

Report on the Continuation of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Implementation (RSI) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in the Republic of Macedonia

The Report on the follow-up of the Regional Strategy for Implementation (RSI) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in the Republic of Macedonia was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with the PI Institute for Social Activities – Skopje, NGO and civic associations that work for the improvement of the wellbeing of the elderly persons: The Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia and the Union of the Associations of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia. These organizations provide support for the elderly persons in the country via various programmes and projects for meeting their economic, health, educational and social needs.

Preparation of a Social Protection Programme is envisaged within the Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy within the period 2011-2013.

General Information

Name of the country: Republic of Macedonia

Name and information on the author/s of the report:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the holder of the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia and in accordance with its competences it performs activities related to the labour relations, recruitment and employment, pension and disability insurance, protection of workers at work; providing financial support to the temporarily unemployed persons; salaries and standard of living, social policy, human population policy for harmonized economic and social development, legal relations in marriage, family and common-law marriage, relationships between parents and children, guardianship and adoption; improving the gender equality, protection of children and minors; protection of youth and women, protection of persons with disabilities, protection of the civilian invalids of war, protection of veterans of the Anti-Fascist War and all wars of national liberation of Macedonia, war invalids, the prosecuted and imprisoned for the ideas of independence of the Macedonian people and its statehood and members of their families without possibilities for financial and social existence; supervision of its competence and performs other duties specified by law.

PI Institute for Social Activities – Skopje is a governmental institution that performs supervision of the professional work in the social protection institutions, monitoring of the occurrences in the social protection system, licensing the professional workers that work in social protection institutions and improvement of the professional work with the beneficiaries of the social protection system.

The Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia is a non-governmental organization that performs works for the improvement of the living of the vulnerable categories of people and promoting the human values and the humanitarian law. The work of the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia is based on the universal principles, it has the power to improve the world in which we live in via promoting peace and tolerance, efficient prevention, timely response and adequate support for the vulnerable people. The ageing related activities that are implemented in the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia are part of the activities intended for improvement of the social inclusion and promoting the culture of non-violence and peace. For the purpose of achievement of its targets, it actively mobilises participants on a national and local level in indentifying adequate solutions. In addition, it continuously makes engagements and efforts in protecting the dignity and decrease of the risk of exposing of the vulnerable target groups of people via participatory approach in indentifying and meeting the priority needs of elderly persons.

The Union of the Associations of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia is a union of 53 associations, voluntarily participating in the Union for the purpose of protection and improvement of the common goals and interests of the pension beneficiaries in the Republic of Macedonia, for more comprehensive promotion for exercising the rights of the pension and disability insurance, for high quality health protection, promoting the cultural, sports and humanitarian needs of the pensioners. In order to achieve these common rights of the associations –members of the Union, the Union of the Associations of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia cooperates

with other associations and their unions, with NGOs and foundations and with pensioners' associations from other countries. The Union of the Associations of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia acts as an independent, non-governmental and non-political organization which constantly develops, also influencing the development of the country. The Unions publishes its own newspaper "Penzioner plus" and has its own webpage www.szpm.org.mk.

The Association for improvement of the conditions for care and accommodation of old and feeble persons Humanost – Skopje was founded in 1998 and works on the improvement of the conditions for care of old and feeble persons. The basic purpose of the association is opening of services - centres for assistance and care at home for the elderly persons and palliative care of persons in the terminal phase of their lives and assistance to their families. The Association achieves its targets via: determining the number of elderly persons within certain municipalities and assessment of the needs of services for home care and assistance to elderly persons, constantly monitoring the status of the conditions for care for the old and feeble persons by conducting surveys and collecting data on the citizens and adequate institutions engaged in the work on this problem; preparing analyzes on the specific way of improving the conditions for care for the old and feeble people, based on which a plan is prepared which envisages specific forms of improvement of the conditions for care for the old and feeble persons, fully and objectively informing the public about the status of the conditions for care of old and feeble persons; taking appropriate activities before the bodies responsible for normative regulation of the issue of creating conditions for care for old and feeble people by means of giving adequate proposals for change of the existing regulation or adoption of a new one.

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Name, reference and date of the acceptance or the status of the preparation of the national strategy, action plan or similar documents for the ageing policy.

- National Strategy for Elderly Persons 2010-2020 (13.07.2010)
- Operating Plan for 2011 and 2012 and Draft Proposal for Establishing a National Coordinative Body for the National Strategy for Elderly persons 2010-2020 (in process of adoption)
- Programme on Development of the Social Protection 2011-2021 (adopted in 2010)
- Programme on the Implementation of the Social Protection 2011

1. Situations, activities and priorities related to ageing at a national level

2. Methodology

3. Review and assessment of the activities for the fulfilment of the obligations of UNECE MIPAA/RSI

General Framework

The world trend of demographic ageing which is manifested with lower or higher degree in all countries in the world, encompassed the Republic of Macedonia as well.

The population of the Republic of Macedonia, for less than sixty years has skipped three stages of demographic ageing and today it is in phase of demographic age. Although in the 40's of the past century, the percentage of the young population, especially after the World War II, was very high, it started its gradual decline. Between 1948-1997, the participation of young population aged 0-14 decreased by 38.4%, and the participation of the elderly population aged 60 and older, increased by 58.6%.

If the average age of the population in one country is above 36 years, and in Macedonia it is 36.2 years for 2006, then that country is in phase of demographic age (SSO). According to the forecasts of the United Nations for 2050, it is considered that the average age of the population of the Republic of Macedonia will increase to 49.4 years, which means that half of the population will be below and the other half will be above this age.

According to the analyzes and assessments of the United Nations for the Republic of Macedonia, the participation of elderly population of 8.5% in 1994, increased to 11.2% in 2006. In 2010 to 14%, in 2020 to 17.9%, and in 2030 to 22.5%.

In this analysis, presented in the Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2008-2015, the elderly population aged over 65 is taken.

The analysis of the population in the Republic of Macedonia, according to the ageing coefficient, i.e. the participation of elderly population in the total population, gives the same picture. According to official data from the Census in 2002 (SSO), the elderly population aged over 65, participates in the other population with 11%. That means that from a total of 2,022,547 persons in 2002, 213,712 were elderly persons aged over 65. If the elderly persons aged over 60 are also taken from this census then the percentage of elderly population is 15%. This information once again confirms the fact that the Republic of Macedonia is in the phase of demographic age.

Although it is considered that the country is in phase of demographic age, yet the elderly population is not equally distributed in the whole country. It is concentrated in certain parts. Viewed by regions, every region has demographic age, but with a different percentage of elderly population. The highest percentage of elderly population is in the Pelagonia region and it is 20.8%. Then follow the Vardar, East and Southeast region with 18.1% elderly population. The lowest percentage of elderly population is in the Polog region and it is 12.2%. The percentage of elderly persons in the Polog region exceeds the critical limit of demographic age of population, which confirms that all regions in the Republic of Macedonia, are in deep demographic age.

The analysis of the ageing coefficient in every municipality separately provides a more realistic picture of the concentration of the elderly population. From a total of 92 municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia, 36 have exceeded the critical of the ageing coefficient of 12%, and in some municipalities it reaches up to 28%. The elderly population aged over 65 is encompassed in this calculation of the ageing coefficient per municipalities.

According to the same data, the City of Skopje, as a municipality, has 10% of elderly population which means that it has not yet reached the critical coefficient of demographic age. This status is a result of the frequent concentration of young population from other cities. However, if the City of Skopje is analyzed per municipalities that form it, the picture is not the same. In that case, an irregular distribution is obtained of elderly and young population per municipalities. The young population is concentrated in some municipalities and the elderly population is concentrated in other municipalities. The municipalities with the biggest concentration of elderly population are: the Municipality of Karpos with 15% elderly population, the Municipality of Kisela Voda with 13% and the Municipality of Centar with 17% elderly population.

With this, the number of municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia that have elderly population is increased to 39. Part of them have a very high concentration of elderly population, even twice higher than the coefficient which is considered a critical point for the demographic age.

Migration, leaving the place of living by the younger and capable of work population, is the most common reason for the high coefficient of elderly population in some areas. The migrations from the hilly and mountainous and rural areas lead to diminishing of the working potential of the population. This causes other consequences that threaten the means of subsistence of the elderly persons in these areas.

Aging is becoming a serious problem for the future demographic, economic, social and technological development of the Republic of Macedonia and therefore in

the following period, the Republic of Macedonia needs a complex, consistent and differentiated population policy, which should synchronize the demographic, economic and technological trends.

b) Instrumental assessment

The Republic of Macedonia continues the process of decentralization and deinstitutionalization. Via opening forms of protection of elderly persons, as capacities of the municipality and regional homes for the elderly persons, as capacities that will also stimulate the inter-municipal cooperation, and at the same time they will contribute in the processes of decentralization and deinstitutionalization.

As of 2009, the membership started in the voluntary fully funded pension insurance or the so called third pillar and in which framework, professional pension schemes were established.

In 2011, the Government adopted the Law on Payment of Pensions and Pension Benefits from the Fully Funded Pension Insurance. Basic purpose of the Law on Payment of Pensions and Pension Benefits from the Voluntary Fully Funded Pension Insurance is rounding up of the pension reform regarding the payment of pensions from the second pillar and the pension benefits from the third pillar. In addition, this draft law takes into consideration the features of the second pillar from the aspect of its connection with the first pillar, especially due to the fact that the process of exercising the right to old age pension is to be treated in an integrated manner, as a right arising from the mandatory pension insurance.

c) National capacities for follow-up of MIPAA/RIS

The Republic of Macedonia has a modified, but not optimal national capacity for monitoring of its commitments arising from MIPAA.RIS. The main body authorized for monitoring of the commitments arising from MIPAA/RIS is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Ministry has a Social Protection Department that is authorized for the implementation of the policies and programmes with which the needs and requests of the elderly population will be met, as well as the monitoring process. The Ministry closely cooperates with the relevant ministries and state agencies, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, PI Institute for Social Activities – Skopje and several NGOs.

The social protection in the Republic of Macedonia is regulated by the Law on Social Protection and other relevant laws regulating the social insurance and social welfare for the elderly persons. The social protection of the elderly persons is provided via the social, pension and health system.

The PI Institute for Social Activities – Skopje, in accordance with its competence, collects data on the elderly persons who are accommodated in social protection institutions or who use services of the daily centre via the centres for social work in the Republic of Macedonia. It collects data and conducts analyses for the beneficiaries accommodated in the institutions for elderly persons and their needs. Concurrently, when opening forms of protection of elderly persons, it conducts surveys of the needs of the elderly persons, in order to define the form of protection they need. Such surveys were conducted in Bogomila and Samokov in 2009 and at the moment, in accordance with the new needs, other surveys are also planned. In 2008, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the PI Institute for Social Activities prepared a Report on the Status of the Institutional and extra-institutional

protection in the Republic of Macedonia, with a special focus on the homes for the elderly persons.

PI Institute for Social Activities, via the supervision and professional assistance that it provides to the professionals employed in the social protection institutions, conducts a continuous education of these professionals in order to improve their work with the elderly persons, introduction of new methods, techniques and contents for work with the elderly persons.

The mandatory health insurance system covers all categories of elderly persons. For the citizens aged more than 65 and who do not have health insurance, funds are provided from the national budget via the social welfare system.

The ageing process itself carries reduction of many functions with the elderly persons. These changes with different elderly persons are manifested with different intensity and quality. Health and health status are especially important with the elderly persons, above all due to the fact that with the reduction of the functions, they become a risk group that is most sensitive to all changes in the surrounding.

The trend of ageing of the population in the Republic of Macedonia is significant and occurs primarily as a result of the decrease of the fertility and extension of the life expectancy (decreased death rate). As in the previous years, in 2008, in accordance with the MKB-10, the diseases of the circulatory system (I00-I99) are the main reason for mortality in the country, with almost 57.3% of the total death cases in 2008. The standardized death rate (SDR) of 100,000 persons for the diseases of the circulatory system is increased from 527/100,000 in 1991 to 599/100,000 in 2008.

The total mortality due to malignant neoplasms (C00-D48) is the second most important reasons for the death rate (18.5% of all in 2008) and it is also increased in the past twenty years, from SDR 140/100,000 in 1991 to 165/100,000 in 2008. The other death cases due to endocrine, metabolic and nutritional diseases (E00-E90) participate with 4.2%, after which follow the injuries and poisoning, as a fifth reason for death.

On the other hand, the maintenance of health and vitality carries increased costs that tend to grow along with the ageing. This especially influences the decrease of the standard of living. The deteriorating health condition with elderly persons leads to almost total exclusion of the elderly persons from the society.

In the sphere of social protection, the Republic of Macedonia is going through a long process of reforms for providing and financing the health services. As a result, the health care of elderly persons was on a low level for a long time, as a result of the lack of material and financial means.

The primary health protection is conducted via the Department of General Practice where the most common beneficiaries are elderly persons aged over 60. However, the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy show that this department is not sufficiently developed in the rural zones and the availability of the health protection and health services for elderly persons in the rural zone is smaller than in the urban zone.

In order to surpass these deficiencies in the health protection and to improve the coverage of the population, with adequate health protection with the budget of the Republic of Macedonia for 2010, sufficient financial assets were allocated for covering the health services and health insurance for the entire population of the Republic of Macedonia, including the elderly persons from the rural and urban areas.

In order to improve the health care of the population of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Health adopted strategic documents that improve the

health care of the elderly persons as well, aiming at improvement of the conditions for maintaining their good health condition.

In accordance with the draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health 2009-2011, several significant actions, aimed at the improvement of the status of the elderly population, were covered.

In accordance with the Programme for increase of the transparency, efficiency and sustainability of health status in the draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health 2009-2011, goals were envisaged that are directed towards:

- Improvement of the quality of services provided in health institutions and rational spending, satisfied beneficiaries of health services, higher level of information of the population, quality and timely health services,
- Establishing institutional infrastructure with clearly defined competences of the municipalities, indicates improved health and health care of the elderly persons within the local self-government,
- Basic package of health services within the health insurance and targeted preventive measures that cover and include the uninsured citizens,
- Introduction of full health insurance of the population in the Republic of Macedonia and for that category of population for which until now there was no legal basis for mandatory health insurance.
- Improvement of the quality of life of the elderly persons,
- Providing access and services for healthy and dignified ageing.

In accordance with the Programme for curative health protection in the draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health 2009-2011, the following is envisaged:

- Programme for health protection of persons with mental disorders which means provided health and social services for patients who are on a long-term treatment in psychiatric hospitals, improving the mental health of elderly persons and the total population, re-socialization and re-integration in the community.
- Programme for covering the costs for patients who are treated with dialysis, providing medications for transplant patients, insulin, extending the life expectancy, i.e. survival of patients treated with dialysis, improving the quality of life, increased working ability of patients treated with dialysis, diabetes and haemophilia, which diseases are most prominent with the elderly persons.

Institutional and extra-institutional forms of care for the elderly persons

The Republic of Macedonia has made great efforts in the past period to expand the national institutional and extra-institutional forms of care for elderly persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy invited all homes for elderly persons, who previously worked as trade companies to obtain licenses for institutions for social protection of elderly persons, because it is the only legal basis for their existence. Therefore, in addition to the four homes for an institutional accommodation of elderly persons, the national capacities are currently increased by another 9 private institutions for social protection of elderly persons and more than 7 homes are in a procedure for licensing. This step of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy increased the national capacities of the state for accommodation of the elderly persons, and concurrently the guaranteeing started of minimum standards in the institutional capacity for accommodation of the elderly persons. The newly licenced private institutions for social protection have smaller capacities than the existing mass institutions, which provides a higher degree of humanization of the living conditions of elderly persons.

In addition, the National Strategy also envisages construction of new regional homes for the elderly persons, by means of which the national capacities will get closer to the European standards for institutional care for elderly persons. The already existing 4 state homes, via their own initiatives, as well as with assistance and support from the competent institutions, improve the conditions for accommodation in their institutions, through reconstruction of the facilities, purchasing new equipment for work, etc. in accordance with the Rulebook on the norms and standards for establishment and commencement of operations of institutions for social protection for elderly persons "(Official Gazette of RM No. 10/2005). The Institute for Social Activities, as a public institution aims to raise the capacities of the professionals in the institutions for social protection of elderly persons, in order to promote the professional work with the beneficiaries, via supervision and training to use new techniques and methods in the work with elderly persons.

In the Republic of Macedonia, at the moment there are 28 retirement homes, intended to meet the needs for accommodation of the pensioners and about 20 pensioners' clubs, but their content and available services cannot fully meet the needs of the elderly population.

During the past years, in the Republic of Macedonia, intensive activities have been undertaken for the development of extra-institutional forms of care and help for elderly persons within the legally prescribed forms: services for daily and temporary shelter of elderly persons, home care, providing financial aid and aid in kind which is implemented via the centres for social work. In addition to the day care center for elderly persons in Caska, which is an organizational unit of the Center for Social Work Veles, in the last three years the Ministry and the Institute worked on the opening of another 3 new day care centers that are also in organizational units of the competent centers for social work. In addition, the Ministry provides an open support to all NGOs and municipalities that are prepared to develop this domain of extra-institutional protection of elderly persons. Based on this support to the Ministry, the Institute helped the municipalities and NGOs that independently wanted to start the development of the extra-institutional forms of protection of elderly persons. Although this is piloting of the municipalities and NGOs, they represent an important starting point for developing of stable extra-institutional capacities for protection of elderly persons on a local level. In that manner, attempts are made to increase the availability of the resources and services for the elderly persons in their natural environment, i.e. where they live.

The Rulebook on the norms and standards for establishment of day care centre for the elderly persons and providing assistance at home is in a procedure before the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, whereby the interested entities will be offered the minimum standards that they need to meet in order to develop these services and the future beneficiaries will be guaranteed a certain minimum of service quality. .

The Rulebook on record keeping and documentation in the institutions for social protection is in a procedure of adoption, whereby, the unification of the procedures of document management will provide higher quality services for the beneficiaries.

4. Review and appraisal of the relevant area

RIS Commitment 1: *Integration of ageing in all spheres of the policy in order to harmonize the society and the economy with the demographic changes - creating of a society for all generations*

a) In which areas is ageing integrated and represents an integral part?.

In the Republic of Macedonia ageing is integrated in the field of the social and health protection, as well as lifelong education of the elderly population, and the answers below provide explanation to which extent that is done in the various areas.

b) To what extent do the different policies related to ageing pursue the holistic approach and are coordinated and applied?

The National Strategy for Elderly Persons 2010-2020 was prepared, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on 13.07.2010 and it represents a plan of many activities.

In order to successfully implement the Strategy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the line ministries prepared their operational plans for implementation of the measures envisaged in the text of the Strategy within their competence.

For its monitoring and evaluation, in accordance with the Strategy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with all line ministries prepared a draft Resolution on Establishing a National Coordinative Body for the National Strategy for the Elderly Persons 2010-2020.

c) What initiatives were taken by your country in order to tackle age discrimination (discrimination based on age)?

The Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 50 13.4.2010) was adopted, which entered into force on 01.01.2011, whose Article 3 forbids every direct or indirect discrimination, inviting to and encouraging discrimination and assisting discriminatory action based on: sex, race, colour of the skin, gender, membership of a marginalized group, ethnicity, language, nationality, social background, religion or religious belief, education, political affiliation, personal or social status, mental and physical disability, age, family or marital status, property status, medical condition or any other basis envisaged by law or a ratified international agreement. The protection and the ban on discrimination apply to all natural persons and legal entities.

d) To what extent do the elderly persons participate in the development of policies and strategies and in their implementation?

The elderly persons actively participate in the development of policies and strategies and in their implementation via the NGO sector, but the elderly persons also have the opportunity to directly participate in the adoption of legal and other decisions by participating in public discussions, debates on ageing, direct submitting of initiatives and proposals to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy or other state institutions.

e) To what extent are the NGOs and the private sector involved the policy development and what is their role in the implementation of the policies and the programmes?

They cooperate closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other competent state institutions, by making initiatives, proposing solutions and other types of cooperation.

The NGO sector and the organizations of elderly persons, based on projects, funded by foreign foundations, contributes to the efforts for improvement of the quality of life of the elder persons in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Associations of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia are very active. In order to strengthen the intergenerational and the international cooperation, the associations of pensioners in the Republic of Macedonia conduct activities through development of cooperation with schools and NGOs in that area. In the scope of the organization of cultural and entertainment life, the pensioners organize folklore shows within the associations of pensioners, they form musical sections (vocal, instrumental and dance sections), literature sections, cultural and artistic shows. They realize their sports activities through organizing amateur sports competitions on three levels (municipal, regional, state) as well as organizing day trips, etc. For the purpose of improving the health and health care of the pensioners, they organize lectures on the preservation of health, conduct periodic medical check-ups (blood sugar and blood pressure). For the purpose of informing the pensioners, they provide free of charge newspaper “Pensioner Plus”, free of charge use of the Website and use of information bulletins.

Within its activities, **the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia** carries out traditional activities of care for the elderly persons as follows: From 15 to 21 November each year, the Week dedicated to the care of the elderly persons is celebrated, in order to raise the awareness of the population for the necessary care of the elderly persons and to provide appropriate assistance and support to the elderly persons and feeble persons. The following activities are organized within the week:

- lectures in elementary and secondary schools and distribution of educational material
- visits to homes for elderly persons and retirement homes by organizing adequate activities by young volunteers of the Red Cross (cultural and entertainment and recreational activities, socializing, conversations, giving appropriate gifts, etc..)
- Free of charge checks ups, measuring of blood pressure and blood sugar of the elderly persons
- Workshops in the area of health care for the elderly persons
- Aid in form of food, clothing, bedclothes, hygiene products, etc..
- Stands with promotional-educational materials and placement of boxes for voluntary contribution by engaging the youth of the Red Cross.

The traditional activities organized on the occasion of the Week dedicated to the care of the elderly persons are nurtured and developed continuously throughout the year. Positive effects are achieved from the implemented activities to help the elderly persons in local areas, which illustrate the achieved results from the field. The active involvement of the volunteers of the Red Cross is of a particular importance in the implementation of these activities, which besides meeting the needs of the elderly persons, they are also aimed at raising awareness of young people for the needed help and care of the elderly and feeble persons.

In the past five years, a total of 13,790 persons were encompassed by the abovesaid activities on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia or averagely 2,758 people per year.

Week of Solidarity and World Hunger Day

Food, clothing, hygiene products, etc., are provided within these two traditional activities. Aid is provided here for the elderly persons as well.

As of June 2011, the Macedonian Red Cross started implementing the project **Care for the Elderly at their Homes**. The objective of the project is to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the vulnerable elderly persons and to the strengthening of the health and social system of the elderly persons in the Republic of Macedonia. The project is implemented in three cities, as follows: Skopje, Kriva Palanka and Veles. In each city, 60 elderly persons aged more than 65 years are included who live alone and are feeble. The selection of these elderly persons was made after the conducted research in the framework of which institutions and individuals who work with this target group were contacted. In other words, a total of 180 elderly persons are covered by the project. Every week, they get support from a team comprised of a nurse and a volunteer trained to work with elderly persons. The nurse gives them health and nutrition advice, measures their blood sugar and pressure levels, and the volunteer helps them with the provision of food, medicine, performs administrative works for the old person, talks to them etc. The project involves a total of 6 nurses and 60 volunteers. The teams of volunteers, in addition to young volunteers also have retired persons who are vital and have a desire to spend their time in volunteer humanitarian activities.

With the support of the Austrian Development Agency and the Austrian Red Cross, the project will last two years. MRC strives to ensure sustainability of the project by involving the local community and the business sector. In October, a donation of 83 mobile phones was received from the mobile operator ONE, for the team and the beneficiaries of the project who are engaged on the territory of the City of Skopje. With this donation, all persons who are part of the project will be able to talk one to another free of charge, which will contribute to better provision of the services.

In 2010, a **Pensioners' Club** was open, which with the support of the German Red Cross implements the activities of the club through the municipal organization of the Red Cross Kriva Palanka. The club has 40 pensioners as active members. Within the project activities there is a mobile team of volunteers who carry out visits to and care for 30 elderly persons in their homes. The project aims to provide a dignified life for the elderly and feeble persons from Kriva Palanka and the rural areas in the municipality Rankovce, Petralica, Milutinca and Ginovci.

The project activities are aimed at involving the elderly persons in the social activities of the community, their having days rich in activities, as well as providing assistance to the most vulnerable groups from the rural settlements. The basic goal is to improve the quality of life of the elderly persons by improving their psycho-social condition, through educational and creative workshops, by means of acquiring new skills and communications, with care for their health and humanitarian assistance and with health care for the lonely and feeble elderly persons from the rural areas. As of this year, a club was also open in the municipal organization of the Red Cross in Negotino which has a membership of 20 pensioners. The Red Cross of the RM plans to also develop such activities in the other municipal organizations of the Red Cross in the country.

The Association for improvement of the conditions for care and accommodation of old and feeble persons "Humanost" from Skopje in 2009 implemented the pilot project "**Service for Providing Care at Home**" on the territory of the Municipality of Aerodrom, with a duration of 6 months. Users of the service were elderly persons and persons in the terminal stage of disease. The service began its work on 13 April, 2009. The service was enabled by an expert team comprised of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, caregivers, so called gerontology-housewives, a

social worker and a psychologist. The services were free for the beneficiaries. The pilot project included 30 people. The service is an extra-institutional form of social protection aimed at providing care and support for the elderly persons who due to an old age or severe disease are unable to care for themselves and at the same time have no one who could help them with it.

Supporters of the pilot project were the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Institute for Social Activities, the Municipality of Aerodrom, the Municipality of Cair, the Municipality of Gazi Baba, the Pensioners' Home Jane Sandanski, the Centre for Research and Policy Making, etc.

After the end of the funding, Humanost continued to provide the services only to those elderly persons who are able to self-finance themselves.

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

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

Within the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2007-2011, a strategic objective is provided for relating to the improvement of the care and the protection of the elderly persons. For the purposes of the realization of this objective, activities are included for the selection and implementation of priority alternative forms for promotion of the social protection of the elderly persons at local level; Increase of the number of institutions for care of elderly persons and their appropriate territorial distribution; Conducting an information campaign about the services in the field of social protection that are available to the elderly people, at national and at local level.

PI Institute for Social Activities elaborated an "Code of Ethics for dealing with old people" and a "Charter of the old persons to all those who care for them and give them protection" which were printed in cooperation with the Red Cross of the City of Skopje, and which will be distributed in institutions for social protection at local level in order to sensitize the population about the needs of the elderly persons.

b) Mechanisms put in place in your country to take into account the views of older persons on the services provided to them

At central and local level, the elderly persons are surveyed about their needs and public debates are held. The state continuously and intensively cooperates with the NGOs representing the interests and the rights of the elderly persons.

c) Challenges in terms of the recognition of the older persons as a significant consumer group with shared and specific needs, interests, and preferences

The Consumers' Organization of the Republic of Macedonia is constantly working on the representation of the interests of the consumers in the Republic of Macedonia and it cooperates on regional and international level; it is working on the raising of the public awareness by means of informing and educating the citizens-consumers, by creation and implementation of appropriate legislation and by consistent consumer policy.

In future, the Consumers' Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia will work on the strengthening of the protection of the consumers in order to exercise their basic consumer rights, as follows:

- Availability of the most essential goods and services
- Safe and high-quality products and services on the market

- Accurate and timely information and education of the consumers for proper selection of products and services
- Indemnification in case of violation of the consumers' rights;
- Healthy environment and sustainable consumption

d) Actions promoting active ageing and political participation of older persons and in particular of older women

“Humanost” plans to implement a campaign for awareness raising of the citizens for the needs of the elderly persons, as part of the European year of older persons and the recognition of the need for improvement of the quality of life of the elderly persons in 2012. In 2012, “Humanost” also plans to organize a charity concert to raise funds intended for free-of-charge care for the elderly persons, and in 2013 to organize an event for telethon donation “Fundraising intended for sustainability of a day-care centre for elderly persons”. Furthermore, “Humanost” and the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as all institutions that work with elderly people traditionally mark 1 October as the day of the elderly persons and the Sunday of the elderly persons in the second half of November.

The PI Institute for Social Activities and the Red Cross of the City of Skopje printed a Code and a Charter for the old persons that are planned to be promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and they will be continuously distributed to the end users and the service providers. For the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, “Humanost” plans printing a brochure in order to inform the elderly persons about the rights that can be exercised by them. In this segment, the NGOs make efforts to promote the older women in politics, through specific projects and campaigns.

e) Mechanisms and organizations that provide a political voice for older persons

The political voice of the elderly persons is heard through the Association of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia and the National Council of Women of the Republic of Macedonia (SOZM) who have 90 sections including sections of rural women and Association of women from third age (senior women).

The above organizations are promoted through specific projects and campaigns, in order to raise the political voice of the older persons, as a basic mechanism in the promotion of the participation of the older persons in the political sphere as part of the overall social life.

f) 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

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluation of the measures envisaged in the National Strategy for Elderly Persons, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with all line ministries and relevant institutions, prepared a Draft decision on establishing a national coordinating body for the National Strategy for Elderly Persons, 2010-2020.

g) Adoption of policies and programmes to improve the housing and living environment of older persons, especially in rural areas This includes access to and affordability of services, such as housing, utilities, sanitation and transport.

The National Strategy for Elderly Persons, 2010-2020 envisages policies for improvement of the environment of the older people by organizing day-care centres

and centres for assistance at home, which will increase the access of older people to the resources they need in their environment, especially to those in the rural and hard to reach areas. For all older people, the City of Skopje is providing a free public transport in the city twice a week. This initiative is also considered by other municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia.

In the framework of the programme activities for provision of social protection and social security of the elderly persons, in 2010, the project for spa and climate recreation for pension beneficiaries started. This project allows a spa and climate recreation of the pension beneficiaries and at the same time impacts the development of spa and climate tourism that will result in secure financial incomes for the legal persons who provide this service. This service is available to the beneficiaries of old age, disability and family pensions obtained in accordance with the regulations of the Republic of Macedonia and the regulations of other countries with which the Republic of Macedonia has signed an agreement on social insurance. During 2010, this project covered 10,000 pension beneficiaries, of which 8000 used the service. The pensioners are happy with the implementation of this project, and so are the legal entities that provide the service. The Government will continue with this project in the next period as well.

h) 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)

As of January 2010, the Association for improvement of the conditions for care and accommodation of old and feeble persons "Humanost" started the implementation of the project "**Big and Small**", with the financial support from the Dutch Embassy.

The project was realized with duration of one year, in the kindergartens "Snezana" (Municipality of Cair) and "25 May" (Municipality of Gazi Baba). The "Big and Small" project is intended for the children from the senior kindergarten groups and 60 elderly people above the age of 65.

Twice a month, creative and thematic workshops are held that are in accordance with the plan and programme of the kindergartens and that cover topics from the everyday life of the children and the adults. The aim of this project is to foster the traditional and moral values and to strengthen the social ties between the children and the elderly persons. In future, efforts will be made for these initiatives to continue and to spread throughout the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

i) Your country's actions to promote volunteer activities enabling younger and older people to interact and help each other

The Republic of Macedonia has passed a law on volunteering which allows for active involvement of volunteers in all spheres of the social life. This allowed the volunteers to have access to all segments where with their volunteer work they will contribute to the improvement of the social inclusion of the elderly persons. The Rulebooks for day-care care centre and centre for assistance at home, which are in an adoption procedure, provide for active involvement of the volunteers in the provision of services to the elderly persons.

So far, the MRC has the biggest experience with volunteer engagements related to the elderly persons. As of June 2011, the MRC started implementing the project Care for the Elderly at their Homes. The objective of the project is to

contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the vulnerable elderly persons and strengthening of the health and social system of the old people in the Republic of Macedonia. The project is implemented in three cities: Skopje, Kriva Palanka and Veles. The teams of this project also involve volunteers who have received training for work with elderly persons.

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)

Through a project of UNDP supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, there were initiatives at local level for the municipalities, depending on the population structure, to define the social needs and to start developing social forms of protection of the vulnerable categories of population, and thus the elderly persons. The activities of the NGOs and the governmental organizations in the sphere of elderly persons are continuously promoted in the media.

b) Measures taken by your country to promote a differentiated and heterogeneous view of the life of older persons to better reflect reality

The different views of the life of the older people are presented in the media in various shows, on certain old-age topics.

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.

Each year, the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia conducts campaigns aimed at focusing the public on the positive sides of the aging process, and thus it provides full support to the older people to undertake specific actions that in the true sense would prove the positive sides of aging. All of this is also supported by the mass media.

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

a) Strategies adopted by your country to transform your economies with a view to eradicating poverty, especially among older persons

Each year, the Republic of Macedonia implements active programs for promotion of the employment of the older groups. Namely, in the annual operating plans for active employment programmes, the Programme for subsidizing of employment provides for support of the persons aged 55 to 64 years, by providing financial means in a period of 6 months for payment of salary by the employer. In that case, the employer has an obligation to keep these people on the job for another 12 months and this allows inclusion of the older persons in the overall socio-economic trends. The aim of the foregoing is to achieve increased employment and reduced unemployment at national level, and consequently reduction of the poverty in all categories of people including the elderly persons over 55 years of age.

Also, a National Strategy for Reduction of the Poverty and the Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia, 2010-2020 and a National Strategy for Elderly Persons, 2010-2020 have been adopted.

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

The Republic of Macedonia takes measures of active demographic policy which are closely dependent on the macroeconomic environment in the country. The increase of the economic activity and the economic growth, as a creator of jobs, remain the main objectives of the policy for raising the living standard of the population.

The successful implementation of the measures requires a macroeconomic stability, i.e. a predictable macroeconomic environment and continued economic growth. The population, its composition and distribution greatly affect the macroeconomic environment and the economic growth, because the growth and the competitiveness of the economy depend on the high quality and functional human capital engaged in productive jobs.

The growth of the Macedonian economy is present and it is expected to continue in the period 2008-2013 year through further intensification of the economic activity and the achievement of the average growth rate of GDP. The role of a driver of the economic growth will be taken by the investments and the export, in which regard a continuation of the investment activity that started in the previous years is expected.

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

a) Actions taken by your country to adapt social protection systems in your country to societal and demographic changes

The national capacities for accommodation of elderly persons have been increased, through licensing of the facilities for accommodation of elderly persons and with the development of forms of extra-institutional protection of elderly persons. This segment was previously explained in more detail in the part pertaining to the institutional and extra-institutional care, and it is an integral part of this Report.

Its aim is to improve the social protection of the elderly persons in accordance with the social and the demographic changes occurring in the country.

b) Steps taken by your country to achieve a sufficient income for all older persons

Each year, the Republic of Macedonia implements active programs for promotion of the employment of the older groups. Namely, in the annual operating plans for active employment programmes, the Programme for subsidizing of employment provides for support of the persons aged 55 to 64 years, by providing financial means in a period of 6 months for payment of salary by the employer. In that case, the employer has an obligation to keep these people on the job for another 12 months. The amount of the financial support in 2008 amounted to 12,000 denars for a period of 9 months. In 2009 it was 22,500 denars, in 2010 it was 16,000 denars and in 2011 it was 15,000 denars.

In order to provide support to the employment of the older persons, it is also provided for in the National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2015

as a separate target group, i.e. it is defined as a strategic priority where an employment rate of 41% in 2015 is planned. The employment rate in 2010 was 34.2%. Accordingly, we can conclude that the employment policies for this target group had a positive impact on the increasing of the employment of the older persons. The employment rate of this target group in 2005 was 26.5% and it was increased in 2010 to 34.2%. The fulfilment of the set goals will be realized in accordance with the different types of programmes and measures defined in the National Employment Strategy 2011 - 2013 that provides for different types of measures.

The older people cannot be left without incomes and so, for the pensioners, in order to improve and ensure their material status, through the pension and disability insurance system, the following measures have been undertaken:

- The payment of the pension is made every first week of the month simultaneously for all groups of pensions;
- In 2008, the average pension was increased by 21% compared to the previous year, where the lowest pensions were increased by about 20% and the remaining three groups of lowest amount of pensions by 15%;
- In 2009, despite the financial crisis, the regular payment of pensions and their alignment continued, by means of which the pensions were increased by 5,59%. The same trend continued in 2010 and 2011 and endeavours will be made for it to continue in the future as well.

c) Which policies have been adopted in order to timely respond to the needs of the elderly people for various social and health services (long-term care)?

The primary health protection is delivered through the Department of General Practice whose most frequent users are the elderly people over the age of 60. The availability of the health protection and health services for elderly people in the rural zone is lower than in the urban zone.

In order to overcome these deficiencies in the health protection and increase the coverage of the population, the Ministry of Health adopted strategic documents aimed at improving the health care of the elderly people and enhancing the conditions for maintaining their good health condition.

The Draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health 2009-2011 covers several important actions aimed at improving the condition of the elderly population.

The Programme for increasing transparency, efficiency and sustainability of the health status in the Draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health 2009-2011 stipulates certain goals.

In accordance with the legal regulation in our country, the elderly people over the age of 65 are entitled to free health care services provided for in the Law on Health Protection, whereas the Law on Social Protection provides for the right to financial assistance, services and extra-institutional forms of care which include accommodation in foster families, and other social aids defined by law, as well as health protection of the users of social protection services. There is one Gerontology Institute on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia that takes care of elderly people with health problems and 12 national homes for the elderly, 3 of which are local and 9 private institutions.

d) Which activities does your country undertake for improvement of the standards of living of the disabled and elderly people in order to enable them to keep their independence and dignity?

The legal regulation in our country provides for raising the living standard of the elderly feeble people who, in order to keep their dignity and independence within the social system, need to have a right to financial assistance, remuneration for assistance and care by another person, as well as services in their homes. The legal regulation was subject to modification in 2009 in terms of the remuneration for assistance and care by another person, which is related to elderly people with certain degree of disability or serious health condition when the person cannot take care of him/herself and he/she needs an assistance and care from another person. Thus, the criterion on the material status of the person has been cancelled as a condition for exercising such right and only the medical findings and examination of a medical board are left to determine the need of assistance and care by another person. The amount of this remuneration is changed annually in accordance with the increase of the average salary for the previous year.

On the other hand, the non-government organisations and local communities are working on the development of extra-institutional forms of care that will raise the level of independence and dignity of the elderly people.

The member states also undertook to establish regulatory frame for providing professional and private pensions.

a) Which steps has been undertaken by your country in terms of the establishment or further development of a regulatory frame for providing professional and private pensions?

With the implementation of the voluntary fully funded pension insurance in 2009, the payment to the voluntary pension funds started for the purposes of generating additional income for old age for people that are insured in the system of compulsory pension and disability insurance or for the purposes of ensuring income for people who are not covered with the mandatory system. The third pension pillar provides the possibility for participation in professional pension schemes.

b) Which modifications have been made to the laws regulating the mandatory retirement?

The modifications of the Law on Pension and Disability have been adopted in 2010. The proposed modifications eliminate the different conditions in terms of the age for acquiring the right to family pension for widow/widower and for the purposes of achieving the principle of equality of the citizens on the basis of their gender and legal security of the citizens stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

The member states undertook to pay special attention to the social protection of the men and women in the course of their entire life.

a) Which policies have been adopted by your country to ensure equal treatment of men and women within the system of social protection?

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men regulate issues that are in the interest of the equal opportunities for women and men in the sphere of health protection and health insurance, social protection, access to goods and services, economics, labour relations and employment, education and vocational training, economic and property relations, the use of public goods and services (consumer rights), culture and sports, information communication technologies, defence,

judiciary and administration, housing, public information and media, state and public administration and the other areas of social living.

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

a) Has your country undertaken active policies on the labour market (assistance in job searching, training, counselling etc.)?

In accordance with the competences of the Department of Labour and the Policies related to elderly people and the Program for subsidizing employment, 142 persons were employed in 2008, 576 people in 2009, 285 people in 2010, and support was provided to 148 older people at the age of 55 to 62 until September 2011, inclusive.

This increases the rate of employment and it may be concluded that the employment policies of this target group had a positive impact in terms of increasing the employment of older persons. The employment rate of this target group in 2005 was 26.5% and in 2010 it increased to 34.2%. These measures are defined in the National Employment Strategy 2011-2013.

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

Republic of Macedonia undertakes measures within its possibilities and activities for facilitating the access to jobs for the older persons as well. In that regard, the National Employment Strategy 2010 that incorporates the employment policies from the revised Lisbon Strategy and the Integrated EU Guidelines stipulates national targets for the country for increasing the employment rate of the older people (55-64) from 26.2% in 2005 to 33% in 2010. As a result of the foregoing, the National Employment Action Plan 2006-2008, which is an operational document, stipulates adoption of a Law on Informal Education, Strategy for adult education and lifelong learning. These activities will create the basis to organize training and additional training in the public and private institutions in the sphere of education.

Furthermore a Law on Lifelong Learning will be also drafted.

Currently, the right to pension under the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance can be exercised only with 62 years of age for women and 64 years of age for men and at least 15 years of service. Women, who have never worked and have never had their parental right revoked, as well as mothers who have given birth to a fourth live-born child, as of 1 January 2009 are entitled to a financial assistance in accordance with the law. This right shall be exercised by a mother, who has looked after her children by their age of 18, is unemployed and cannot exercise the right to pension at the age of 62. The amount of the financial assistance is MKD 8,000 and it is aligned with the increase of the cost of living for the previous year published by the State Statistical Office, in January for the current year.

The member states also reached an agreement to improve the employment rate of the older people:

a) Has your country undertaken any measures to improve the employment opportunities for older people, for example through vocational guidance and training, promoting lifelong learning, improving working conditions?

The lifelong learning is promoted through the work of the University "Third Age" within the Faculty of Philosophy at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius.

The interest in science and acquiring new knowledge of the elderly people who attend the University "Third Age" is really amazing and attracts special attention among professionals who work with elderly people.

The member states committed to take steps for increasing the age at which people stop working and for making the retirement more flexible and gradual.

a) Has your country stepped toward stimulating the participation of older persons in the labour market?

As of January 1994 several restrictive measures were undertaken for exercising the right to retirement, such as leaving the practise of buying added years of service as a possibility for early retirement etc. The introduction of the legal measure for the years of age as a condition for retirement, as well as the measures stipulated in the National Employment Strategy 2015 stimulates the participation of the older people in the labour market.

b) Which measures has your country undertaken for cancellation of the encouragements for early retirement?

Except the early retirement on the basis of job positions for which the insured years of services are calculated with increased duration (reduced service retirement), since 2000 in the Republic of Macedonia there is no basis for early retirement.

c) Which mechanisms has your country adopted for promotion of the gradual retirement?

With the beginning of the implementation of the reformed pension system in 2000, gradual increase (dynamics) of the age limit for retirement has been introduced, as follows:

- for men from the age of 63 in 2000 to the age of 63.5 as of 01.09.2000 until 31.12.2000 and to the age of 64 as of 01.01.2001;
- for women from the age of 58.5 as of 01.09.2000 until 31.12.2000, and the age limit was increased every calendar year for six months and on 01.01.2007 it reached the age of 62.

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

a) What steps have been undertaken to adjust the educational institutions to the needs of the retired people?

With regards to the **programmes for lifelong learning**, in the recent years an accent was put on the adult education and the Adult Education Centre started to operate in 2008, which implemented the following activities:

- Programme for completion of secondary vocational education for adults in the Municipality of Aracinovo, which covers 28 women of the Albanian ethnic community,
- Training for acquiring specific knowledge in English for catering services, which includes 31 women.

The Lifelong Learning project, which was aimed at raising the awareness for the adult education and acquiring certain skills, covers 9 municipalities: Suto Orizari, Cair, Lipkovo, Stip, Konce, Radovis, Caska, Bitola and Zajas. These workshops were attended by more than 60% women from all ethnic communities.

As of 2010 a programme was introduced for facilitated enrolment of the adults in the universities, including women at the age of 35 and above and men at the age of 45 and above and the amount of the enrolment fee is EUR 200.

b) What initiatives has your country undertaken in terms of the pre-requirement programmes?

The existing Law on Pension and Disability Insurance does not include a basis for exercising the right to early retirement but the pension is exercised only by reaching a certain age and minimum duration of pension insurance.

c) Which teaching methods are developed for teaching the elderly persons to use the latest information technologies?

The elderly population in the Republic of Macedonia has to respond to the modern information society. For that purpose the National Employment Strategy 2010 has clearly determined as a strategic priority the need of increasing the availability of the information communication technology to an increased number of businesses, population, including the elderly persons. The implementation of the project for identification of the providers of informal education is underway (CARDS project 2006). The elderly people have also access to computer courses and in accordance with the modern IT developments, the older persons who are in labour relation attend on-the-job IT training.

d) Has your country adopted an education plan and programme that can prepare the people for a life with constant changes and can teach them the necessary skills?

Republic of Macedonia adopted a National Strategy for Education Development (2006) which includes the Strategy for Adult Education (2005-2015) that are aimed at diminishing the gap between the existing knowledge and skills on one hand, and the market economy on the other hand. Furthermore, in accordance with the National Employment Action Plan, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia is intensively conducting everyday training, retraining and additional training of the labour force which promote methods that help to more easily respond to the challenges of the modern living.

e) Has your country undertaken steps for establishing closer relations between the educational institutions and the employers and for motivating the employers to provide on-the-job training for the employees of different ages, including the older employees?

The Republic of Macedonia has adopted a Law on Vocational Education and Training and the establishment of Centres for vocational education and training is ongoing in cooperation with the social partners. Furthermore, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia organises training, qualification and additional training for unemployed persons, including the elderly people if they are registered as unemployed. During the trainings the employers are paid a fee in the amount of MKD 2,000 for covering the cost of training and the persons engaged in the training are paid MKD 4,000 for covering the costs related to the training. The second motive for the employers to employ unemployed people that have been registered with the Employment Service Agency as persons who are actively looking for a job for over one year, including elderly people, is the fact that they are exempted from the payment of the personal income tax for a period of three years.

Alleviating circumstance for the employers is the fact that every employer who will employ a beneficiary of monetary allowance shall be entitled to pay the person the remaining part of the monetary allowance as a onetime fee for employment.

Apart from organizing trainings for unemployed people, trainings are also organised for employees who might lose their job. These persons are referred to trainings for acquiring knowledge and skills in order to be taken over by another employer.

f) Which initiatives have been undertaken in order to improve the rate of retention in the schools and to decrease the drop outs?

In order to raise the public awareness on the increase of the coverage and decrease of the drop out of the girls from the ethnic communities and rural areas, the Ministry of Education and Science organised numerous campaigns and other activities such as: medium campaign for mandatory secondary education.

The campaign “The key is in our hands”, owing to the Roma Education Fund, was implemented by the NGO National Roma Centre in cooperation with the Administration for development and promotion of the education in the languages of the communities and the Department for promotion of the primary and secondary education. The campaign was initiated in 2006 and it is still ongoing. The campaign motivates the Roma parents to include their children in the education process and to decrease the drop out. During the campaign a Manual for prevention and protection from discrimination in the educational process was prepared.

NGO organised forums on the influence of the infrastructure on the time of the woman in the rural areas – how to increase the enrolment of the girls in high school in accordance with the Publication "To the gender sensitive Macedonia" (CIKP).

g) Have any special programmes been developed for alleviating the reintegration on the labour market of the people who have dropped out of the formal education?

Our country plans to adopt a Law on Informal Education, Strategy for Adult Education and a Law on Lifelong Learning that will raise the awareness of the citizens for the lifelong learning. Later on they would more easily find their way to the labour market as reintegrated and more productive.

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

a) Which actions have been undertaken for integration of the ageing in the policies of all departments? In addition, member states are committed to ensuring equal access to health and social services, including long-term care for persons of all ages.

Republic of Macedonia undertakes actions for integration of the issues related to the old persons and the ageing process. Namely, they are processed in the departmental policies within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health.

b) What measures have been undertaken that are aimed at decreasing the non-equal access to the health and social services, including the people in the rural and remote areas?

Republic of Macedonia has a network of institutions for primary health protection of all citizens of the state and social services that are available to all ages, including the old persons. However, this network is not sufficiently available to the old persons who live in the rural and remote areas. The National Strategy for old persons stipulates measures for increasing the availability of the health and social services in the remote and rural areas.

c) Which initiatives have been undertaken for improvement of the services for long-term care of elderly people, especially if the services have been established in the community, in order to overcome the mismatch between the services offered at home and the services offered in the institutions?

The improvement of the services for long-term care of elderly people in the communities is subject to measures stipulated in the Programme for social protection 2011-2012.

d) What actions are undertaken in your country in order to improve the coordination and integration of the services that are provided to the older people (for example, through the case management systems)?

Our country has 30 centres for social work that are mutually coordinated and integrated for providing social services and financial assistance to elderly people. They also closely cooperate with the institutions on a local level and in their annual plans they set priorities for their actions and concurrently they cooperate on an ongoing basis with NGOs or citizens that can help them with certain individual cases of old people that are at a social risk.

e) What initiatives have been undertaken that refer to the special needs in the cases of dementia and Alzheimer disease?

Republic of Macedonia has NBO Association for Alzheimer disease that, in addition to continuous publishing of numerous publications on persons with intellectual diseases of this type (Alzheimer and dementia), in 2010 the Association held a Conference for adults with intellectual disabilities on the topic: Alzheimer. The activities of this Association raise the awareness of the population in the Republic of Macedonia about the symptoms of this disease and the preventive activities that can diminish the risk of this disease.

f) What efforts have been made to improve the training of the care providers: professionals, volunteers and family members?

On the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, trainings are permanently conducted through the PI Institution for Social Activities and the NGOs (funded by the World Bank and other international foundations) for professionals and volunteers who are stimulated to contribute to the development and provision of assistance for the older persons. Concurrently, the professionals independently decide to attend trainings they think will improve the quality of the services they provide to the older persons and their families.

Currently in the Republic of Macedonia started the process of licensing of all professionals employed in the institutions of social protection, a process under which all professionals, in order to obtain a license to work, must spend a certain number of hours of initial and advanced training in their area. Thereby the standards for continuous training of the professionals are set, which shall indirectly influence the end users, the older persons.

g) What efforts have been made to improve the skills of older persons in terms of self-care, health promotion, prevention of disease?

The Centres for Social Work provide psycho-social services to the older persons, the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia through voluntary actions include the volunteers and the offspring to raise the skills of the older persons in terms of self-care, health promotion, preventing of disease and disability. Furthermore, through the calendar week of the older persons and the International day for the older persons we have intensified the education for the older population regarding all prerequisites for leading a healthy and peaceful life. The Ministry of Health, according to a plan, conducts annual free examinations for the older persons and education for preservation of their health.

The member states also communicate so as to provide adequate financial assistance for the health and social services for the older people.

a) What steps have been taken to ensure efficient, equitable and sustainable financing of health and social services for persons of all ages?

During this period we are striving to determine the minimum price of the accommodation services in institutions and for the use of services from a day care centre and a centre for assistance at home, which will enable the older persons who have sufficient financial resources to pay for services based on certain standards, whereas the costs of those older persons who do not have enough finances shall be covered by the relevant ministry. In that way, the beneficiaries can decide for themselves, depending on their needs, whether to use cash compensation for assistance and care by another person or directly use the services from deinstitutionalized care.

Moreover, member states are committed to enable people to make healthy choices.

a) What measures have been undertaken to facilitate the adoption of healthy lifestyles (e.g. information campaigns)?

Through the activities of the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia, SOZM and other organizations from the non-governmental and the governmental sector that are aimed at the older persons and the aging process, campaigns are implemented for adoption of healthy lifestyles such as joint social gatherings (visiting cinemas, theatres), visiting cultural and historical monuments, hiking, leading a healthy lifestyle by giving advice on healthy diet, etc.

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

a) What measures have been 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 Law on equal opportunities for men and women also defines the term equal treatment as absence of any direct and indirect discrimination based on sex.

Under this law, in September 2006 a Commission on equal opportunities for men and women was established in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for considering draft laws and other regulations in terms of the inclusion of the concept of

gender therein. Furthermore, the Commission initiates the adoption and amendment of laws and other regulations in the area of equal opportunities for women and men. To that end the Commission has organized several public debates, such as debates on domestic violence, detection of malignant disease in women, introduction of the concept of gender in the budget policy.

In order to achieve the objectives of this law, coordinators for equal opportunities have been appointed in all 14 ministries and 10 state institutions (24 in total). At the local level, in the local self-government units, out of 84, 81 have established a Commission on equal opportunities for women and men and 81 coordinators for equal opportunities among the civil servants.

Law on Political Parties (Official Gazette no. 76/2004) obliges the political parties in their activities to take care of the realisation of the principle of gender equality in the availability of the functions of the political party. Given that the amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament, under which it is defined that in the proposed list of candidates each sex is to be represented by at least 30%, did not meet the requirements for participation of women in legislature, in 2006 amendments were made to the Electoral Law (Article 64), under which it is defined that in the submitted list of candidates for members of parliament and members of the municipal council and the City of Skopje, in every three places on the list, at least one place shall belong to the underrepresented sex.

Pursuant to the Labour Law (Official Gazette No. 16 dated 05.02.2010) the employer may not put the employment applicant or the employee in an unequal position because of race, colour, sex, age, health condition or disability, religious, political or other convictions, membership in trade unions, national or social origin, family status, financial standing, sexual orientation or other personal circumstances. Furthermore, women and men must be provided with equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment, job promotion, training, education, retraining, salary, remuneration, absence from work, working conditions, working hours and cancellation of the employment contract.

With the Law on equal opportunities for men and women, with the modifications and amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament, with the modifications and amendments to the Law on Local Elections, and the modifications and amendments to the Electoral Law, the Republic of Macedonia has taken concrete steps towards gender equality between the sexes. A Commission on equal opportunities for men and women was established in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, and such commissions exist at local level within each municipality. The practical implementation of these laws is ensured constantly by organizing seminars and training aimed at introducing the concept of gender, both on local and central level. Thereby, our Country makes serious efforts to completely eliminate any possible forms of discrimination against women, thereby improving the individual development of women in general, and within the society as a whole.

b) What actions have been taken to give particular attention to collection and analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data?

The PI Institution for Social Activities regularly keeps statistics for analysis of the beneficiaries of social services, and in the last 4 years we are implementing the Resource Centre project aimed at keeping electronic records for the beneficiaries of social services. In all previous statistical data processing and in the Resource Centre as well, data about the gender of the beneficiaries is collected, i.e. gender-disaggregated statistics is kept, wherein the PI Institution for Social Activities is

responsible to keep such statistics in accordance with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2007 - 2012.

On the other hand, the State Statistical Office always keeps gender-disaggregated statistics for data analysis.

c) What measures have been taken 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.)?

Under the existing legislation there are no legal solutions and norms that provide for payment of different salaries based on sex and other employment rights. For the purposes of prevention of discrimination, the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women explicitly defines discrimination based on sex in terms of applying for jobs and opportunity for filing an appeal before the competent authorities so as to determine possible discrimination.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia (Article 32, paragraph 1) everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment, protection at work and material assistance during temporary unemployment, every job is open to all without any discrimination, including the discrimination based on sex.

Furthermore, under the labour legislation of the Republic of Macedonia women and men must be provided with equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment, job promotion, training, education, retraining, salary, remuneration, absence from work, working conditions, working hours and cancellation of the employment contract. The exercise of the rights arising from the labour relation is enhanced with the adoption of the Law on Contributions from Mandatory Social Insurance, whereby in addition to the exercise of the right to health insurance, the right to pension and disability insurance is constantly exercised with regular payment of the contributions. Before the adoption of this Law, only the right to paid contributions for health insurance was regularly exercised. Under the Labour Law, the employer is obliged to pay the employees equal salary for equal work, regardless of the sex.

The measures pertaining to special protection and assistance to certain categories of workers stipulated under the Labour Law, collective agreements and employment contracts, related to special protection and assistance to certain category of employees, especially those for protection of the disabled persons, elderly workers, pregnant women and women who use any of the rights of protection of motherhood, as well as the provisions related to the special rights of parents, adoptive parents and protégés shall not be considered as discrimination nor serve a grounds for any discrimination.

The gender equality is also observed when posting of vacancies. Thus, the employer may not announce the vacancy for men or women only, unless the particular gender is an essential requirement for the performance of the work. Furthermore, the employer may not condition the entry into the employment contracts with data that are not directly related to the labour relation. When concluding an employment contract, the applicant is not obliged to submit any proof of medical capability, unless the employer has referred employee to medical examination at its own account. (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 16 dated 5.2.2010).

d) What measures have been taken to encourage and facilitate equal sharing of family and care responsibilities between women and men?

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

a) Which policies and programmes has your Country adopted to respond to the needs of family members of different ages?

In order to respond to the needs of family members, the Law on Social Protection provides for the exercise of rights to different types of assistance (social financial assistance, one-time financial assistance, exercise of the right to assistance and care by another person) and social services (through various forms of protection: institutional and deinstitutionalized).

b) What measures have been adopted by your Country to help families deal with the growing responsibilities of care for their older members?

Our Country is intensively working on the development of the deinstitutionalized forms of protection at all levels in order to relieve the family members from the obligation to care for their older family members, in one part of the day. In this way they can commit to strengthening the economic stability of their family and care for the younger family members, wherein they can be sure that the older persons are not left on their own, but to professionals who can provide higher standard of quality in the care for the older persons.

c) Which mechanisms have been put in place to strengthen the role of communities, organizations and associations in providing support and care to older persons?

With the implementation of the planned Programme for Social Protection of Older Persons within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, mechanisms shall be applied aimed at strengthening the role of the community, the organizations and the associations, so as to jointly provide support and care to older persons who live in the society in general.

The member states shall also strive to support families in coping with the social and economic consequences of the demographic changes.

a) What measures have been adopted by your Country for supporting families in coping with the social and economic consequences of demographic change (for example support to care-giving families, family friendly policies and services)?

The Strategy for Demographic Development and the National Strategy for Elderly Persons provide for the development of deinstitutionalized and institutional forms of social protection of older persons, which will indirectly help the families both in the social and in the economic aspect, as part of the care for the older persons in the families will be taken over by the state as well. The care-giving families receive cash compensation for assistance and care by another person.

b) 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)?

Efforts are made to improve the infrastructure in order to adapt it to the needs of families, by exerting efforts to make the resources needed to every generation available in the environment where they live. Therefore, during admission, the schools give priority to children from their municipality, efforts are made to provide

employment in the municipality where the people live, and efforts are made to develop the deinstitutionalized forms for the older persons within their municipality. Furthermore, efforts are made to open homes with smaller capacities, in a family atmosphere and at regional level, whereby the older persons placed in such homes would be closer to their biological families. Such measures are intended to improve the infrastructure of the municipalities and to provide living conditions to all generations.

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

The social protection, as a separate segment and instrument in leading the social policy, has broad competences in preventing and resolving the problems associated with the demographic aging of the population and the risks associated with it. However, after the Madrid Summit, as a government institution we do not have a continuous cooperation with the UNECE member states and the UNECE secretariat.

b) What opportunities have you provided for the civil society to cooperate in these processes?

The NGO sector and the organizations of older persons with projects funded by international foundations contribute to the raising of the quality of life of older persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy fully supports the implementation of their activities related with the older persons. The Law on Social Protection provides a possibility for the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to issue a call to the civil society for funding specific projects aimed at the older persons.

c) Have you requested/received assistance from the UNECE secretariat and/or other entities of the United Nations system in the implementation of RIS?

The assistance of the UNECE secretariat may include trainings of professionals and volunteers who will be focused on the older population, adoption of strategic documents in accordance with the EU policies, standardization of the services in the Homes for the older persons and necessary financial support for the development of different types of deinstitutionalised protection.

d) If so, what are your needs for assistance and how would you describe the further needs for assistance?

5. Conclusions and Priorities for the Future

a) Brief summary on the extent of addressing the challenges and opportunities of population ageing since the León Conference in 2007

b) 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:

Currently, our Country is implementing reforms based on two concepts - deinstitutionalization and decentralization, while the National Strategy for Employment enables the older population to stay in the field of labour in a high-quality way and to provide effective and productive contribution to the market economy. Furthermore, we work on developing the deinstitutionalized forms of protection of the older persons, on raising the standards in the institutional care, on the education of professionals working with older persons, but also on more intense involvement of the older persons in making decisions that concern them.

c) Indicate major strengths and weaknesses of your country in the field of ageing;

The national institutional capacities in our Country are not sufficient to meet the growing needs for institutional care for the older persons. In the last two years there are growing initiatives for construction of private homes for older persons, but due to the high cost of the services they are unaffordable for a number of older people with a minimum pension.

The situation with deinstitutionalized care is not at desired level, however many measures have been taken in this area, and the results are expected to be seen in the future.

However, the Republic of Macedonia works intensively in the field of raising awareness about the problem of older persons and aging, and at the same time, with the active employment also takes care of the older population that otherwise would be threatened by the negative consequences of aging which carry in themselves a high mortality rate.

d) Outline future activities in the areas of population and individual ageing and other related areas;

All measures and future activities in this field are included in the development plans and political strategies at national, regional and local level. This especially refers to the commitment which aims to integrate aging at all fields so as to eventually create a harmony between the demographic changes and the society in general.

e) Propose adjustments to existing policies;

The policies are embedded in strategies and plans and programmes for social protection, but their realization depends on the macroeconomic policy and the reform process in the field of decentralization and deinstitutionalisation.

f) identify priorities for further policy research;

In the future the Republic of Macedonia necessitates on-the-field researches which would help to identify the needs of the older population, and based on which policies shall be created for the care and protection of the older population.

g) Describe the level of need and/or wish to exchange experiences across countries;

The Republic of Macedonia has an increased need for exchange of experiences with other countries that have positive processes in terms of the problem of older persons and aging, and have a similar system of social protection for older persons (countries in the region, Croatia, Serbia, Austria and others). The needs for exchange are related to the manner of functioning and organization of the protection

of the older persons, as well as the manner of work of the professionals and their education.

h) Indicate your country's requests, needs and wishes with regard to the work of international organizations in the field of ageing.

The international institutions need to undertake steps to provide financial support for the system of social protection and in presenting the experiences and solutions of other countries, in the creation of a more secure system of protection of the older persons.

Annex

1. List and contact details of organizations in your country that are directly involved in preparing this report
2. List and contact details of organizations in your country that are involved in the follow-up of the MIPAA/RIS, per sectors (governmental institutions, NGOs, academies, private sector)
3. Please enclose, if any, the action plan on ageing and the relevant laws related to aging
4. Other materials (tables, charts...)