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Introduction

The report of the United Nations Secretary General “Further implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002” (MIPAA) to the 48th session of the Commission for Social Development in 2010 (E/CN.5/2010/4) stated that it is highly important for countries to share information, experiences and good practices, to draw conclusions and to set priorities for future cooperation and technical assistance. This is most relevant **at the regional level and in particular during the review and appraisal exercises** organized by the regional commissions. In the UNECE region, the first cycle of review and appraisal of implementation of MIPAA/RIS was concluded in 2007 at the UNECE Ministerial Conference hosted by Spain in León. The secretariat of the UNECE is currently engaged in conducting the second review and appraisal cycle¹ receiving support from the Working Group on Ageing and its Bureau and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna (ECV). The UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, to be hosted by Austria in Vienna on 19-20 September 2012, is planned as a concluding regional event of the second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation.

The present guidelines are designed to assist member States in reporting on the national follow-up to the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of MIPAA. They are intended for national focal points on ageing and all the others involved in preparing the report. It is hoped that the outline provided in this document will help the focal points on ageing to organize existing and newly collected material into a concise report. The harmonized structure of country reports is also helpful for summarizing ageing related developments across the region and for exchanging experiences between member States.

Information provided through these member States’ reports will form the basis for discussions at the 2012 UNECE Conference on Ageing in Vienna, Austria. “**Ensuring a society for all ages: promoting quality of life and active ageing**” will be the main theme of the Ministerial Conference therefore it is expected that national reports will focus on these aspects where relevant and possible. A synthesis report based on national findings will be prepared by the UNECE secretariat and presented at the Conference.

It is suggested that the length of the country report is 6000 to 8000 words (12-16 A4 pages, single spaced, excluding annexes), including an executive summary of 500 to 700 words. The **deadline for submitting this report to the UNECE secretariat is 31 October 2011**. For additional background information, you are referred to the following documents available on the UNECE Population Unit’s website <http://www.unece.org/pau/>:

- Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*
(http://www.unece.org/pau/_docs/ece/2002/ECE_AC23_2002_2_Rev6_e.pdf)
- Berlin Ministerial Declaration – A Society for All Ages in the UNECE Region*
(http://www.unece.org/pau/_docs/ece/2002/ECE_AC23_2002_3_Rev2_e.pdf)
- León Ministerial Declaration - A Society for All Ages: Challenges and Opportunities*
(http://www.unece.org/pau/_docs/ece/2007/ECE_AC30_2007_2.e.pdf#Page=6)
- Guidelines for the review and appraisal of MIPAA: bottom-up approach*
(<http://www.un.org/ageing/documents/MIPAA/GuidelinesAgeingfinal13%20Dec2006.pdf>)

Outline of the Report on the Follow-Up to the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in Cyprus

Executive Summary

Please provide an executive summary of 500 to 700 words (1-1.5 A4 pages, single-spaced) according to the structure below:

Methodology used for this report, in particular an explanation of the bottom-up participatory approach used, if any

The National Focal Point in Cyprus (Social Welfare Services) invited all the relevant Ministries and governmental Departments involved in ageing issues to contribute to the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS and to the preparation of the present report.

A letter has been sent by the national focal point to all the relevant Ministries and governmental Departments explaining the background, the purpose and the procedure for the preparation of the present Report, including an invitation to contribute towards the Report by sending, in writing, their position on priorities and latest developments and changes on issues on ageing.

*Brief review of national progress in fulfilling (or lagging behind) the commitments of MIPAA/RIS. Include **three to five major achievements** since 2007 and **three to five important aspects to be improved** in the future*

The Republic of Cyprus continues its efforts for integration and participation of older persons which is aimed through the provision of benefits (e.g. pensions, public assistance), an array of long-term care services, especially on local level, social support schemes (e.g. for housing, holidays, employment), life-long learning programmes and incentives for participation in cultural activities.

The promotion of equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing is among the core political objectives of the Republic of Cyprus. Implementing the planned consolidation of public finances over the medium term will reduce the risks to long-term sustainability while other parametric reforms (i.e. changes to social security system and fundamental reforms of the health care system) will be necessary to contain the projected high increase in age-related expenditure in the period up to 2050.

Major Achievements since 2007	Important aspects to be improved
Adjustments of the social protection system have been undertaken in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Social Insurance Fund up to year 2048.	With an aim to enable the labour market to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing, the National Employment Strategy identified the following areas for policy action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of high rates of increase in labour supply, particularly by raising older persons and female participation rates and by reducing gender inequality (see active employment policies, employment schemes etc) • Increase in the flexibility of the labour market • Orderly management of foreign workers

	<p>issues to serve the economic and social needs of the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of human capital • Further enhancement of the conditions of social cohesion.
<p>The Law for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes has been amended in order to enhance the protection of victims of gender discrimination.</p>	<p>In order to tackle challenges in the healthcare system, the Republic of Cyprus is proceeding with the introduction of a National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the restructuring of the public hospitals into autonomous establishments. The main characteristics of the NHS are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • universal residence based coverage of the population • financing by tripartite earnings-related contributions calculated on total income • freedom of choice of provider between the public and the private sector • separation of provision from financing health care • management of the NHS by an independent public law Health Insurance Organisation.
<p>The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus has adopted a Life-long Learning Strategy 2007 – 2013, as a response to a commitment undertaken in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and the National Programme for Education and Training 2010.</p>	<p>Ongoing improvement of access to goods, healthcare, education and services aims to ensure that all citizens of Cyprus enjoy quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being. Early diagnosis Guidelines for Reporting on National Follow-up to MIPAA/RIS UNECE, December 2006 and prevention of disease, together with promotion of healthy life styles are promoted as a positive influence to the quality of life</p>
<p>The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus adopted in 2007 the Action Plan for the Equality between Men and Women (Ministry of Justice and Public Order) for the period of 2007 – 2013, with an aim to promote gender mainstreaming in all policies. The State encourages NGOs to develop a range of care services (for children, older persons, persons with disabilities), on a local level, in order to support families and facilitate intergenerational solidarity.</p>	

Family support programmes (care services for children, older persons and other dependent family members, support of informal home-care etc) have been strengthened, in recent

years. Special emphasis is placed on the encouragement of NGOs and Local Authorities that operate social care programmes on a local level.

Promotion of the implementation and the follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy has been initiated by the national focal point through social dialogue. RIS Commitments are largely integrated in national policies.

Conclusion.

The ageing of population is an issue for Cyprus which raises concerns. Ageing has been mainstreamed in policies such as economic, social protection, labour market and health, in recent years.

An ongoing objective of the government policies is to enhance long-term growth and the standard of living of all citizens, to maintain macroeconomic stability, to implement structural reform which improves the functioning of the market mechanism and to ensure that the government sector provides, adequately and efficiently, services to the public.

Adjustments to the social protection system (social security system and healthcare system) have been and will be undertaken in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences. A key government policy is that social spending should be further geared towards those who are in greater need such as low income earners, pensioners and people living in rural areas.

General Information

This introductory section should contain general information about the member State that is submitting the report, in particular:

1. *Country name*
The Republic of Cyprus

2. *Name of and information about the author(s) of the report*
Toula Kouloumou, Director of Social Welfare Services (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance)

3. *Contact details for the author(s) of the report*
Social Welfare Services, 63 Prodromou Str., 1468 Lefkosia, Cyprus

4. *Name and contact details of official national focal point on ageing*
Marina Efthymiadou, Social Welfare Services, 63 Prodromou Str., 1468 Lefkosia, Cyprus

5. *Name, reference, and date of adoption or status of preparation of national strategy, action plan or similar policy document on ageing (please attach relevant documents in the annex).*
National Action Plan on Older Persons, 2005 – 2015, Adopted by the Council of Ministers on November 2nd, 2005 (Decision no 62.797)

1. National ageing situation

This first section (about 500 words, or one A4 page, single-spaced, excluding annexes) should include an overview of the national ageing situation with respect to demographic, social, economic and political developments, and in particular major challenges related to population ageing in the country.

One of the key objectives of the national reports is to allow member States to share good practices and novel approaches to similar challenges and opportunities related to the ageing of their societies, taking into account the different contexts in which population ageing evolves.

Therefore, this section *may* consist of the following:

*Presentation of **demographic indicators** that could help better understand the country's development regarding the issues discussed*

The population of Cyprus is estimated at 803.200 at the end of 2009, an increase of 0,8% since 2008. An ageing trend in the population is shown by the proportion of children below 15 which decreased to 16,9% compared to 25,4% in 1992 and 25% in 1982. The proportion of persons 65+ years increased to 15% (2009) compared to 11% in 1992 and 10,8% in 1982. The working population is ageing as well. The proportion of persons aged 45-64 years increased to 25% from 19,3% in 1992 and 17,6% in 1982.

Infant mortality is at a low level of 3,3 infant deaths per 1.000 live births in 2009. Since 1995, the total fertility rate remains below replacement level of 2,10. The total fertility rate in 2009 has slightly increase to 1.51 compares to 1,46 in 2008. The total fertility rate has declined gradually from 2,46 for the period 1982 – 1985 to 1,48 for the period of 2006 – 2009. Life expectancy at birth is at 77,9 for males and 82,4 for females for the period 2006/2007 (compared with 71,0 and 81,7 respectively in the period 2004/2005) and is projected to increase by 2050 to 81,9 years for males and 85,1 years for females .

*Presentation of key quantitative **social and economic indicators** and features that may help to put into focus the issues treated and to permit quantitative analysis*

The growth of economic activity at constant prices in 2009 has decreased to -1,7% compared to 3,6% in 2008. The number of unemployed people, as a percentage of the economically active population, increased to 5,3% in 2009 compared to 3,7% in 2008.

The rate of inflation, as determined by the consumer price index, for 2009 decreased to 0,3% compared to 4, 7% in 2008, which is the lowest inflation rate since 1965.

The overriding objective of economic policy is to enhance long-term growth and the standards of living of all citizens, to maintain macroeconomic stability, to implement structural reform which improves the functioning of the market mechanism and to ensure that the government sector provides, adequately and efficiently, services to the public. Cyprus faces a high risk with regard to the long-term sustainability of public finances in view of the budgetary impact of ageing populations. Implementing the planned consolidation of public finances over the medium term will reduce the risks to long-term sustainability, while other parametric reforms will be necessary to contain the projected high increase in age-related expenditure in the period up to 2050 and to reduce the risk of long-term sustainability.

*Brief description of the **social, economic and political situation**, which may help to understand the context in which ageing-related issues are dealt with in your country.*

Families in Cyprus are changing in size and structure. One- to two-person households have increased from 30% in 1982 to 37% in 1992 and 43% in 2001. The total number of divorces in 2009 was 1.738 and the crude divorce rate was calculated at 2,2 per thousand population. The total divorce rate, which shows the proportion of marriages that are expected to end up in divorce, rose to 275 per thousand marriages in 2009, from 42 per thousand in 1980.

As a response to a weakening in informal care and an increasing participation of women in the labour market, new forms of formal care and other family support services have been developed in recent years. The current social trends suggest that there is a need for continuous development and adjustment of measures at all levels of prevention, including measures for reconciling work and family life. The Government, the social partners and civil society are involved in the development of these measures.

In 2009, the risk of poverty rate for the general population was 16,2%. For the population aged 65 years or more the rate was 48,6%. In 2009, the risk of poverty for children aged 0-17 years was 12%. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold in PPP for a single member household in 2003 was € 11.785. Income inequality (as measured by the ratio S80/S20) was 4,2. Social protection expenditure in 2008 was 18,42% of GDP. In 2009, social transfers reduced the risk of poverty to 16,2%.

The labour market of Cyprus is characterised by comparatively high participation and employment rates, although there has been a decrease in the participation rate in 2010 to 64,8% compared to 73% in 2006 due to the aftermath of the international economic crisis. The employment rate in 2010 was 60,8% compared to 69,6% in 2006. Female employment rate in 2010 was 53,6 % that is, 15 percentage points lower than the respective rate for men. The employment rate of older workers (persons aged 55- 64) was 56,8% compared to 53,6% in 2006, 50,6% in 2005, and 50,1% in 2004.

In 2010, the unemployment rate increased to 6,2% (5,3 in 2009 and 3,7 in 2008). The employment policy promotes measures which encourage the participation of women in the labour market, more active participation of older workers and more effective management of economic migration.

Structural reforms (see National Reform Programme, 2005 and Progress Report, 2006) aim at boosting productivity and competitiveness that will deliver high growth and living standards for the citizens of Cyprus. Among others, the reform of the social security and health care systems addresses key challenges in light of the prospective ageing of the population. A key government policy is that social spending should be further geared towards those who are in greater need such as low income earners, pensioners and people living in rural areas.

Total expenditure on health has increased to 3,3% of GDP in 2009 compared to 3,0% of GDP in 2007. Total expenditure on education has increased to 7,8% of GDP compared to 5% of GDP in 2007. Expenditure on education has increased due the implementation of the Educational Reform Programme implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture since 2008, which includes the of the new school curriculum, training of teachers and the design, development and implementation of support programmes.

Methodology

This section (up to 500 words, or one A4 page, single-spaced, excluding annexes) should deal with the methodology for an evaluation of policy actions taken towards the implementation of MIPAA/RIS within the framework of the ten commitments of RIS. It is suggested that both a quantitative and a qualitative approach be used for assessing the impact of policy actions.

Quantitative information can be taken from ongoing and new studies on ageing, both cross-sectional (assessing the impact of policies across several sectors) and longitudinal (observing a specific policy impact over a period of time).

Qualitative information can be obtained through a **bottom-up participatory approach or other available qualitative data from recent research** (preferably undertaken since 2007). If member States wish to conduct new qualitative research for the purpose of this report the participatory approach may be a suitable tool, as it calls for the involvement of older persons in assessing the impact of policy actions on the quality of their lives. This approach is flexible, and can be adapted to country-specific challenges and opportunities.

In general this section should refer to interactions with the different stakeholders – such as ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academia and older persons – and on how these interactions contributed to the report. If applicable, the links between the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS and other established monitoring mechanisms in your country should be discussed here.

Suggestion: If the national focal point on ageing is going to organize the process of bottom-up participatory assessment, s/he is encouraged to identify and engage one or more *facilitators* with expertise in using a participatory methodology. Such facilitators could come from academia or NGOs.

A letter has been sent by the national focal point to all the relevant Ministries and governmental Departments explaining the background, the purpose and the procedure for the preparation of the present Report, including an invitation to contribute towards the Report by sending, in writing, their position on priorities and latest developments and changes on issues on ageing.

3. Review and Appraisal of National Actions to fulfil Commitments of UNECE MIPAA/RIS

This part of the report is expected to be divided into subsections devoted to the individual RIS commitments (about 400-500 words per commitment on average or one A4 page, single-spaced, excluding annexes). Since many of the commitments stress several aspects, the guidelines provide some indicative prompts on each aspect, aligned with the content of the corresponding RIS commitment. *The prompts are provided for guidance to stimulate your ideas — you are not expected to report on every aspect mentioned in the bullet-pointed prompts, but rather to choose those most relevant to the situation in your country.*

a) General framework

You are expected to **report on all commitments**. Note that at the 3rd meeting of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing it was decided that member States should also report on commitments where no progress had been made. This should help to indicate areas where further work is needed and may assist in facilitating the discussion during the 2012 Ministerial Conference on Ageing.

The report is expected to include evidence of **results and outcomes** that the measures, programmes or initiatives described have achieved, especially in the **period after the León Conference** (2007 to 2011 or the latest available). For empirical evidence, longer time series might be preferable and could be presented in the annex.

b) Instrumental assessment

The reporting on the RIS commitments should include instrumental assessment, focusing on **policies, laws and regulations** adopted and/or modified since the León Conference (for instance, a new law on palliative care, etc.); on **programmes** established to adjust to demographic change (such as a new programme for home care, etc.); on measures to adapt the **physical environment** (such as new housing or new transport facilities for older persons); and, if available, on the allocation and rates of change per annum of **budgets** relevant for ageing related issues.

c) National capacities

Reference should be also made to available national capacities, if applicable, under each commitment. You may include information on:

- *institutions responsible for follow-up to MIPAA/RIS*
- *organizations of older person taking part in the follow-up activities*
- *educational, training and research activities on ageing*
- *data collection and analysis of the ageing-related situation in your country*
- *mobilization of financial resources dedicated to MIPAA/RIS follow-up*
- *monitoring mechanisms in place for the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS.*

Suggestion: in reporting on each RIS commitment, you may follow this general algorithm - instrumental assessment of action (e.g., policies, programmes, etc. that have been introduced) - impact assessment (outcomes of policy action) - analysis (what was successful and what did not work, and why) - conclusion and proposed way forward (what needs to be done).

RIS Commitment 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

This subsection should focus on analysis of whether and to what extent mainstreaming ageing is part of national priorities. It should reveal whether ageing is included in development plans and policy strategies on the national, regional and local levels.

In your analysis you *may* consider:

a) areas in which ageing is mainstreamed

Ageing has been mainstreamed in policies such as economic, social protection, labour market and health, in the recent years.

Reform of the Social Security System: The dialogue with the social partners concerning the long-term financial sustainability of the General Social Insurance Scheme begun on March 2005 by presenting and analyzing the findings of an actuarial study in relation to certain alternative reform scenarios. In July 2005, within the context of the presentation to the social partners of the National Strategy Report on Pensions, the consultations intensified and expanded to a wider range of measures. Furthermore, the consequences of each one of the proposed measures had been evaluated and analyzed while scenarios for gradual application of some of the measures discussed had been prepared in combination with certain amendments in the legislation targeting the improvement of procedures or the marginal increase of the benefits without causing to the Social Insurance Fund substantial financial burden. The relevant actuarial study undertaken by the two major trade unions was presented to the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and the final round of consultations was commenced in April 2007.

On the 5th of March 2009 an amended Social Insurance Law (No. 22(I)/2009) was put into force so as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Social Insurance Fund up to Year 2048.

Reforms of the Healthcare system: Improvement of the quality of health care system and the effective tackling of the anticipated increases in public health expenditure constitute important challenges to the Cyprus economy. In order to tackle these challenges, the Government of Cyprus is proceeding with the introduction of a National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the restructuring of the public hospitals into autonomous establishments. As regards the implementation of the NHIS, a Strategic Plan was prepared in November 2006.

b) extent to which the different policies related to ageing pursue a holistic approach and are coordinated and applied consistently

The mandate of the Supreme Policy Making Body on Issues Concerning Older Persons (established in 2000 by the Council of Ministers) is to advise on the formulation of comprehensive policies for older persons and to coordinate relevant services and programmes.

The Action Plan for Older Persons, 2005-2015 has made several efforts to coordinate different policies related to ageing with the involvement of all stakeholders (government, NGOs and social partners).

c) initiatives taken by your country to tackle age discrimination

The Republic of Cyprus, in recent years has made efforts to incorporate age related issues to its legislation and policies.

The Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance have implemented national awareness raising activities in the fields of antidiscrimination, diversity and equality on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The activities undertaken during the completion of this project lay within the context of the two Directives, the Council Directive 2000/43/EC and the Council Directive 2000/78/EC. The duration of the programme was one year and was completed within the year 2008. It was financed by the European Union by 80%, and the Republic of Cyprus by 20%. Within the context of the above Programme, the Social Welfare Services aimed at raising awareness and enhancing mobilization of all stakeholders in policy making and developing a mutual process of cooperation and learning in this field.

d) participation of older persons in the development of policies and strategies and in their implementation

The Supreme Policy Making Body on Issues Concerning Older Persons, established in 2000. This Body has been set up by the Council of Ministers to advise on the formulation of comprehensive policies for older persons and to coordinate relevant services and programmes. It is chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and it is composed of the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of Finance, Health, Labour and Social Insurance and the Planning Bureau.

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC) as the umbrella organisation of all voluntary organisations has an advisory role in the planning of social policy, including issues concerning older persons.

The Coordinating Body for Older Persons is also chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, has an advisory role on policy issues with special emphasis on matters related to social services, health services and special privileges which can be granted to facilitate the access of older people to different sites and services. Governmental departments as well as trade unions, NGOs and older persons themselves are represented on this Body.

The Advisory Board is appointed by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, under the law regulating the establishment and operation of homes for older persons and persons with disabilities. The role of the Board is to advise the Minister on the implementation and the improvement of legislation related to older persons. Governmental departments, NGOs, local authorities and older persons themselves are represented on the Board.

The Elders Parliament was established in 1999 during the International Year of Older Persons. It consists of 56 members representing various non-governmental organisations dealing with matters related to older persons. The general aim of the body is to bring up issues and recommendations relevant to older citizens.

e) involvement of NGOs and the private sector in policy development and their role in the implementation of policies and programmes.

See comments in d) RIS Commitment 1, above.

RIS Commitment 2: To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society

The member States committed to further enhancing the social, economic, political and cultural **participation** of older persons. In reporting on the follow-up to this aspect of the commitment you *may* take into account:

- a) measures undertaken by your country to recognize, encourage and support the contributions of older people to society (e.g. media campaigns, school curricula)*

Intergenerational understanding is encouraged through several activities in the school curriculum, such as students' visits to adult day care centres or residential homes, older persons visits to schools and organisation of common recreational activities between students and older persons.

The Cultural Services (Ministry of Education and Culture) provide older persons with the services such as reduced tickets for all events organised by the Cultural Services, etc.

- b) mechanisms put in place to take into account the views of older persons on the services provided to them*

The Cyprus Ministry of Health is implementing the Law of Patients Rights to ensure the right of patients to express their opinion for health services provided to them at all levels. Furthermore the Ministry of Health has appointed complaints officers at all public hospitals, where patients can apply for any complaint related to their treatment.

Cyprus has adopted the Charter of Patient's Rights and Protection to ensure the participation of older people in health sector matters.

Furthermore, Cyprus Ministry of Health implements the Law on Psychiatric Treatment act of 1997 which provides for the rights of the people requiring psychiatric treatment.

Also see point d) under RIS Commitment 1.

- c) channels for recognising older persons as a significant consumer group with shared and specific needs, interests, and preferences*

-
- d) actions promoting active ageing and encouraging the participation of older persons in society, culture, and economy*

Long-term care constitutes a right of every resident of the Republic of Cyprus, who is unable to secure it by her/his own means. For eligible persons, this care is provided directly by the Social Welfare Services, NGOs, local authorities and private institutions with state financing (subject to eligibility). Long-term care services include home care, day care and residential care. The following care services and support schemes are provided for older persons with the aim of enhancing their quality of life and participation in social life:

Home care includes home cleaning, help in personal hygiene, shopping, reading of newspaper etc.

Day care includes the provision of services to older persons within the framework of Day Care Centres for Adults, which may offer breakfast, lunch, laundry services and a range of activities such as handcrafting, cooking, discussion groups, excursions, group games etc.

Residential care is provided by residential homes (public or private) for older persons, which provide accommodation, care and activities for residents.

Subsidisation of Holidays for Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities Scheme is a scheme which provides persons 63 years of age or older, who are public assistance beneficiaries, the eligibility for a holiday allowance which covers hotel accommodation in Cyprus for a specified period throughout the year.

Self-Employment Scheme for Older Persons, is a scheme which aims to encourage self-employment in persons 63 of age or older (e.g. in handcrafting, writing, drawing etc.)

In the area of education, the Adult Education Centres (Ministry of Education and Culture) implement the following programmes:

(i) Special educational programmes: Within the general government policy for lifelong learning, Adult Education Centres provide free educational programmes for persons aged 65 and over. Programmes cover a wide array of subject areas.

(ii) Lectures: The Adult Education Centres in cooperation with schools offer a series of lectures for older persons.

The Social Card is granted to all persons aged 63 years and over. It entitles them to attend social and cultural events and enjoy several benefits such as free transportation by bus in rural and urban areas.

e) activities undertaken to promote the political participation of older persons and in particular of older women

See point d) under RIS Commitment 1.

f) mechanisms and organizations that provide a political voice for older persons

See point d) under RIS Commitment 1.

g) existence of a national advisory body on ageing or a similar institutional mechanism that includes older persons to ensure a dynamic and coordinated contribution of older persons to national policy responses to ageing

See point d) under RIS Commitment 1.

h) adoption of policies and programmes to improve the housing and living environment of older persons, especially in rural areas (access to and affordability of services, such as housing, utilities, sanitation and, in particular, transport).

Persons who cannot secure their basic and special needs (including accommodation and hygiene utilities) are entitled to public assistance. Furthermore, the following schemes aim to improve older persons living conditions:

Scheme for the Improvement of Housing Conditions

This is a scheme which aims to improve the living conditions of public assistance recipients or persons who would be eligible for public assistance should rent be added in their special needs. The scheme provides for house repairs and house extensions.

Family Support Scheme for the Informal Care of their Elderly and Disabled Members

This scheme aims to promote independence and prevent institutionalisation. It provides financial support to individuals and families who provide care and accommodation to a family member or a friend for the following purposes: house extensions or house adjustments or purchase of house equipment necessary for the beneficiary (e.g. special bed/mattress).

The overall aim of these schemes is to promote social inclusion and participation of the elderly by helping them to become more functional and remain in the home (or the informal carer's home) for as long as possible.

Furthermore within 2010 the public transportation within cities as well as in between cities and rural areas, has been changed and the Ministry of Communications and Work has introduced a modern and decent service, which aims to provide all citizens with accessible and low cost public transportation with the introduction of new buses and more frequent routes. Citizens aged 63 and over as well as students can enjoy the services free of charge.

Also see Social Card, point d) of RIS Commitment 2.

The Republic of Cyprus within its priorities includes the commitment to promoting the integration of older persons by encouraging their active involvement in the community and by fostering intergenerational relations.

The member States also committed to promoting the **integration** of older persons by encouraging their active involvement in the community and by fostering **intergenerational relationships**:

- a) *steps taken to promote age-integrated communities where facilities are made available to people of all ages and where they can meet and interact (e.g. joint community centres for the elderly and the young)*

The Government encourages the development of care services on a local level to support families for reconciling work and family life and older persons to remain in their communities for as long as possible. Through the Grants-in-Aid Scheme, the government subsidises social care services (e.g. childcare, home care, day care and residential care), run by Community Volunteerism Councils and voluntary organisations, especially in disadvantaged or remote communities.

- b) *actions to promote volunteer activities enabling younger and older people to interact and help each other.*

Volunteer activities are promoted by the Cyprus Volunteer Corps which is a coordinating body that promotes volunteerism and facilitates volunteer service. Its mission is to identify social problems and needs, to match need and demand for voluntary service, to register, train and support volunteers, to monitor volunteer placements and to initiate volunteer projects. It gives the opportunity to older and younger people to serve in many capacities within organisations by contributing time, energy or talent that help to fulfil the organisations' mission.

Older persons tend to spare more time in volunteerism. They usually engage in voluntary sector decision making processes as board members in voluntary organisations.

The RIS commitments also refer to the need to **promote a positive image of ageing**:

a) *steps undertaken by your country to promote a positive image of ageing (e.g. media campaigns, incentives for employers to promote continued employment of older persons, initiatives within local communities and with the participation of other social actors to facilitate dialogue and a better understanding between the generations)*

b) *measures taken to promote a differentiated and heterogeneous view of the life of older persons to better reflect reality*

c) *actions taken (in particular in cooperation with mass media) to encourage older persons to make the general public more aware of the positive aspects of ageing.*

RIS Commitment 3: To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing

The member States committed to promoting **equitable and sustainable economic growth** in response to population ageing. To ensure that growth is environmentally and socially sustainable, efforts to boost economic growth and productivity must be accompanied by a broad strategic policy response, including to population ageing. Equitable growth ensures that resources are available for transfer and distribution amongst generations and helps to ensure the financial sustainability of social protection systems in general and pension schemes in particular. You *may* refer to:

a) *strategies adopted to transform your economies with a view to eradicating poverty, especially among older persons*

Following the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for the period 2006 – 2008 (as mentioned in the previous report), the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for the period 2008 – 2010 was prepared. It constitutes the policy document concerning the challenges and priorities of the Republic of Cyprus in the fields of social protection (pensions and healthcare) and social inclusion.

The formulation of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion 2008-2010 (NSSI) aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion, by securing the opportunity of access to material and non-material resources, rights and services for all citizens. This possibility is an adequate and necessary condition for the active participation of all citizens in social affairs, it provides a preventive function against exclusion, while at the same time fights against all the possible, old and new, forms of social discrimination that lead to exclusion.

For more information on the reform of the Social Security System, see point a) in RIS Commitment 1.

b) *measures taken to review and adjust macroeconomic policies to address the needs of a growing ageing population.*

See points in Chapter 1 and point a) RIS Commitment 1.

RIS Commitment 4: To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences

The member States committed to taking steps to **ensure the financial sustainability of social protection systems** in the face of demographic ageing. They agreed that social security systems should strengthen incentives for citizens to participate in the labour force while protecting the weakest groups in society. Social protection systems should be adjusted so that they can fulfil their basic functions of assisting those who are deprived and safeguarding those who are at risk.

They need to be supported by a high level of employment, comprehensive health services, functioning educational systems and active labour market policies.

In this regard, the member States agreed to pursue the objective of preserving and strengthening the basic functions of **social protection**, namely to prevent and/or reduce poverty and provide adequate benefits for all. In addition, the member States agreed to adapt existing social protection systems to demographic changes and changes in family structures. In your report you *may* refer to:

- a) *actions to adapt social protection systems in your country to societal and demographic changes*

On the 5th of March 2009 an amended Social Insurance Law (No.22(I)/2009) was put into force so as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Social Insurance Fund up to year 2048. The basic provisions of the amended Law concern the increase of the contribution rates of the Social Insurance Fund every five years, starting as from 1st April 2009 and ending 2039. It also concerned the adaption of stricter insurance conditions in order to be entitled to an old-age pensions as well as a lump-sum of old-age pension.

- b) *steps taken to achieve a sufficient income for all older persons*

Old-age pension

All employed and self-employed persons are compulsorily insured under the Social Insurance Scheme. Upon reaching the age of 65, they are entitled to old-age pension provided they satisfy the relevant contribution conditions. However, entitlement may commence at the age of 63 for persons who have completed a period of insurance specified in the legislation.

A minimum pension is ensured through the General Social Insurance Scheme for every working person with low insurance record provided s/he satisfies the relevant contribution conditions for old age pension.

Widow' s pension

Widow' s pension is payable to a widow of an insured person who, at the time of his death, was a beneficiary of old-age pension or satisfied the contribution conditions for the payment of old-age pension and at the time of his death she was living with him or was wholly or mainly maintained by him.

Insured widows are entitled to the concurrent payment of their old-age pension according to their own insurance, as well as the widow' s pension according to the insurance of their deceased husband.

A widower's pension is payable to a widower of an insured woman if he is permanently incapable of self-support and at the time of his wife's death he was wholly maintained by her.

Social pension

This pension is financed by general taxation and is paid to persons who have completed the age of 65 and are not entitled to a pension from any other source.

Special Allowance

A special allowance is payable to every pensioner with an annual pension income below the poverty line (which is calculated for the various cases of households by the Ministry of Finance).

Public Assistance

Public Assistance ensures the right to a decent standard of living through the provision of financial assistance and/or social services to persons, whose resources are not sufficient to meet their basic and special needs as determined by legislation.

- c) *policies adopted to address in a timely manner the needs of older persons for a variety of social and health services, including sheltered housing and long-term care*

See point d) under RIS Commitment 2.

- d) *actions to improve standards of living for persons with disability and for fragile older persons which allow them to maintain their independence and dignity.*

See points d) and h) under RIS Commitment 2.

The member States also committed to establishing a regulatory framework for occupational and private **pension provision**:

- a) *steps taken to establish or further develop a regulatory framework for occupational and private pension provision*

The Government Employees Pension Scheme

The Government Employees Pension Scheme provides supplementary retirement and survivors' pensions for permanent civil servants and members of the educational service, the police and the armed forces.

The Semi-government Employees Pension Schemes

The Semi-government Employees Pension Schemes provide supplementary pensions to the permanent employees of the publicly utility corporations of local authorities and of other public law authorities.

Each scheme is established and regulated separately either through primary or secondary legislation.

Provident Funds

The Provident Funds are arrangements that are agreed within the framework of the system of free collective bargaining. They provide defined contribution lump-sum benefits.

Provident Funds are regulated through the Provident Funds Law N. 44/81 as amended.

Its main objective is to rule the establishment and operation of Provident Funds in order to secure their efficient operation in favour of their members

In 2006, the Law of Establishment, Operation, and Supervision of Occupational Pension Funds Law 146(l)/2006 was put into force. The main objective of the law is to provide a regulatory framework regarding the activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision.

Self Employed Pension Schemes (Lawyers, Doctors)

The Pension Scheme of Doctors and the Pension Scheme of Lawyers are regulated by separate secondary legislations.

b) changes made to the laws regulating mandatory retirement.

Compulsory retirement has increased from the age of 60 to the age of 63 in the governmental sector while consensus has been reached for extending the age of retirement to the age of 63 in the semi-governmental sector as well.

The member States also pledged to pay special attention to the social protection of women and men throughout the life course:

a) policies adopted to ensure the equal treatment of men and women by the social protection system

In 2009, the Law on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes, L.133(l)/2002 was amended. The amendments concern extrajudicial protection of victims of gender discrimination via the Ombudsman, the provision of independent assistance to victims of discrimination by the Committee of Gender Equality in Employment and Professional Training as well as giving the possibility to NGOs to institute statutory judicial or extrajudicial proceedings on behalf or in support of victims for discrimination.

b) policies adopted to ensure that social protection system supports a better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities throughout the life cycle (e.g. through special leave arrangements for working parents and other caregivers, or supportive measures such as respite care services – that is, professional care services provided on an ad-hoc basis to give the regular caregiver some time off).

The Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law of 2002 was adopted as a measure for further reconciliation of work and family life. The law regulates the right of every employed parent to unpaid leave for the purpose of taking care and raising of a child. It also regulates the right of any employee to unpaid leave on grounds of force majeure by reason of a family emergency. Among others, during absence on parental leave, the employee is credited with the insurable earnings provided for by the Social Insurance legislation.

The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Unfair Treatment) Law of 2002 also promotes the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities by safeguarding employees' rights to freely opt for part-time work and prohibiting unfair treatment of part-time workers when compared to employees in full time employment as regards the terms and conditions of employment.

Informal home-care to a person in need of care can be financed (including social insurance contribution) for public assistance recipients, in case a family member (mainly women) has to leave employment to provide care.

According to the amendment of the Social Security Law 41/80 in 2007, the period for which maternity allowance is paid in case of birth has been extended from 16 to 18 weeks and the period for which is paid in case of an adoption rose from 14 to 16 weeks.

RIS Commitment 5: To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing

A commitment was made by member States to take measures to **enable labour markets to respond** to the economic and social consequences of ageing. In this regard, they pledged to seek increases in employment rates, especially the employment rates of older persons. In your report, while addressing measures taken to promote access to employment opportunities and to reduce the number of out-of-work persons, especially for older age groups, 3 you *may* refer to:

a) *active labour market policies (job search assistance, training, counselling, etc.)*

According to the National Employment Strategy the following main challenges are faced in the area of employment:

- Maintenance of high rates of increase in labour supply, particularly by raising older persons and female participation rates and by reducing gender inequality
- Increase in the flexibility of the labour market
- Orderly management of foreign workers issues to serve the economic and social needs of the country
- Further development of human capital
- Further enhancement of the conditions of social cohesion.

National targets for 2010 were as follows:

- Increase of the overall employment rate to 71% (actual 60,8%)
- Increase of the employment rate of women to 63% (actual 53,6%)
- Increase of the employment rate of older workers to 53% (actual 56,8%).

Active employment policies include the modernisation of Public Employment Services (PES) that will enhance support of persons with special problems especially public assistance recipients and persons with disabilities, through the provision of individualised assistance. At the same time, the modernised PES will improve access to the labour market through the geographical distribution of services, use of information technology in monitoring the labour market and enhancement of the capacity for the treatment of special groups.

Active employment policies also include training programmes for those whose position on the labour market is weak. In addition, measures are being undertaken to improve physical access to public buildings, sidewalks and public transport.

The Public Assistance and Services Law includes provisions which encourage employment. For example, when determining the amount of public assistance for an applicant aged 63+ years, monthly earnings of up to € 170 from work are not taken into account.

b) *adaptation of curricula to labour market needs; measures to ease the transition between formal education and work*

c) *efforts to reduce non-wage labour costs while protecting workers' rights; easing of factors reducing demand for labour (e.g. excessive administrative regulations, etc.).*

The member States also agreed to improve the **employability of older workers**:

- a) *measures taken to improve the employability of older workers, e.g. through vocational guidance and training, promoting lifelong learning (delivery of job-relevant training to enable workers to adjust to changing labour markets), improvement of working conditions.*

The social insurance legislation encourages employment of older persons as it provides the possibility for pensioners to enter (or remain) in employment.

The modernisation of the Public Employment Services (PES) aims to promote active employment policies including individualised assistance (for older workers, among others) for vocational training and job placement.

The Self-Employment Scheme for Older Persons may potentially have a greater role in the employment in persons 63 of age or older (see point c) of RIS Commitment 2). The Scheme provides for a lump sum granted for self-employment purposes such as handcrafting, writing, drawing etc.

Also see point b) of pension provision under RIS Commitment 4., on measures regarding the extension of the age of compulsory retirement.

Raising **participation rates** for all women and men is another commitment of the member States.

- a) *steps taken to raise participation rates in labour markets of all women and men, e.g. through removing barriers and disincentives to stay in employment*

Various schemes have been developed to promote the employability of all persons, particularly of vulnerable groups such as older persons, women, young persons and persons with disabilities.

Apprenticeship Scheme: A New Modern Apprenticeship has been promoted within the framework of the programming period 2007-2013 (co-financed by the European Social Fund). It constitutes an alternative way both to meet the educational and training needs of young persons who leave formal education early and to satisfy the needs of the labour market. The New Modern Apprenticeship aims to attract a greater number of young women and to broaden the age of eligibility and the range of skills.

Scheme for Enhancing Youth Entrepreneurship: Its purpose is to promote activities for fostering youth entrepreneurship through specific incentives and to promote equality of opportunities for young persons to develop entrepreneurial activities.

Scheme Providing Financial Assistance for the Social Re-integration of Former Dependent Persons or Ex-Drug Users: The Scheme provides financial assistance for the social reintegration of former dependent persons or ex-drug users who are in the course of treatment for drug dependency.

Scheme for the Enhancement of Women's Entrepreneurship

It aims at encouraging women to develop entrepreneurial activities in various sectors of the economy with state subsidisation.

Scheme for flexible forms of employment: The scheme aims to attract unemployed and economically inactive women to employment while subsidising employers who create additional jobs under flexible arrangements.

Centre for the Occupational Rehabilitation of the Disabled: The Centre provides facilities for assessing the abilities of persons with disabilities and for training in technical occupations that will facilitate their placement in employment. In addition, the Centre provides services aimed at helping persons with disabilities to use their potential, to become independent and to cope with any psychological and social problem they may face. Moreover, the Centre provides employment in its workshops to trainees with productive capacity, paying them a special allowance on top of the regular training allowance.

Scheme for the Self-employment of Persons with Severe Disabilities: The scheme provides for a grant to severely disabled persons and for a subsidy of interest for a loan to encourage self-employment of such persons. For group self-employment, an extra subsidy for each additional person is payable.

Scheme for Financial Assistance through the special fund of the Centre for the Occupational Rehabilitation of the Disabled for the creation and operation of small units for self-employment of persons with disabilities. The scheme provides for a grant and for interest on a loan to persons with disabilities wishing to become self-employed.

Scheme for Training Persons with Disabilities in occupations for which training is not available at the Centre: The scheme provides for a grant for fees paid by people with disabilities attending a course of vocational training that would facilitate their employment and their career prospects.

Scheme for Support of Employment of Severely Disabled Persons: The purpose of the scheme is to encourage employment of severely disabled persons in the open labour market, mainly through the provision of personal support by a trained guide. Under this scheme, a grant is given to organisations that intend to offer such programmes against the costs of the support services to be provided.

Scheme for the Subsidisation of Employment of Persons with Disabilities: The scheme provides subsidies to employers of up to 40% of the annual salary for every employed person with disabilities during the first 12 months of employment. The total assistance that may be granted to an employer cannot exceed the percentage by which the productivity of the person employed is reduced.

Scheme Providing Incentives for the Employment of Severely Disabled Persons in the private sector: The scheme provides subsidies to employers of up to 40% of the annual salaries for the installation of facilities for severely disabled employees. In addition, it subsidises the employment of such persons up to 60% of their annual salary.

Unit for the Occupational Rehabilitation of the Mentally III: A unit for the Occupational Rehabilitation of the Mentally III has been in operation since 2002 in Lefkosia (Nicosia). It is expected that, by 2013, such units will be established in all 6 districts.

- b) *specific measures to increase the labour force participation of women, e.g. through suitable education and training, efforts to broaden their job opportunities and avoid discriminatory situations in relation to pension benefits or personal income.*

See answers above on active employment policies (integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market) under RIS Commitment 5.

On measures for reconciling work and family life, see point b) under RIS Commitment 4 and point a) under RIS Commitment 2 on integration of older persons.

The member States committed to taking steps towards increasing the age at which people stop working and towards making **retirement** more **flexible** and **gradual**:

- a) *steps taken to introduce incentives for the participation of older persons in the labour market*

See answer under current RIS Commitment 5 on raising participation rates for all women and men.

- b) *abolition of incentives to take up early retirement*

- c) *mechanisms put in place to promote a smooth and gradual retirement.*

RIS Commitment 6: To promote lifelong learning and adapt the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions

The member States committed to promoting lifelong learning and adapting their educational systems in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions.

In particular, they committed to facilitating and encouraging **lifelong learning**. Addressing this commitment in your report, you *may* refer to:

- a) *steps taken to adjust educational institutions to the needs of persons in retirement*

Cyprus has a Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007 – 2013 (CyLLS) which was formally adopted by the Council of Ministers Decision in November 2007, as a response to a commitment undertaken in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and the national Program for Education and Training 2010. The practical importance of adopting the CyLLS is the implementation of a unified and coordinated policy for lifelong learning (LLL) through the development of educational and training measures for the achievement of common strategic objectives, in a way that ensures the compatibility of actions as well as high effectiveness and efficiency in resource management.

The monitoring, coordination and formative evaluation tasks for the implementation of the CyLLS was designated, by another Council of Ministers Decision (April 2008), to the following committees, chaired by the Planning Bureau, which is the National Authority for the implementation of the European LLL Program 2007 – 2013, in Cyprus:

1. The National LLL Committee, which has a broad synthesis, comprised of the main services, organisations and social partners involved in the provision of education, and
2. The Technical LLL Committee, which assists the National LLL Committee and is comprised of the Planning Bureau, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre.

The general aim of the CyLLS is to promote the formal, non formal and informal education and training of all citizens, throughout their lifetime, as a vital contributor to their personal attainment and fulfilment, as well as for their adaptation to the continual changes. These changes are mainly delivered, nowadays from the rapid creation of new knowledge and the technology with new, the demographic changes resulted to a bigger share of old ages in the labour market, the need to acquire new skills for new jobs created in response to global economic crisis and emerged changes like the climate change and the urgent need for energy conservation.

The changes above render LLL a critical determinant of people's potential to work, integrate, operate and prosper in the society as well as a defining parameter of the countries' capacity for social and economic sustainability and growth.

The CyLLS is structured around the following four priority axes and strategic objectives:

1st Priority Axis / Strategic Objective: Promoting Access and Participation in Lifelong Learning for ALL

2nd Priority Axis / Strategic Objective: Strengthening of Lifelong Learning Infrastructures and Systems

3rd Priority Axis / Strategic Objective: Research and Development for the Support of Lifelong Learning

4th Priority Axis / Strategic Objective: Effective Governance of Lifelong Learning

The future actions in the field of LLL, are being formed on the basis of the results of the 2007 – 2009 CyLLS Progress Report and in line with the objectives of the ET2020 strategic framework and the EU2020 Strategy. Emphasis is to be attached to promoting LLL actions under the EU flagship initiatives “Youth on the move” and “New Skills for New Jobs”. In this context, the LLL policy, in the short to medium run, will focus on strengthening the CyLLS implementation mechanism and the promotion of high added value LL measures enhancing CyLLS strategic axis and objectives, as follows:

- Broadening access and encouraging people to remain in education (CyLLS, 1st Axis)
- Facilitating Integration and re-integration in the labour market (CyLLS, 1st and 2nd Axis)
- Improvement and strengthening of the infrastructure and content of education and training systems (CyLLS, 2nd Axis)
- Increase of the Impact of LLL on improving productivity and competitiveness of the Cyprus Economy (CyLLS, 3rd and 1st Axis)
- Effective Governance of the Educational System and Training System (CyLLS, 4th Axis)
- Promoting of the “knowledge triangle”, which combines education, research and innovation, as a driving force for growth

b) initiatives undertaken in relation to pre-retirement programmes

c) initiatives undertaken in relation to pre-retirement programmes learning methods developed to teach older persons the use of new information technologies

- d) *adaptation of educational curricula to prepare people for lives of continuous change and to equip them with the necessary skills and attitudes favouring flexibility; promotion of new didactic methods in this regard.*
-

The member States also committed to ensure that the **education system** achieves better **employability** of all persons:

- a) *steps taken to establish closer links between educational institutions and employers and to encourage employers to provide on-the-job training for workers of different ages*
-

- b) *development and/or promotion of special programmes to facilitate the reintegration into the labour market of those who left the formal educational system early*

Another policy issue that is considered as Cyprus' priority is the continuous anticipation of skill needs in the labour market. This mainly includes the provision of employment forecasts in occupations and sectors of economic activity, as well as the identification of educational, training and special skill needs. The main formal mechanism in place for the assessment of skill needs is operated by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) which, it conducts the following research studies for the systematic employment forecasting and the identification of skill gaps:

- Long term employment forecast
 - Annual investigations for the identification of skills needs with the involvement of Social Partners
 - Identification of Green Skill Needs
- c) *Steps taken to make formal schooling more gender sensitive e.g. through the introduction of gender-sensitive curricula, specific programmes for girls and women, and specific programmes for older women to help them re-enter the labour market*
-

- d) Has your country taken steps to make formal schooling more gender-sensitive, e.g. through the introduction of gender-sensitive curricula, specific programmes for girls and women, and specific programmes for older women to help them re-enter the labour market?
-

RIS Commitment 7: To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being

The UNECE member States committed to striving to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being. In particular, the member States agreed to promote health and well-being over the entire life course, by mainstreaming health through sectoral policies. In your report you *may* refer to:

- a) *actions taken to integrate ageing issues into sectoral policies*

Two Action Plans for Older Persons have been prepared in an effort to integrate ageing issues into all policies.

The Ministry of Health is promoting a ten-year (2004-2014) Plan of Action for the Healthcare of Older Persons. Services are expected to be integrated in both primary and secondary health care services in order to ensure early detection and treatment of diseases that lead to dependency in old age. The aim is to prolong the ability of older persons to look after themselves for as long as possible and to improve the quality of their lives. The objectives of the Plan fall into the following categories:

- Health promotion and prevention through the provision of special schemes
- Respect for older persons and abolition of age discrimination
- Provision of individualised and comprehensive care
- Development of intermediate Care
- Improvement of hospital services
- Comprehensive mental healthcare.

The Supreme Policy-Making Body on Issues Concerning Older Persons prepared a National Action Plan for Older Persons, 2005-2015 which was approved by the Council of Ministers on November 2nd, 2005. The aim is to secure synergy among different actions of the Plan for the promotion of the general well-being of older persons. The Action Plan consists of the following pillars:

- The social protection system as a means to secure a dignified standard of living
- Productive occupation and utilisation of older persons free time
- Securing of an accessible and supportive environment
- Access to knowledge, education and lifelong learning
- Health
- Intergenerational solidarity
- Improvement of access and mobility
- Promotion of health and welfare
- Neglect and violence against older persons
- The role of NGOs
- Protection of older persons in case of a calamity or an emergency.

In addition, member States committed to ensuring **equal access** to health and social services including long-term care for persons of all ages:

- a) *targeted measures to reduce inequalities in access to health and social services, including for people in rural and remote areas*

Health care in Cyprus is provided to all citizens without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, religion, ethnicity or any other attribute. In Cyprus 70% of the total population is covered free of charge by the public sector and a population of 5 – 10% has to pay 50% of charges for inpatient treatment, depending on family income. The free care beneficiaries pay only €2.00 as co-payment fee outpatient consultation. Beneficiaries of 60 years and over and the recipients of public assistance do not have to pay any fee for outpatient consultation.

Treatment in emergency cases is provided free-of-charge for all residents at the Accident and Emergency Departments of public hospitals.

In spite of the fact that the public health care system covers the majority of the population free-of-charge or at reduced fees, the PHS do not have the capacity to provide care to all eligible persons. As a result, many eligible patients make use of the private health services paying the fees out-of-pocket.

As regards equal access to social services, the Social Welfare Services (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance) are responsible for the design, implementation and monitoring of such services including long-term care. For the implementation of the relevant programmes, the Social Welfare Services operate a network of District and newly Local Offices under the direct administrative authority of the Central Office.

The State encourages the development of care services at the local level through subsidies and technical support within the framework of the policy for promoting involvement of the community and society at large in the provision of services.

b) initiatives to improve long-term care services for older persons, in particular community-based services that are needed to overcome the mismatch between the homebased services that are usually desired and the residential care services that are in fact supplied

Home-care was and will continue to be the main axis of ensuring access to long-term care services within the framework of the overall aim of retaining elderly persons and persons with severe disabilities in the family. Home-care provided by a family member to a person in need of care can be financed only in case that member has to leave employment to provide care.

The Ministry of Health in Cyprus has developed programmes in home health care in several areas of Cyprus and is planning to expand across Cyprus. All programmes are based on the philosophy of primary care team and are offered through the health centres or outpatient primary care, including home visits. The aim is to gradually expand the services to the whole population.

The Community Mental Health Nursing, is a network on a national wide basis, offering assistance to seniors and their caregivers, and health promotion programmes for community issues including the elderly. The contributions made through a comprehensive range of services with home visits, through the community mental health centres, counselling centres, primary health care centres, homes for the elderly, liaison/counselling, Polyvalent Community Centres for:

- support for elderly people
- training and support families/careers
- training of caregivers working in multi-dimensional centres and nursing homes for training in the care of elderly people (which is formed request), to cope in their role
- education community with the help of local authorities, the Community Volunteer Councils, NGOs, etc
- continuing education of Community Nurses

Through primary Health care Centres, visits in remote areas and services in home settings and the Community mental health Services, enable people to maintain their independency as much as possible to avoid institutionalisation.

The quality of long-term care services is ensured through the law that regulates the establishment and operation of community and private care homes and sets minimum

standards. A similar law applies to the Adult Day-Care Centres, operated by voluntary organisations.

c) actions to improve the coordination and integration of services provided to older persons (e.g. through case management systems)

Coordination between health care (Ministry of Health) and social care services (Social Welfare Services) is implemented on a case by case basis. It is recognized that more formal procedures of cooperation would safeguard continuity and quality of services for older persons in need. The implementation of the two Action Plans (see response on integration of "...ageing issues into sectoral policies" under Commitment 7.) is expected to enhance such cooperation between the two Ministries and other stakeholders involved with older persons issues.

d) initiatives concerning special needs in case of dementia and Alzheimer's disease

The community Mental Health Nurses implement programmes for the training of formal and informal carers of elderly people and patients with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. The programmes are targeted to lectures for purposes of enlightenment and transfer knowledge and techniques to meet specific needs and address problems concerning the elderly or informal carers. Within the context of prevention the Community Nurses apply the Mini Mental State Examination to identify memory problems, so that the therapeutic intervention, where appropriate, can be scheduled early enough.

In Cyprus two Day Centres are operated for patients with Alzheimer operated by the Ministry of Health.

In all urban primary health care centres Health Outpatient Clinics are operated for the purpose of psychiatric monitoring of these patients. Mental Health Services are planning to establish a special outpatient clinic for patients with Alzheimer disease.

Special seminars have been organised, addressed to all general practitioners in urban and rural centres, to raise awareness and education for early recognition of Alzheimer disease.

e) efforts to improve the training of care providers: professionals, volunteers and family members

The Social Welfare Services implement programmes of continuing education for all members of their staff, including home-carers, welfare officers and carers employed in long-term care institutions.

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC) operates a Centre for Training, Development and Research which carries out training and skills development activities for the staff and members of the management committees of voluntary organisations, including volunteers. Through the Centre, PVCC promotes lifelong learning, knowledge and new perceptions and practices in the volunteerism sector.

The Ministry of health has implemented programmes with special training in geriatrics in collaboration with foreign university and has given scholarships to six Community Mental Health Nurses for training courses abroad in the area for care of people with Alzheimer.

During the period 2009 – 2010 community nurses collaborated with Municipalities and delivered at community level a lot of education programmes for the health care of elderly and

patients with Alzheimer. These seminars cover issues as depression, care for patients with Alzheimer, etc.

- f) efforts to improve the skills of older persons in terms of self-care, health promotion, prevention of disease and disability.

The member States also committed to ensuring appropriate financing of health and social services for persons of all ages:

- a) steps taken to ensure efficient, equitable and sustainable financing of health and social services for persons of all ages.

Early diagnosis and prevention of disease, together with promotion of healthy life styles, are among the factors that influence positively financial sustainability (see answer below on measures promoting healthy lifestyles).

Participation of care recipients in the financing of long-term care according to their means, targeting of care allowances to persons with insufficient means and introduction of incentives for enhancing home-care services and mobilisation of voluntary resources, contribute to ameliorating the pressure on public finances.

In addition, member States pledged to enable people to make healthy choices:

- a) *measures undertaken to facilitate the adoption of healthy lifestyles (e.g. information campaigns).*

The Ministry of Health implements a number of important measures for the prevention of disease that take into account the disease profile of Cyprus. These measures include:

- The Breast Cancer Detection Programme which covers, free-of-charge, women aged 50-69 years. It is in operation in three districts and will gradually expand to all districts.
- The Network of Epidemiological Surveillance and Control of Infectious Diseases established, since 2004.
- Programmes for the prevention of oral diseases, especially for children.

Measures for health promotion include:

- Programmes of health education in schools
- Prevention of accidents for children.

An advisory Committee for the Prevention of Accidents and Poisoning was setup, in 2002. The Committee developed a Strategic Action Plan for the prevention of accidents in children. The Plan was approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2005 and is currently being implemented.

- Membership in the European Network of Health Promoting Schools since 1995
- A programme for stopping smoking, under which special clinics have been setup in all urban public hospitals to assist people trying to give up.

In addition, many voluntary welfare organisations carry out various campaigns for the prevention of disease and promotion of health (e.g. The Pancyprian Association of Cancer

Patients and Friends, the Pancyprian Diabetics Association, the Cyprus Anticancer Association, the Cyprus Family Planning Association etc).

RIS Commitment 8: To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society

The member States committed to mainstreaming a **gender** approach in an ageing society. In your report you *may* refer to:

- a) *measures taken to mainstream gender, to remove all obstacles for achieving gender equality, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and to promote individual development of women throughout their entire life cycle*

The Government implements the following measures to strengthen the mechanisms for equality and women's rights:

- the establishment of a Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, in 2004, to overview the implementation of the equality principle,
- the enhancement of the National Machinery for Women's Rights and
- the handling of claims related to gender equality issues by the Commissioner for Administration.

The Government has finalized an Action Plan for the Equality between Men and Women (Ministry of Justice and Public Order) with an aim to promote gender mainstreaming in all policies.

Social partners are also active in the area of equality through the implementation of measures such as the Cyprus Equality Observatory (DEOK), the Mechanism for Supervision of the Implementation of the Equality Legislation (PEO), the Department of Working Women (SEK) and the "Code of Practice for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace" by OEB.

The amendment of the Social Insurance legislation instituted important advantages for women with dependants and introduced insurance coverage for women working in the agricultural sector - now treated as self-employed.

The Public Assistance and Services Law of 2006 strengthened provisions supportive of women, such as:

- Exemption of a part of income from work for single parents (usually women), who are fully employed and receive public assistance, so that the monthly public allowance becomes higher.
- Provision of a monthly care allowance in cases where a family member (usually women) is obliged to stay home and care for someone, hence either losing the opportunity for a paid job or having to leave the labour market.
- Provision of home-, day- and residential care services for children, older persons or persons with disabilities by public, community or private bodies.

- b) *actions to give particular attention to collection and analysis of gender- and age disaggregated data*

The Statistical Service of Cyprus is in line with the methods and tools used by Eurostat in the collection and analysis of data by gender and age.

- c) *measures to promote the economic rights of women (such as legislation to ensure equal pay for equal work, to protect women's rights in the workplace, to reconcile family life with work life, etc.)*

The Equal Pay between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work to which Equal Value is Attributed Law of 2002 ensures that the principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work or work of equal value is applied without direct or indirect discrimination regarding remuneration or other benefits either in money or in kind. The right to submit a complaint to the Ombudsman is also granted to a person who believes that s/he has been offended by an infringement of the Law.

- d) *social protection policies reviewed to ensure full and equal participation of men and women in social protection systems*

See point b) under RIS Commitment 4.

See point a) under RIS Commitment 8.

- e) *measures to encourage and facilitate equal sharing of family and care responsibilities between women and men.*

Through the Grants-in-Aid Scheme, the Social Welfare Services encourage NGOs to develop a range of care services (for children, older persons, persons with disabilities), on a local level, in order to facilitate parents in reconciling work and family life.

The introduction of the Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law of 2002 regulates the rights of parents and employees – both men and women - to unpaid leave.

RIS Commitment 9: To support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity among their members

The RIS describes the family as the basic unit of society. The member States committed to ensuring support to families that provide care for older persons and to promoting solidarity among their members, to respond to the needs and changing roles of individual **family** members and strengthen **inter- and intra-generational solidarity**. In your report you *may* address:

- a) *adjustments made to family policies in view of changing demographic circumstances*

In recent years, the Social Welfare Services have strengthened their policies on the development of care services for children, older persons and other dependent family members.

Informal home-care provided by a family member to a person in need of care can be financed (including social insurance contribution) for public assistance recipients, in case that member has to leave employment to provide care.

- b) *policies and programmes adopted to respond to the needs of family members of different ages*

Family policies are based on the following premises:

- The family unit is the core of society.
- Family members need to be supported in order to respond to their increasingly complex roles.

- Local communities can respond more efficiently and effectively to families' needs.

Family support programmes usually refer to social care services as mentioned above (child care, home care/day care for families with children, older persons, persons with disabilities and residential care for older persons and persons with disabilities as a solution of last resort). Through the Grants-in-Aid Scheme, the Government provides technical and financial assistance to NGOs that operate social care programmes (see point a) above).

- c) *specific elements introduced in these policies and programmes to promote equality between men and women*

Informal care for family members is usually provided by women. As a result, family policies and social care programmes mostly facilitate women to respond to their family and work responsibilities.

- d) *awareness-raising measures on the contribution of older persons to family, community and society at large*

- e) *measures adopted to help families deal with the growing responsibilities of care for their older members*

See point a) under RIS Commitment 9.

- f) *mechanisms put in place to strengthen the role of communities, organizations and associations in providing support and care to older persons.*

See point b) under RIS Commitment 9.

The member States also committed to supporting families in coping with the social and economic consequences of demographic change:

- *support to care-giving families, family friendly policies and services*

See points a) and b) under RIS Commitment 9.

- *adaptation of the infrastructure of towns to the needs of families, and in particular the needs of young and older persons, to ensure that generations can live together; improvements in planning of services.*

See points a) and b) under RIS Commitment 9.

RIS Commitment 10: To promote the implementation and follow-up of the regional implementation strategy through regional cooperation

UNECE member States have the primary responsibility for the implementation and follow-up of the RIS. They are encouraged to do so, among other means, through regional cooperation, civil society involvement, and cooperation with the UNECE secretariat.

The analysis of your activities in this field *may* take into account the following:

a) *activities undertaken by your country to strengthen cooperation among UNECE member States in the field of ageing (e.g. participation in meetings of the UNECE and the ECV, exchange of information with member States and with the UNECE secretariat)*

b) *opportunities provided for civil society to cooperate in this process*

c) *assistance requested/received from the UNECE secretariat and/or other entities of the United Nations system in the implementation of RIS (if so, consider providing a brief evaluation)*

d) *possible needs for assistance.*

4. Conclusions and Priorities for the Future

This section (about 1,000 words or two A4 pages, single-spaced) is expected to:

- *briefly summarize the extent to which your country has addressed the challenges and opportunities of population ageing since the León Conference in 2007*
- *indicate, based on the assessment provided and in view of expected future demographic developments, what will be your country's future policy challenges and perspectives related to ageing*
- *indicate major strengths and weaknesses of your country in the field of ageing*
- *outline future activities in the areas of population and individual ageing and other related areas*
- *propose adjustments to existing policies*
- *identify priorities for further policy research*
- *indicate capacity development needs*
- *describe the level of need or wish to exchange experiences across countries*
- *indicate your country's requests, needs and wishes with regard to the work of international organizations in the field of ageing.*

The ageing of population, is an issue of concern for the Republic of Cyprus. Hence, ageing has been mainstreamed in policies such as economic, social protection, labour market and health, in recent years.

Challenges and opportunities of ageing, as identified in MIPAA/RIS, are largely integrated in national policies.

Major strengths of Cyprus in the field of ageing are:

- overall positive economic performance
- strong intergenerational solidarity, despite increasing loosening of family and social networks
- a social protection system which guarantees a minimum standard of living for all citizens.

Major weaknesses of Cyprus in the field of ageing are:

- long-term sustainability of public finances
- higher risk of poverty for the population aged 65 years or more (51%) compared to the general population (16%)

Cyprus faces a high risk with regard to the long-term sustainability of public finances in view of the budgetary impact of ageing populations. Implementing the planned consolidation of public finances over the medium term will reduce the risks to long-term sustainability while other parametric reforms (i.e. changes to the social security system and fundamental reforms of the health care system) will be necessary to contain the projected high increase in age-related expenditure in the period up to 2050.

In the area of social protection – a high national priority - government policy gears social spending further towards those who are in greater need such as low income earners, pensioners and people living in rural areas.

Future policy needs to address the formal coordination of healthcare and social care services with a view to improving the quality of life in old age.

On an international level, exchange of knowledge, information and good practices, would give a further impetus for discussion, future policy directions and action on ageing issues.