

**UNECE CONFERENCE ON AGEING
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**STATEMENT
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*Ministerial panel: Promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability.
Promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older
persons*

**DEAR MR. COMMISSIONER,
DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN MINISTERS,
DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN PARTICIPANTS
IN THE CONFERENCE,**

The demographic changes, globalisation and the advancements of information technologies underlie the formation of a new social reality in Europe and other regions of the world. We are witnessing a process of an increase of the proportion of the older population and reduction in the number of children and young people.

The population ageing has a direct impact on the operation and financial stability of the key social systems such as labour market, pensions, education, health and social care.

Demographically, population ageing is an ongoing and irreversible social process affecting the whole of Europe, including Bulgaria. According to the latest Eurostat estimate, the proportion of the Bulgarian population aged over 65 is to grow from 17.4 per cent in 2010 to 32.7 per cent in 2060. The average age of the population has been on a rising trend over the recent years. It stood at 42.7 in 2011, compared to 40.4 in 2001 and 38.9 in 1995.

To address demographic issues and the ageing challenge Bulgaria has developed a long-term political strategy for balanced demographic development and improvement of the quality of human capital.

In 2012, Bulgarian government adopted two important strategic documents with a horizon to 2030 outlining guidelines for developing horizontal policies on demographic issues and adjusting sector policies to demographic changes. They are the Updated National Demographic Strategy of the Republic

of Bulgaria (2012-2030) and the National Concept for Promotion of Active Ageing (2012-2030).

The Bulgarian government has identified specific areas for action in the coming decades aimed at promoting and prolonging active working life in good health, life-long learning, vocational training at the workplace, enhancing employability and labour market mobility of older people; introducing flexible employment systems for retired individuals without creating disproportions in the labour market or conflicts between generations; overcoming negative attitudes to hiring aged individuals and durably using their work experience and skills; encouraging social entrepreneurship, “silver economy” and sectors of the economy with potential for job creation appropriate to the abilities of the ageing workforce; reforming and stabilising the pension system; diversifying and enhancing the quality of health services and long-term care; promoting volunteering and inter-generational solidarity; ensuring equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The unemployed individuals aged over 50 are among the main target groups of the **active labour market policy** of the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

A number of schemes targeting older working individuals in the 55-to-64 age group are implemented within the **Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2007-2013** which is the main instrument for implementation of projects co-financed from the European Social Fund and the national budget. Related data shows that one out of ten persons (namely 10 per cent) included in labour market initiatives between 2007 and 2010 was in the 55-to-64 age group.

The measures under Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2007-2013 allow the involvement of employed persons aged 55 or more in train the trainer seminars and their subsequent inclusion as mentors of new employees disadvantaged in the labour market. Other options include part-time work or flexible working hours for older employees, whereupon they will be provided incentives in the form of additional wages.

Furthermore, training voucher schemes, tailored to the needs of individuals aged over 50, offer participation in digital competence and foreign language trainings aimed at enhancing employability and prolonging active working life.

Bulgarian Long-term Care and Social Services System is significantly broadened over the recent years resulting from actions aiming at deinstitutionalisation and expanding the scope of community and home based services. The range of services is extended to include day centres, social

rehabilitation and integration centres, protected homes, supervised homes and family-type centres, among others. The home based model of services delivery, including the provision of personal assistants, social assistants, caregivers, in-home respite care, is under way and improving.

Soup kitchens providing daily meal to low-income elderly people for free or against a small charge is a particularly popular form of social service in the country.

The Bulgarian government has implemented significant reforms to **stabilise and adjust the pension system** to demographic challenges of ageing. 2011 saw the beginning of a gradual increase in retirement age and period of insurance. By 2020 the retirement age will reach 63, with 37 years of insured service, for women, and 65, with 40 years of insured service, for men. The Aim is to decrease early retirement and stimulate the population to stay longer on the labour market. Pension reform is expected to yield positive results in terms of sustainability of public finances.

Bulgaria is actively pursuing **innovative approaches** to create conditions for independent and active living of elderly people. An example of this is the elaboration of the pilot project “Green Garden” as well as the **Public-Private Partnership Manual for Provision of Services to the Elderly** designed to increase capacity and facilitate the cooperation between businesses and local national authorities.

The Republic of Bulgaria continues to implement the **National Work Programme** planned under the **European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012)**.

In conclusion, public institutions and civil society in Bulgaria are preparing to accept the population ageing as an inevitable process in the decades to come and actively participate in addressing the demographic challenges in order to transform them into opportunities so that will benefit the whole society.

Thank you for your attention!