

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
2007 UNECE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING
León, Spain, 6–8 November 2007

The Republic of Serbia Delegation

Statement for the Panel:

„Creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing“

The population of Serbia belongs to the oldest populations in Europe. According to 2002 Serbian Census, excluding Kosovo and Metohija region, over 1.200.000 citizens are over 65 and older. It is almost 18 per cent of the overall population. The ageing process will keep on with particularly intensive ageing of already old population. Every second older individual lives in elderly two-member or one-member household.¹

The social and economic situation resulted from the long-term crisis and isolation of the country, was characterised by rapid decline of the social and legal security and rise of the poverty amongst citizens.² Even the majority of older people are pensioners; the poverty is more prevalent amongst elderly, with the worse costs and housing conditions. There are obvious gaps in the institutional and instrumental level of the fulfilment of the basic needs of the elderly.

In Serbian society the transition of the economy and democratisation of the political system is carried on by means of reforms oriented to European Union integration and enhanced compliance with fundamental human rights. With the GDP growth for 18 per cent by 2006 in comparison to 2002, allowed for the stability of elementary social security of citizens.³

Prior activities were going through the provision of enhanced social and financial security and more sustainable, more complete, and more adjust functioning of the pension and disability insurance system, labour market, elderly social and health care.

¹ National Ageing Strategy, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy of Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2006

² Poverty Reduction Strategy, Government of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2003

³ Republic Statistic Office, web site <http://webzrzs.statserb.sr.gov.yu/axd/index.php>, 2007

In creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing, the following results have been achieved:

I. In order to achieve the mutual goal – society for all ages, Government of Serbia adopted on September 7, 2006, **National Strategy on Ageing**, for the period 2006 – 2015. Adoption of document shows us that mainstreaming ageing has been progressing after the International Plan of Action and European Implementation Strategy, in 2002.

The Strategy directly builds upon the Regional Implementation Strategy - 10 strategic directions, in line with 10 Regional Obligations. It taps also, into several adopted strategies in various fields, such as European Union Accession, Poverty Reduction, Employment, Social Welfare, Health, and others. This is the political response to accepted Obligations and challenges of ageing in Serbia. It is response to the authentic needs of the population and activities conducted to effective adjustment of economic and social impact of ageing in the country. Government Council for Ageing and Old Age is the main national responsible body for the ongoing implementation, along with the public social, education, health sector and civil society.

II. Mainstreaming ageing on the instrumental level we mention here, only through the most significant **strategic documents**, as well as the laws adopted by the Government and Parliament in five years period. It is:

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002,
Health Care Reform Policy Paper, 2004,
National Employment Strategy, 2005,
European Union Accession Strategy of Serbia and Montenegro, 2005,
Social Welfare Development Strategy, 2005,
Family Code, 2005,
Disability Discrimination Strategy, 2006,
Law on Voluntary Pension Insurance, Amendments to Employment Law and to Law on Social Protection, 2006, Disability Discrimination Law, 2006.

As result, the pension system reform shows already that significant step forward concerning regular disbursement of benefits has been made. In 2004, pensioners received all 12 benefits per month. The voluntary pension insurance has been introduced and the consolidation of all three-pension funds will be finished until next year. Since the average level of pensions are still low introduction of the “minimum level of social security” in 2004 enhanced access to social allowances for the most vulnerable groups elderly included. Different Social contributions for the nearly 5 per cent of elderly citizens are in place.

III. Mainstreaming ageing on the **local level** we leaded through Social Welfare and Health reforms. One of the main directions of these reforms is gradual decentralization process in developing an integrated approach to prevent elderly health and social independence. With significant international support and by developing civil society through the state Social Innovation Fund, we preserved over 30 per cent more services for fragile elderly on the local community base.

IV. The issues of ageing have been mainstreamed on the **Government reform activities**, as medium-term goals for the period of two to three years. These issues have been built into the new enhanced system of Annual Operational Planning of the Ministries. At the level of six responsible ministries and state agencies for integrated planning, budgeting and transparent reporting of the poverty reduce with social economic and health reforms the first Budget plan has been made.

Conclusion

Serbian Government is still faced with the various present challenges in enchasing elderly social inclusion, security, reducing poverty and developing non-discrimination approach to Ageing and Old Age. We are aware that only the first step has been made. However, with real optimism we look upon the next period of implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

We plan our actions in mainstreaming ageing, to keep up and develop even more dynamic and supportive cooperation between our countries, UN system and international and non-governmental organisations to achieve the set strategic goals in further development of the society for all generations.

Serbian Delegation member
National Focal Point on Ageing

Lidija Kozarcanin, PhD
