

## Ageing in Moldova: The Road Ahead UNECE advises Republic of Moldova on policy-development in response to ageing

The UNECE Population Unit is preparing a Road Map on Mainstreaming Ageing for the Republic of Moldova. Based on an in-depth appraisal of the situation in the country, recommendations will be prepared on how to implement internationally agreed policy standards, as set out in the Madrid Plan on Ageing. During a recent fact-finding mission, Andres Vikat and Viviane Brunne of the UNECE Population Unit interviewed stakeholders from government, private sector, civil society, trade unions and academia. They were received by Deputy Prime Minister Ion Negrei and Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family Valentina Buliga, as well as Deputy Ministers from the same Ministry, to discuss how the recommendations that will be developed as part of the Road Map can be integrated into the National Strategy on Population Security that is currently being prepared on the national level.



Ageing in Moldova is progressing fast, due to a combination of factors: While people live longer, the fertility rate is 1.3 children per woman in 2008, which falls far short of the level of 2.1 needed to maintain the replacement of generations. Population decline is further enhanced by high levels of out-migration. Several hundred thousand working age population have been estimated to have left the country to work abroad. They are not contributing to the Moldovan social protection system. High unemployment rates and informal work further increase the burden on the pension system. Currently only two persons contribute per each pensioner, which is not sustainable.

The challenges caused by these dynamics are many: pensioners do not make ends meet unless they receive financial support from their children. Capacities of nursing homes, day care centres and home-based care do not meet actual needs. Reforms of the social protection system have to ensure that benefits paid out cover basic subsistence while ensuring long term sustainability of the system. Companies may be struggling to find and keep qualified workers and vocational training should be offered systematically so that the workforce remains attractive for the labour market even when getting older. The transport system has to accommodate the needs of older persons and better provisions need to be made that pensioners can meet amongst themselves and lead active and fulfilled lives. To address all these areas, comprehensive and integrated strategies need to be developed. Here, the UNECE Road Map on Mainstreaming Ageing will point directions. The information and data collected during the mission will have to be analyzed to decide about activities to be pursued in the coming years. Capacities have to be further developed sensitising staff in health care, social service provision or other relevant areas to handle issues related to older persons professionally. Physical capacities in geriatric clinics, day care centres and home-based care have to be increased to meet actual needs. Eligibility criteria for services need to be made more transparent and better information has to be provided as to what kinds of services are available to whom. Volunteer services could be built as a basis for self-support networks between older persons. Most importantly, a broad public discourse needs to be generated so that all stakeholders and the wider public can develop ownership for the reforms ahead. The earlier necessary reforms are initiated, the less painful the process will be as ageing dynamics unfold in future. Clearly, even if fertility rates or outward migration should improve, ageing is here to stay in the decades to come. Older persons represent a huge potential in terms of experience and wisdom. An old Moldovan proverb says, if you do not have an older person in the family you have to purchase one. Currently, many older people may rather feel like a burden to their families and society as a whole. With the Road Map being implemented, this old saying will hopefully become true again, eventually.