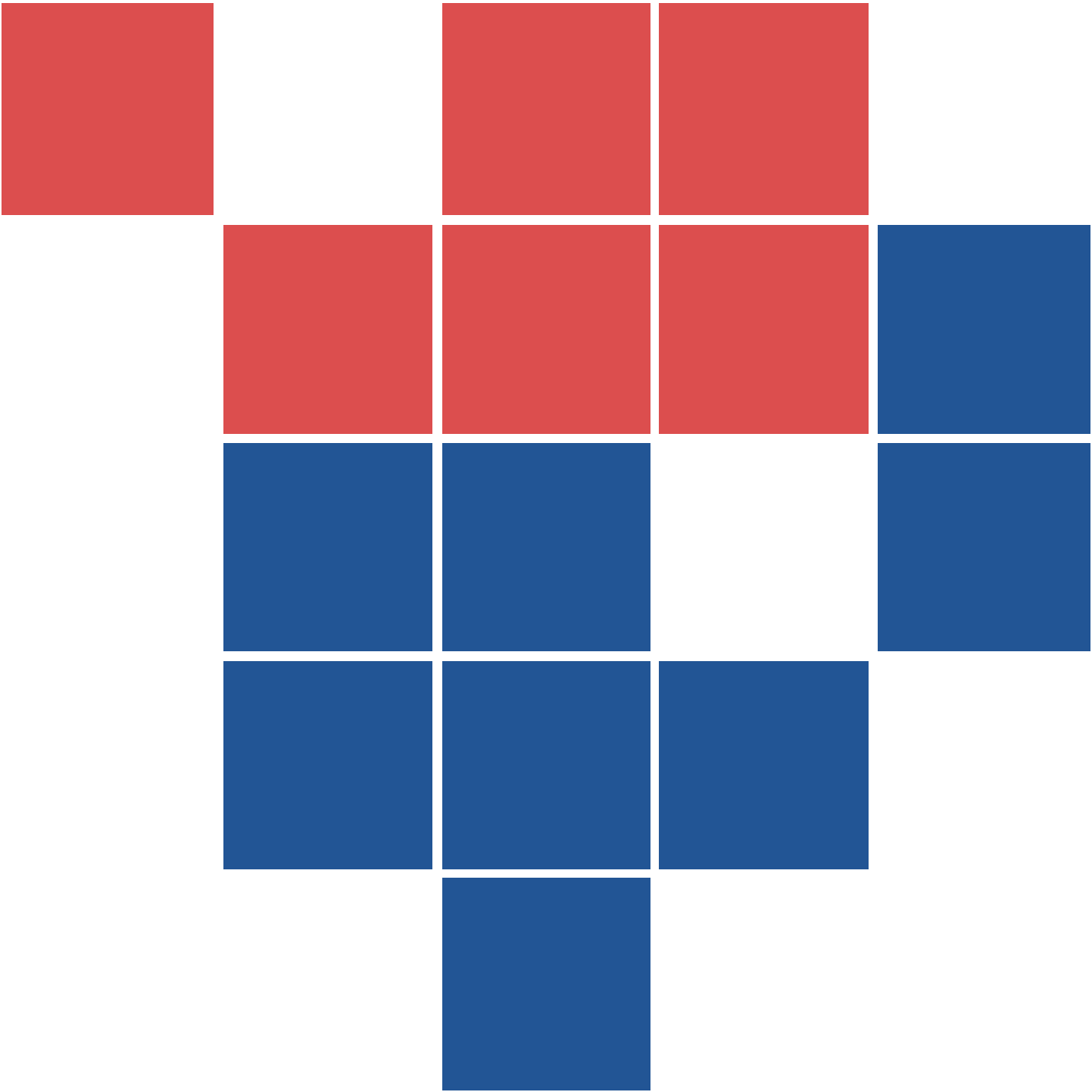


REPORT ON THE ROUND TABLES

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON AGEING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA, 2006-2015 AND PROPOSALS FOR THE NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK







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REPORT SUMMARY

The process of evaluation of the National Strategy on Ageing 2006-2015 (hereinafter NSA) began by organizing four round tables where more than 120 participants. Representatives of academia and professional public, as well as practitioners from public, civil and private sectors in the fields of social protection, healthcare, education, employment and judiciary, both from the local and the national levels, discussed the current experiences and challenges in the Strategy implementation, examined difficulties and obstacles in achieving certain goals and objectives, and issued recommendations for improvement of further strategic planning in the area of ageing.

The final results and conclusions of these round tables show that all the participants from all regions of Serbia are united in their position that **certain steps forward were made in all ten strategic directions of the NSA, but the overall implementation process went slower than it was planned and expected.**

The total scope of achievements in different regions of the Republic varies: in South and Southeast Serbia (Niš), the

achievements are somewhat modest, in central Serbia (Kragujevac) they're moderate, while in North Serbia (Novi Sad) and Belgrade, the achievements are visible the most. **All of the defined strategic directions of the NSA were deemed as appropriate for the upcoming period of time, with the recommendation to establish the following priorities in this period:**

- poverty reduction,
- sustainability principle,
- adjustments of the pension and disability insurance system,
- defining and establishing the legal framework for ageing, and development of long term care services (LTC),
- strengthening of NGOs and private partners in the long term care process,
- more accessible lifelong learning and education for the older people,
- improving the living environment and security of the older people,
- prevention and protection of the older people from discrimination and violence.

The participants agreed that the most visible achievements were made in the

area of institutional social protection, which is the fourth strategic direction which partly concerns the development of nursing homes. The accommodation capacities of these social protection institutions are partly increased in those regions where there hadn't been any nursing homes (which was an objective in the Strategy), while at the same time, these public sector institutions also had the best results concerning some other special social protection reform goals. The number of various community services aimed at the older people living in nursing homes was increased. Among other things, it improved the contact between the older people living in nursing homes and their environment. In the public sector, the structural conditions for accommodation were improved, including all the functional aspects of the accommodation service. This was achieved by introducing service standards and licensing of service providers – institutions and professionals that work directly with the beneficiaries. To a certain extent (around 25%), there are new accommodation capacities in nursing homes in the private sector, but they're not equally allocated and, at the moment, they're not fully included in the network of institutions.

INTRODUCTION

For many decades, the Republic of Serbia fosters the tradition of developing socially structured activities aimed at ageing issues and gradual adaptation of the society to consequences of population ageing. In the 1970s, a survey on living conditions and social position of the older people in Yugoslavia was implemented, as part of preparations for the first General Assembly of the United Nations dealing with the topic of ageing. However, from the 70's until today, Serbia – apart from the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija - has experienced rapid population ageing. The percentage of the older people has almost doubled: in the early 70's, it stood at 9.04% (65+), while the Census from 2011 showed that the percentage of older people was 17,4% (65+)¹. Conversely, when it came to long organized social re-

sponse to adapt different systems (such as the labor market, education, healthcare and social welfare) to the consequences of these changes, there were numerous halts and/or downscaling of the activities.

This is why, with the beginning of the new millennium, the strategic framework for ageing policy in the Republic of Serbia became part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2003 – a special chapter was dedicated to the older people. After this, in line with the Millennium Development Goals, the Government adopted a special strategic framework for ageing policy, the National Strategy on Ageing (2006-2015). At the same time, demographic forecasts show that the trend of dynamic population ageing will continue, with an increase of older people population.

To create a new strategic framework for the post-2015 period, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, which is in charge of monitoring the achievement of goals, asked the United Nations to support the country in creating the further steps for adapting the society to the consequences of population ageing.

This Report contains the results of implementation of one of the phases in the process of receiving this support.

These evaluation processes of strategic documents at the national level are conditioned by international and European strategic planning processes, especially in the context of programming and use of the available international and EU funds for financing of programs and activities.

¹ *Demographic Profile of the Elderly Population in Serbia*, Republic Statistical Office, 2015

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the National Strategy on Ageing was implemented during the last year of the Strategy's implementation, in late 2015. The Strategy covered the period from 2006 to 2015, and it is important to note that the prevalent opinion among the decision makers is that the existing document should be prolonged, given that its defined strategic goals are in line with the goals set by the European Union by 2022. This ensures the continuity in having the strategic grounds for harmonizing the national aspirations with the EU goals in terms of protection of the older citizens.

The process of evaluation of the National Strategy on Ageing was implemented by joint efforts of the United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA in Serbia, the Republic Fund for Social Protection and the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, in cooperation with United Nations Department for Social and Economic Affairs – UNDESA. The evaluation results should serve as the basis for redefining the existing strategic document and establishing strategic directions in the field of ageing for the upcoming period.

Evaluation content examines to what extent the goals, objectives and measures defined by the National Strategy

on Ageing 2006-2015 were met, focusing on experiences to date, good practice examples, and difficulties and challenges in achieving certain strategic goals and objectives.

The expected result of the evaluation of the National Strategy on Ageing is defining the recommendations for the new process of strategic planning in the field of ageing, in line with the experiences and findings that resulted from the implementation of the previous strategic document.

The institutional framework of the evaluation is focused on the local and the national levels, analyzing sectors that are directly related to the enjoyment of rights of the older people population – social welfare, healthcare, education, labor market, and legislation.

The evaluation timeframe includes the period from 2006 to the end of 2015, or the period covered by the National Strategy on Ageing.

The regional scope of the evaluation included all regions of the Republic of Serbia, by organizing four round tables in four cities: Kragujevac, Niš, Novi Sad and Belgrade. In addition, the round tables in Niš, Kragujevac and Novi Sad were also focused on the local and the provincial levels,

whereas the round table in Belgrade was focused on representatives of all the sectors active at the national level.

The evaluation process included **more than 120 participants**, representatives of academia and professional public, as well as practitioners from public, civil and private sectors in the fields of social welfare, healthcare, education, employment and judiciary, both at the local and at the national levels. The process was chaired by the representatives of the Republic Institute for Social Protection and the representatives of the UNFPA Office in Serbia.

The round tables were **implemented** by using interactive work methods, with a special focus on work in small groups that assembled the participants in line with their professions, aiming to maximize the contribution of representatives of certain sectors to the assessment of the implemented strategic goals, objectives, measures and activities. In all four cities where the regional round tables were held – Niš, Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Belgrade – evaluation began by presenting some examples from practice. The presentations were held by the practitioners from these cities as follows:

NIŠ

- Gerontology Center Niš – Raising the institutional capacities for accommodation of the older people
- Nevena Petrušić, Ph. D. – Survey Findings on Discrimination and Violence against the Older people

KRAGUJEVAC

- City Center for Social Welfare Kragujevac – Experiences in Creating and Implementation of Integrated Services
- City Red Cross Branch Kragujevac – Care Program for the Older people and Volunteer Work in Protecting the Older people

NOVI SAD

- Provincial Institute for Social Protection – Presenting the Results of NetAge Project
- Gerontology Center Novi Sad – Development of New Services

BEOGRAD

- NGO Amity – Strength of Friendship – Challenges in Providing Services to Older Citizens
- PENZIN Portal – Modern Methods of Informing the Citizens on Available Services and Rights in the Field of Ageing

After presenting these practice examples, further exchange of experience was encouraged among the participants, focusing on implementation OF the National Strategy on Ageing, with a special emphasis on lessons learned and analyses of mutual and individual experiences that can be of importance for further process of strategic planning for the upcoming period.

The most important part of the round tables was working in small groups. The participants were split into three groups, and in each group they had the task to analyze a set of strategic directions:

- *Group One* discussed the strategic directions I, II, III and IV
- *Group Two* discussed the strategic directions V, VI and VII
- *Group Three* discussed the strategic directions VIII, IX and X

Each group was tasked to discuss the overall achievement level of the strategic directions it analyzed, to list the difficulties that impacted the achievement of these goals, and to make recommendations for improvement of implementation of measures and ac-

tivities defined within these strategic directions for the upcoming period of time.

The final part of the round tables consisted of plenary presentations of group work and drafting of conclusions.

The beneficiaries of this evaluation of the National Strategy on Ageing 2006-2015 are policy creators and decision makers in all areas of social life who are directly or indirectly related to the wellbeing of the older people citizens, in particular in the fields of social welfare, healthcare, employment, culture and judiciary, both at the national and the local levels.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON AGEING 2006 – 2015

The National Strategy on Ageing – NSA was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on September 7th 2006, its implementation period ending in 2015.² During the implementation period, the Republic of Serbia participated in two UNECE international conferences on ageing, in 2007 in Leon (Spain) and in 2012 in Vienna (Austria). At these conferences, Serbia submitted its national reports on the implementation of actions and measures in the process of adapting the society to the consequences of population ageing and monitoring the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing within the UN system (UNECE).

The NSA is directly connected to the European Implementation Strategy (RIS)³ of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)⁴ but at the same time it is an authentic strategic document because it sets forth the activities that reflect the authentic needs of the older people in Serbia, and describes the objective conditions for their further wellbeing. Ten

commitments of RIS are formulated as ten strategic directions, i.e. objectives in the national document of the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to achieving the main goal of the NSA, which is the same as the one set forth by RIS and MIPAA (a society for all generations), the national document also lays down the ten commitments of RIS as objectives, which will contribute to reaching the main goal. In the Strategy, it was important to include all areas of significance for the life of older generations, as well as to appropriately monitor the implementation process. The very process of monitoring the NSA implementation was designed in such a way that it is comparable to the situation in neighboring countries and wider.

The principles that the NSA is based on are harmonized with the principles of valid international and regional documents - MIPAA/RIS, and they stem from modern science and practices concerning the approach to ageing:

- principle of lifelong development of individuals;
- principle of improvement and protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms;
- principle of securing economic and social security and quality life in old age;
- principle of allowing full integration and participation of older people in the community;
- principle of elimination of all forms of social neglect due to decreased capacities and disability in old age;
- principle of gender equality;
- principle of respecting diversity and different needs in the older people population;
- principle of promoting intergenerational and intragenerational transfer of solidarity and dialogue;
- principle of establishing partnerships at all levels – the Government, the NGO sector, the private sector and the older people themselves;
- principle of equal opportunities for all, and
- Principle of affirming personal responsibility.

² The year 2015 was seen as a turning point because the Millennium Development Goals of the Republic of Serbia were scheduled to be reviewed in that year.

³ Hereinafter: RIS

⁴ Hereinafter: MIPAA



EVALUATION RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS ON NSA IMPLEMENTATION⁵

In line with the methodology used when organizing the round tables, we hereby present the conclusions that the participants have reached after discussing each of the 10 strategic directions defined by the National Strategy on Ageing 2006 - 2015.

I. MAINSTREAMING AGEING INTO DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Implementing this strategic direction of the NSA mostly consisted of activities related to mainstreaming ageing into development plans at the local, the provincial and the national levels. It was also planned to introduce the appropriate (EU) poverty indicators, and to continuously and appropriately monitor them at all levels. In addition, special activities were planned aimed at reaffirming family values and family solidarity.

a) In Niš, the evaluation conclusions of these activities on the territory of South and Southeast Serbia noted that progress was made concerning local community development plans in all larger municipalities (towns) in this area. These plans included planning of social welfare capacity building for the older people, and cooperation with the local self-government on resolving problems related to ageing. This was seen as a positive step in the NSA implementation, and at the same time as a step towards decentral-

ization of social welfare services, in particular of the long term care service, which was also one of the set objectives.

The discussion elaborated on the good practice examples of cooperation between the city administration of Niš on developing institutional and local services for the older people, the local self-government in Aleksinac on improving the quality of long term care services, and the local self-government in Leskovac on developing new kinds of services and capacity building for long term care for the older people. It was noted that family life was extremely important for the older people, that there hadn't been enough activities for promotion of family values in the previous period, and that there was a lack of monitoring of poverty indicators for the older people at the local level, even though these indicators were available at the national level.

b) Conclusions on evaluation of these activities in Western and Central Serbia, as reached at the round table in Kragujevac, noted that ageing was included in all development

plans of towns and municipalities in this area. In particular, Kragujevac was a good practice example where ageing was successfully mainstreamed into the city's development plan, which resulted in setting up a new service for the older people, integrating some healthcare and social aspects (the service of home care assistance), where the support of the local self-government secured the sustainability of this service.

Unlike the other towns and municipalities in this area, Kragujevac provided support to the NGO sector. In addition, at the moment a new Strategy for Social Welfare Services Development is being drafted, which will also support the NGOs as providers of social services for the older people. Novi Pazar was also successful in mainstreaming, and thus it received support from the local municipal self-government to raise accommodation capacities for the older people. As for monitoring of poverty indicators in this area, it was emphasized that the implemented activities were not sufficient, as there was no qual-

⁵ The conclusions include observations on evaluation and the objective assessment of certain issues or activities, obstacles that hinder the completion of the activities, and specific proposals proposed by the participants.

ity database on the older people in this region, especially in the rural areas where the older people need assistance and support the most.

- c) In Novi Sad, while drawing conclusions on the evaluation of these activities in North Serbia and the Province of Vojvodina, the participants agreed that ageing was included in development plans of all communities, towns and municipalities of this region. However, it often happens that, for various reasons, this apparently successful mainstreaming comes up to mere words on paper, while the planned activities are more seldom implemented in practice.

The poverty indicators are periodically monitored, and professionals and wider public are informed about it in the entire region. However, assessing the situation in reality, the participants believe that there are no any significant effects of this monitoring, nor is there a significant poverty reduction among the older people, because the measures implemented are usually not sufficient to solve the problem in a more sustaining manner. The activities on promoting family values and encouraging family solidarity are seen as partial and only sporadic.

It was concluded that it was not objectively possible to meet all the deadlines set forth by the NSA – this is an important experience that should be used for the next planning.

- d) While evaluating these activities on the territory of the City of Belgrade, the participants concluded that the older people were included in strategic documents both at the national and at the city levels, in a way that appropriately incorporates ageing in development of the Serbian society and its capital. However, when implementing the planned activities, certain measures are often neglected and not undertaken. Thanks to awareness raising and mainstreaming of ageing, the biggest progress was achieved in the institutional aspect of social welfare (nursing homes). The majority of nursing homes are part of the public sector. The situation is slightly different in Belgrade where private accommodation capacities are substantially developed, even though these nursing homes are not fully included in the network of social welfare institutions.

Poverty indicators are regularly and periodically defined by relevant methods by the Republic Statistical Office and its city counterpart.





They are fully comparable to indicators in other countries and harmonized with Eurostat. Monitoring of poverty indicators has shown that poverty among older citizens is in proportion to the current general financial situation in our society. The results have shown that in the period from 2006 to 2009 there was a poverty reduction among the older people, while in the next period of time, the poverty of older people was notably increased.

The activities related to promotion of family values and family solidarity were first and foremost present in the activities of the relatively developed and well connected civil society, and they contributed to positive changes in the quality of life of the older people. In this context, a special portal was created in Belgrade, PENZIN that deals with issues important for the quality of life of the older people, and at the same time provides support to families with elderly members.

II. INTEGRATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

In order to implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities mostly consisted of informing the older people about their rights and procedures on how to realize their rights. Ageing was introduced in school curricula, self-organization and volunteer work among the older people were encouraged, and a positive image of the older people was promoted.

a) In their conclusion about the evaluation of these activities in Niš, the participants had a positive opinion about the center for social welfare in Niš, which is active in informing older beneficiaries on their rights in the social welfare system. The same goes for Leskovac, Aleksinac and Kučevo. However, due to the lack of capacities, some of the social welfare rights cannot be realized. The representatives of health center in Niš – the Home Treatment Department and the Home Visiting Service – also confirmed that they work on providing information to older patients, even though they do not have enough vehicles to be able to reach more than 3000 older patients, which is the number of patients they had visited last year.

Involvement of older people in the community life is confirmed by very lively self-organized activities of members of clubs for the older people in the towns of this region. These activities are extremely important not only for integrating the older people in the society, but also as a form of daily support. Panels and rounds tables are organized with the aim to impact the decision making process in local communities, municipalities and/or towns. These activities involve the media, thus contributing to spreading of a positive image of the older people as active and interested community members.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac emphasize that there are significant differences in the level of community inclusion of the older people: in the city itself, the older people are far more integrated in the community and their position is more favorable in comparison to their peers from rural areas. In addition, there is a difference in community inclusion between the older people who live in relative isolation, around or under the poverty line, and the older people who have a better financial, housing and family situation, who are more involved in the local community and who take part in some forms of decision making. One of the reasons for the

existence of this deepening difference, according to the participants, is insufficient territorial coverage of social and other services and lack of focus on the older people who live in poverty and/or in rural areas.

c) The evaluation conclusions from Novi Sad repeat the concern that the older people from rural areas are much less informed about their rights, first and foremost in social welfare, but in other fields as well. The older people from rural areas are significantly less involved in some activities in their own local communities. The school curricula does not feature enough topics that deal with ageing and old age.

Self-organization of the older people was sufficiently encouraged so it takes place in the form of work and membership in clubs for the older people, which are relatively widespread. Along with cultural, recreational and educative contents, these clubs often offer a range of daycare services provided in the community.

The older people are one of the population groups whose members are more often part of citizens' association than the general population. Usually, they are members of the Association of Pensioners of the

Republic of Serbia, which has its branches at the local level.⁶ The discussion participants believe that the share of volunteer work among the older people is insufficient given the existing resources, but there are older people who are engaged in volunteer work, and this results in positive effects, primarily due to enthusiasm of certain individuals.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade again presented a good practice example of the NSA implementation: the creation of PENZIN portal, which had an excellent positive role in informing the older citizens on issues important for realizing their rights and meeting their daily needs. The creation of this portal has significantly contributed to improving the social inclusion of the older people in Serbia, but other online sources of information should not go without mention (websites of ministries, social welfare institutions, healthcare institutions, humanitarian organizations and NGOs, etc.). These websites were either created or developed in the period relevant

for the Strategy, and by providing appropriate information, they have contributed to social inclusion of the older people.

It was established that the older people in this region are well integrated in activities in the community, but at the same time, available resources of the older people are significantly larger, so we cannot be fully satisfied. It was stated that, in line with demographic forecasts and the influx of new generations in the near future, the resources in the group of “younger” older people population of Belgrade will be even larger. This is why it is important to better use their contribution to development, both at the city and at the state levels.

There are more older people in Belgrade who are part of clubs and associations in comparison to other regions of Serbia. Usually, they are also members of the Association of Pensioners of the Republic of Serbia. At the level of the Republic of Serbia, as well as in Belgrade, the Third Age Movement works for sev-

⁶ In the entire country, the Association of Pensioners of the Republic of Serbia has around 300,000 members, which is slightly less than a quarter of the total number of pensioners. Members of the Association of Pensioners are mostly the older people who receive lower pensions. This is why the Association also always implements activities of humanitarian nature.





eral years. This movement gathers a large number of older people interested in the active ageing concept, who participate in sports, recreational and educative activities. Once a year, to celebrate October 1st as the International Day of the Older people, they organize the Olympics of Sports, Health and Culture, which consists of competitions and socializing, and the number of participants is growing every year.

The older citizens of Belgrade are also engaged in some 15 humanitarian organizations and NGOs, which are connected within the network „Humanas“ that works for the older people and with the older people. The Red Cross alone has around one thousand older volunteers, and volunteer work is an essential part of other NGOs, such as „Amity“, „Bread of Life“, „Caritas“ and others. The local self-governments are joining this trend, as we can conclude based on the successful activities of the Volunteer Center of the Municipality of Zvezdara in Belgrade. A lot can be done to continue the activities on integrating the older people citizens in the society, because this has an important positive impact on the quality of life of the older people.

III. FAIR (MACRO-ECONOMIC) DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

To implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on providing care for the older people as victims of transition, meeting the obligations related to the EU integrations, and cooperating with the United Nations in the field of ageing. The major activities also included dealing with poverty reduction, introducing the social pensions, and adapting the system of pension and disability insurance.

a) The evaluation conclusions on these activities in Niš pinpoint an example of lack of care for the older people: the city administration was very slow to meet its obligations pertaining from the Law on Social Welfare. In accordance with the Law, in early 2015 the home treatment and palliative care service was established (the Institute for Gerontology and Palliative Care), but this service hasn't started working yet.

On the other hand, participants have welcomed the measures for pensioners in the labor market (older craftsmen entrepreneurs), which allow them to prolong their working activities beyond the legally stipu-

lated retirement age (65 years). In addition, it was concluded that the overall capacities to provide assistance to the older people in this area were close to their limits. Efforts were made to respond to every request for services, but in order to properly select the beneficiaries, some alternatives must be offered.

b) The evaluation conclusions on these activities in Kragujevac focused on introducing social pensions – which haven't been introduced even though they were planned in several action plans at the level of state authorities. It was confirmed that the need for this type of social transfers in this area became more and more urgent. In addition, there is a concern that in the upcoming period, a certain number of older citizens will remain without their pensions, which will result in an increase of financial vulnerability of the older people.⁷ At the same time, older workers, just like older citizens, are not being offered enough active empowerment meas-

ures which would raise their chances or give them opportunities to avoid poverty in old age – there is no appropriate easy access to informal education for older trainees, trainings for different skills or educative courses and seminars at different fields so the potential of the older people remains underused.

c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad also emphasized the need to introduce social pensions. This would mean to introduce the so-called zero pension pillar, but only for the financially vulnerable older people who have entered their third age without regular income in the form of contribution pensions, and who are living in dire circumstances.

In addition, the conclusions emphasized that in this region there was discrimination against the rural older people. Due to economic reasons and a lack of understanding of the needs of older citizens, post offices,



⁷ In the Republic of Serbia, slightly less than one half (40%) of older people without regular income in the form of pension have paid contributions for their years of service, but the period of paying the contributions was under the stipulated threshold of 15 years, which is the minimum to be eligible for pension. This is one of the findings of the survey „They Cannot Wait“, published by the NGO Amity in 2009.



health centers, schools and other branches of public services are being closed in such areas. Such rationalizations make these services virtually unavailable to the rural older people, or at best they cannot access them easily.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade highlighted that the needs of older citizens were identified, while the capacities of several support systems to appropriately respond to these needs were established. This could serve as a good basis for a fair distribution of resources. However, in practice adequate support mechanisms haven't been established given that there is no sufficiently developed cooperation between different sectors, which hinders the implementation of joint actions. Social pensions haven't been introduced due to financial reasons.

As for the EU-related obligations which concern the rights of the older people in the labor market and social welfare, they have been ratified through the Revised European Charter of Social Rights, and the Republic of Serbia regularly reports to the EU on this matter. Our international obligations in the field of cooperation in the area of aging are also being met.

IV. ADAPTING THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION AGEING

In order to meet the goal of this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities mostly aimed to improve the legal framework for efficient poverty reduction, to improve the practice of incentives and subsidies to the older people, and to improve the benefits for vulnerable pensioners and older citizens (medical spa treatments, higher amounts of permanent and one-off financial aid to the disadvantaged older people, secured stable funding of soup kitchens).

In addition, there were activities to improve the accessibility to long term care services, social welfare and health care, as well as to support aging in place, to raise the accommodation capacity in institutions, to develop alternative forms of accommodation (social housing, protected housing, small housing communities), and to provide support to NGOs and private service providers. There was also development of services such as clubs or home services with different contents, such as assistance and care, food delivery, phone aid or response to alarm. Other developed alternative forms of support include day care services for older people with health issues.

a) The evaluation conclusion of these activities on the territories of South and East Serbia in Niš stated a good practice example of the NSA implementation in this strategic direction, in the area of adapting the social welfare system to ageing. At the same time, participants said they were aware that the needs of the older people for long term care services were significantly higher than the current capacities could meet, even though such services were recently developed.

Other participants from this region have agreed with the conclusion that the best results in their municipalities were achieved in the field of social welfare. Most of the activities took place in the public sector, in social welfare institutions such as the center in Leskovac, and best results were achieved in the field of institutional social protection of the older people. In Aleksinac, thanks to a well-developed program of rehabilitation, a certain number of beneficiaries were able to leave their nursing homes, or to continue residing in the nursing home for mentally sound patients.

Another good example comes from the municipality of Kučevo, where social welfare for the older people was significantly improved

thanks to the work of the Gerontology Center, even though the nursing home struggles both with a lack of staff and with insufficient funds. It was concluded that these activities must be continued, in line with all defined parameters, especially when it comes to including the private service providers and the NGO sector in the official social protection system which entails regular verifications of quality and observance of the stipulated service standards.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Central and West Serbia, in Kragujevac, assessed that in this area very good results were achieved, which are proportional to the capacities of the community. A good practice example of the NSA implementation is the project of integrated social welfare and healthcare services in Kragujevac. Today, this project has become a regular social welfare activity in the public sector, implemented together with the Center for Development of Services "Knjeginja Milica" which provides services of home assistance and care. The services are no longer integrated (as in, social and healthcare services), but a good result of this project is the creation of network between the two sectors, which is confirmed by a signed protocol between the local institutions of social wel-

fare and healthcare. In the same period of time, healthcare was improved by establishing the home treatment and visiting service. The Gerontology Center, which is the public sector nursing home, provides daycare services which also used to be a part of the integrated model. The Center for Development of Services is happy to share its experiences with other towns and municipalities.

A positive result is also the increase of the amount of permanent social aid for the older people, which is paid from the national budget, even though the number of beneficiaries eligible for this service is reduced. Another positive result is the increase of the amount of the one-off financial aid for the older people which is paid from the budget of the local community. However, in the municipalities of the entire region, it was said that there are limits for one-off financial aid for the disadvantaged older people, set by the local self-governments. Often, the funds are insufficient either because not enough money is allocated for social transfers, or because the municipality struggles with poverty, which is reflected in its budget. As for clubs for the older people, according to the law, they are not treated as a community-provided daycare service. Therefore, the conclusion is that it is necessary to include the clubs in the

legal framework, officially making it a form of support for the older people.

In this region, Kragujevac is the leader in good practice examples in the field of social welfare, because it encourages the development of NGOs and humanitarian organizations. The NGO "Victoria" implements several projects for providing support to disadvantaged older people. Among them, there is a public works project which trains unemployed persons with disabilities to provide home assistance services. As for humanitarian organizations, the local Red Cross set a good practice example of the NSA implementation. The Red Cross branch in Kragujevac is one of the best in the country, and it developed a whole range of activities in the local community for the older people and with the older people.

These activities vary from social and healthcare services for the poorest and most vulnerable population groups, to organizing social events and other forms of creative leisure time for the older people. Advantage is given to self-organization and networking of the older people, so that they can help each other and socialize. After several years of efforts, advocacy and support from the national and the local levels, the Municipality of Novi Pazar has finally opened a new department for

social welfare, which nowadays operates as a nursing home for adults and older people. Such a nursing home was necessary for the entire region, because there were no services of this kind. Progress was achieved even though the center for social welfare struggles with a lack of employees. In brief, the implementation of most aspects of this strategic direction was positively evaluated. Development of services for the older people resulted in introducing some new services, such as the service of psycho-social support for the family. Such services should not be abandoned.

- c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Northern Serbia (the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina) in Novi Sad highlighted that, in the field of social welfare reforms, in comparison to the situation in 2006 when the implementation process had begun, the biggest progress was achieved in the development of nursing homes. However, it was also noted that in the last few years, the number of older people beneficiaries registered in the social welfare system at the level of towns and municipalities has decreased.

The centers for social welfare are burdened by the unemployed and other vulnerable groups and beneficiaries, so in this region there are several thousands of older beneficiaries

less than in 2011, when the new law on social welfare was put into force. Some legal provisions, such as penalty measures against the family which is obliged to provide for elderly members, have proven to be a very efficient way to discourage the disadvantaged older citizens from asking for their right on financial aid. In addition, there is a decrease in accommodating the older people in foster care homes in urban areas, while in some municipalities this form of welfare is better developed.

Another good practice example of the NSA implementation consists of the activities of the Gerontology Center in Novi Sad, concerning capacity building to provide services to the older people in their local communities, as well as fostering a whole range of different services and partnerships between service providers from different sectors. The Provincial Institute for Social Protection presented several examples of cooperation with local self-governments on networking between local social services and introducing quality standards. They have also presented some examples of international cooperation with the neighboring countries, with exchange of experiences in social services for the older people and challenges in aging policies.

According to the participants, the best results in implementing the planned activities were achieved in the field of institutional protection of the older people. This success consists of raising the accommodation capacities (by opening private nursing homes), of more humane conditions in nursing homes in terms of respect of fundamental human rights of beneficiaries (more comfort, improved standardized services), of stronger role and importance of rehabilitation (more rehabilitation services), as well as of all sorts of daycare activities for the beneficiaries (more programs and leisure activities). The deinstitutionalization process is also progressing by developing a range of community services for the older people and strengthening the connections between the nursing home and its environment. However, in some municipalities like, for instance in Bečej, the daycare capacities in urban areas are lacking, and the same goes for the home care service in rural areas.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities on the territory of Serbia and the City of Belgrade agree that the normative framework concerning the financial benefits for the older people living in poverty was improved by the adoption of the Law on Social Welfare, but the effects of this law in practice are still not visible enough.

Largest progress was achieved in the implementation of the NSA in the field of institutional social protection of the older people, both at the level of the Republic of Serbia and especially in the City of Belgrade. The Gerontology Center in Belgrade and the nursing homes in the public sector have improved the selection and the quality of their services by introducing a quality standard. The majority (80%) of 195 private nursing homes in Serbia (which is the number of nursing homes opened in the period covered by the Strategy) are on the territory of Belgrade or in its vicinity, and therefore in this region the accommodation capacities were raised the most. The Gerontology Center in Belgrade is the social welfare institution that was the first to receive the working license.

In development of community services, steps forward were made in the services funded by the city of Belgrade. However, this is not the case for all services, but only for those concerning clubs for the older people and home assistance and care. It should be noted that we still don't have organized databases on services provided by the NGOs and the private sector. A step forward is also creating and adopting standards for home assistance and care





services. A good practice example in implementation is promotion and lobbying within the city administration to develop and introduce a new daycare service for the older people with dementia in Belgrade, recently initiated by the NGO Amity – Strength of Friendship.

Incentives and exceptions from paying certain expenses were introduced for older citizens (65+) and older people living in poverty (such as reduced price of public utility services or lower price of public transport). This was implemented in the majority of towns and municipalities in Serbia, in Belgrade in particular. According to the City Decree for Social Welfare of Citizens, the city of Belgrade provided an increase of the permanent financial aid for older people living in poverty of slightly less than 20%. The city also provides free public transport for the older people (65+), free use of libraries, reduced ticket prices for certain events etc. The funding of soup kitchens is secured in Bel-

grade, as well as in all larger urban centers in Serbia.

At the level of whole Serbia and in particular on the territory of Belgrade, the Serbian Red Cross and the NGO network “HumanaS” (15 members) are engaged in networking and capacity building for different types of services for the older people who are financially and socially vulnerable and are in poor health.

In the city center for social welfare in Belgrade, i.e. in the municipal social welfare departments, it was noted that instead of a gradual reduction of the number of employees, there was a sudden decrease of staff, primarily due to professionals going to retirement. This caused certain difficulties in carrying out the entire work, which was also reflected on the work with older beneficiaries of social welfare. It was highlighted that a particular problem are the complex affairs concerning cases of deprivation of legal capacities, or of abuse of contracts on lifelong support.

V. ADAPTING THE LABOR MARKET TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF LABOR FORCE AND POPULATION AGING

In order to meet the goal of this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on introducing the measures for flexible and gradual retirement, on increasing the number of users of voluntary pension funds, on reducing the unemployment rate of older workers and on increasing the share of older people who are aging in an active manner. The activities also included prevention of discrimination against the older people at workplace by implementing the appropriate measures, as well as removing the obstacles for volunteer work of the older people.

a) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Niš assess that it is a positive step that now pensioners can get employed. There were frequent media campaigns for various types of voluntary pension and disability insurance funds. However, the income of workers is relatively modest, which prevents them from contributing more to these funds. In practice, gender-based discrimination and ageism in the labor market happen on daily bases, even though in the period of time

covered by the Strategy, a national legal framework strictly prohibiting such practices was adopted.

The local employment services usually only register unemployed older workers, failing to implement the active employment policy measures. In Leskovac, a municipal proposal to organize a municipality-funded training to train 57 caregivers to provide service for the older people was not adopted. There are no appropriate incentives to employ older people workers, such as volunteer work. At the moment, only the nursing homes pay more attention to the active use of now.

Gradually, the market comes up with certain advantages for older people consumers (such as discounts, home delivery of groceries and cooked meals etc.). However, in order to become eligible for some of these perks, pensioners and the older people must go through long and often difficult administrative procedures.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac assessed that the implementation of flexible and gradual retirement was insufficient. In addition to voluntary insurance, it is proposed to introduce company insurance in

order to lift the burden from the future generations. It was said that, in order to reduce the unemployment rate of the older people, the potentials of older workers in the labor market must be used in a better way. That is to say it is necessary to encourage and develop their potentials through the social entrepreneurship system, and this includes the appropriate support from the state. The law should regulate and secure support but not in the way it was done in the draft law. The draft law provides support only to establishing of social enterprises, while a certain level of support is necessary to help these enterprises operate in the free market. This is the only way to achieve some effects.

c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad state that the working conditions in the labor market of today are not adapted to all workers, and that employers should be stimulated to employ all workers. It was noted that, in spite of regulations in the labor market, older workers still suffer discrimination to some extent. Anti-discrimination mechanisms that will protect older workers must be strengthened. To boot, the active employment policy measures were reduced due to the economic crisis,



which is why we cannot expect to see a decrease of the unemployment rate of older workers.

The activities and measures for flexible and gradual retirement were extremely modest, which is why their further implementation should be supported, as they work in the best interest of the older people. Even though a new Law on Volunteer Work was adopted, it did not remove the obstacles for a greater engagement of the older people in volunteer work. This is why it is necessary to amend some parts of the Law concerning the conditions for volunteer work, in order to meet this goal of the Strategy.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade have noted that the effects of the implementation were very modest. Even though older workers (age 50+) are the majority in the labor age population of Serbia (except in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija), the structure of the employed workers consist of only one third of older workers (or 33.3%). Out of job seekers, more than one fifth are older than the age of fifty (23%). This proves that the older generations (65-70 and 70-75) are in a particularly disadvantaged position, and soon enough they will be

the largest generation in this country's population.

Among the employed workers today, one fifth are in the age group of 60-65. With the economic crisis in the past couple of years, we have lost the previously achieved positive effects of incentive measures for employers to employ older workers, which were shown in the Labor Force Survey. It is proposed to turn the active employment policy towards some other reliable mechanisms, such as, primarily, education and training, including additional qualification courses, training for new occupations, and investments into self-employment of the older people.

No progress was made with introduction of flexible retirement measures, which hurts the most certain groups of women in the labor market who should be given the choice to work until the age of 65. Anti-discrimination mechanisms that will prevent discrimination against older workers should be enforced. The media should have the main role in informing the youth on the importance of voluntary pension funds. Given the needs that we have, it is necessary to introduce free volunteer courses for volunteer work, as well as other incentives that would encourage people to participate in volunteer work.

VI. FACILITATING LIFELONG LEARNING FOR THE OLDER PEOPLE

In order to implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the majority of planned activities aimed to fight against prejudice related to education of the older people, and to provide appropriate accessibility to formal and informal education systems for older students. It is planned to extend the Third Age University network to the territory of the entire country. With the financial support of the government and the relevant ministries, implementation of trainings for independent life in the old age shall be encouraged, as well as trainings for professional development and/or employment of older workers, and trainings to raise the literacy of the older people.

a) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Niš note that there are very limited options for professional development and/or additional qualification courses for older workers, even though they are happy to attend them. The principle of active ageing among the older people mostly encourages the establishment of cultural and artistic associations and similar recreational activities, while the opportunities to include the older people in the educational system are low.

The education system as it is today does not meet the needs of economy in our society, and in particular the needs of the older people. The Third Age University network, even though it gave excellent initial results, was not extended to this region. On the other hand, unfortunately, even in the places where the network was present, it has been shut down.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac underline that not enough has been done, that the formal education system remains closed to older students, and that nothing was done to raise its accessibility. In the area of informal education and training, there are trainings for requalification and/or raising the literacy levels, but the Third Age University does not have the capacity to implement programs in this region even though that would be necessary, especially given the interest among the older people. At the same time, it can be concluded that programs and trainings for independent life in old age are necessary, because at the moment such programs are not available.

c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad noted that education was not fully acces-



sible to the older people, and that in the meantime there haven't been enough activities to counter the prejudice related to older people in education system. Courses and promotion of education of the older people are necessary in all spheres of social life.

The Third Age University project was good. At the very beginning, it was met with a lot of interest, a great attendance rate and a lot of involvement among the older people. However, it was not sustainable without additional funds, so the planned expansion of the network never happened. The issues of funding these activities related to education of the older people should be resolved, again in line with the possibilities, and the network should be expanded because very soon all the funds invested will prove themselves fully justified.

It was noted that there were not enough trainings on independent living in old age. Such programs for independent and autonomous living in old age are really necessary for a relatively large target group. Introducing these trainings for the older people into practice can be implemented in several areas, starting from the labor market (as part of preparations for retirement),

healthcare and social welfare, education and culture to information, sports and recreation. The media should have an important role in the implementation of projects, education, promotion and sharing of good practice examples.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade highlight that it is high time to make a direct connection between education and the labor market and that in this process the older people must have better access to both. This means that there should be more room for older people in universities, but also at all other levels of education.

Based on the good experiences from the Third Age University project, whose activities were slowly withering away without the necessary support, it was proposed to continue to develop its activities within the gerontology centers or nursing homes, or in general within the social welfare system institutions. This would certainly contribute to empowering of the most vulnerable part of the older people. Here, it would also be important to introduce specific programs for independent living in old age which are missing at the moment, or other training courses depending on the needs and wishes of older trainees.

VII. ADEQUATE HEALTHCARE TO MEET THE NEEDS AND ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT LIVING OF THE OLDER PEOPLE

In order to implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on establishing the efficient primary healthcare that would meet the needs of the older people, both with regard to scope and quality. This direction also included the activities to establish as many home treatment and visiting services within healthcare centers as possible. It also included the development of improved referral services to other healthcare instances, (hospitals and clinics) and social welfare institutions, as well as healthcare, education and social services (such as palliative care services). In addition to these activities, it was planned to establish more nursing homes or raise the accommodation capacities for long term care, and to implement special activities to improve the mental health protection of the older people. In addition, geriatrics and gerontology should be promoted as subjects that could be studied in medical high schools, colleges and universities.

- a) At the round table in Niš, there were representatives of the home treatment and visiting services depart-

ment of the healthcare center in Nish who actively took part in the discussion. In the evaluation conclusions, it was emphasized that this department's contribution to providing primary healthcare services to the older people (3000 patients, 3 medical doctors) could be much bigger if they only had one more vehicle. They were pleased with the level of cooperation with the social welfare institutions such as the center for social welfare and nursing homes for adults and older people. On the other hand, the representatives of the center for social welfare believe that the cooperation with the gerontology center is very good, while the cooperation with healthcare institutions presents a bigger challenge. It is a fact that the older people harbor prejudice related to accommodation in nursing home, because they see such homes as "places where people go to die", especially since more and more often, residential parts of the homes are transformed into hospitals. This is why the discussion participants believe that the cooperation between the healthcare sector and the social welfare sector must be legally regulated and structurally arranged.

- b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac emphasized that in practice there was a system

of primary healthcare for the older people, but it is burdened with a whole set of difficulties such as lack of staff, insufficient working equipment and insufficient funds. At the moment, in two thirds of the villages in this region there are no accessible services of primary healthcare. In providing healthcare services to older patients living in the rural areas of this region, it would be good to provide more healthcare services for the older people by implementing active employment policy measures for doctors.

In institutional healthcare, officially there are no capacities for long-term care. However, in practice, this service is present in institutional healthcare, because within gerontology centers, nursing homes and nursing home departments within centers for social welfare in Serbia there are healthcare and long term care services provided to more than one half of accommodated beneficiaries. These services are not appropriately recognized and valued in the system. This is why they should be all introduced in a unique long term care system with defined services and funding sources, a record of activities and professional training of employees to work with the older people. We should aim towards the integrated



model of long term care, because it is harmonized with the European integration process and the demands that the Republic of Serbia must meet in that regard.

- c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad emphasized that primary healthcare was available to the older people, but the accommodation capacities for long term care (nursing homes for long term care) were very limited. It was noted that palliative care was a big challenge for the healthcare sector because of the lack of funds, which is why the older patients in final stages of illness are mostly sent to home treatment.

The health insurance system covers home treatment but it does not cover care services, even though often they are needed the most. At this level of community development, it is difficult to advocate for unique and integrated healthcare and social welfare services for the older people, which is exactly what the older citizens need. We should definitely avoid a situation in which gerontology centers and nursing homes are

labeled as places where people go to die.

The secondary healthcare instance for the older people is not organized well, and these services are not accessible enough to the older people, especially to very old patients. In the reorganized system of secondary healthcare, it is possible to find new accommodation capacities for long term care for the older people as well as for palliative medicine.

Geriatrics as a subject is not sufficiently included in the education curricula, and the same goes for gerontology. This must be changed relatively quickly by introducing these subjects into appropriate programs and levels of formal education.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade noted that, from the point of view of the older people and their needs, the expected progress with the reforms was not achieved. To boot, there is a lack of human resources and funds. In these circumstances it is difficult to talk about regulating the cooperation and coordination between the

healthcare system and the welfare system. The institution of a chosen family doctor turned out to be a good practice example in treatment of older patients.

It is proposed to amend the normative framework concerning human resources in order to increase the number of staff working in primary healthcare, home treatment and visiting services (taking into consideration the age structure of population on the territory covered by the healthcare institution). In capitation, the variable share should be increased from 10% to 40%.

The appropriate accommodation capacities in social welfare system (in nursing homes) which are objectively already prepared for long term care of terminal patients should be regulated and recognized. Accordingly, these parts of healthcare services should be recognized as equal in the healthcare system. Given that it is not present enough, geriatrics (and gerontology) should be more widely introduced as a subject in medical high schools, colleges, universities and specialist studies.

VIII. IMPROVED GENDER EQUALITY

In order to improve this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on adopting the appropriate strategic and legal framework at the level of the government and the state. This includes the following: activities on eliminating the gender pay gap in salaries and pensions, work on social and healthcare services, but also other activities in the fields of gender equality, prevention and protection from neglect, discrimination and violence against the older people (women in particular), and protection from domestic violence.

- a) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Niš stated that the older people, and older women in particular, did not participate enough in political bodies i.e. in city administration bodies where all decisions were made. At the same time, objectively speaking, older women are far more burdened with tasks of providing care to sick and powerless household members and carrying out household chores in general. In addition, older women are much more often victims of domestic violence, even though in practice the problem is that this phenomenon is often in-



visible, staying out of reach of the appropriate system institutions.

- b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac underlined that some progress has been achieved in the period covered by the strategy. In five cities (municipalities) in this region there are all the instruments and mechanisms of gender equality protection – in addition to strategies and action plans, the municipalities have established the working bodies which are directly tasked to deal with gender equality issues.

However, the measures for direct achievement of gender equality haven't been fully adopted, which is why public awareness must be raised anew every time. In the labor sphere the regulations must state that equal work means equal pay regardless of the employees' gender. There are difficulties in pension and disability insurance of farmers, where due to administrative oversights in practice the position of older women in rural households is jeopardized. The protocols on pro-

tection of victims of domestic violence do not mention older victims in particular. The adopted municipal protocols on protection of victims of domestic violence should include all the appropriate parameters that would ensure the adequate treatment of the older people victims of violence, older women in particular.

- c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad state that a significant step forward was made when the normative and the strategic frameworks for gender equality were adopted at the level of the government and the state. Thus, now we can claim that formally, from the legal point of view, gender equality is guaranteed. However, in almost all areas of daily life there are frequent cases of violating the stipulated provisions. This is why more has to be done in the upcoming period in order to operationalize the adopted regulations and to directly implement them in daily practice.
- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade say that, in the-

ory, we do have gender equality, but in real life it hasn't been achieved yet. We do not have data for a more precise evaluation which is why we should introduce new international indicators („Gop“and „Share“surveys) and establish the so-called monitoring centers. Progress in the gender equality sphere is hindered by the widespread traditional family patterns, as well as by wide gaps between the urban and the rural areas of the country. This situation requires special education of not only the public, but also the media.

It was emphasized that for the past two years in the City Center for Social Welfare, i.e. in the 17 municipal departments of the center for social welfare, there were trainings for employees on the topic of violence against the older people. The goal is to prepare the professionals of the City Center to adequately respond to these specific situations, to early detect and identify cases of violence against the older people and to adequately provide protection to the older people victims of violence (domestic violence victims in particular).

IX. PROVIDING SUPPORT TO FAMILIES WITH ELDERLY MEMBERS

In order to implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on identifying and defining the needs for services in single households, older people households and families with mixed generation members. The activities also included promotion of family solidarity, prevention and community response to discrimination and violence, and providing support to families who care for their older and dependent members (such as trainings for service providers and family members and introducing respite care into the system).

a) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Niš underlined that development in the Republic of Serbia was not harmonized at demographic and economic levels. In addition, the epidemiology forecasts defined by the public health institutes are not harmonized with the manner in which the healthcare services are organized and provided. Monitoring of the activities also takes place at the level of social welfare system institutions, but in each institution separately, so we do not have a clear joint picture of the needs, nor of the individual vulnerability level of older citizens living in this region. Instead of

promoting solidarity, the public only sporadically hears about cases of older people abuse in the context of abuse of lifelong support contracts or full deprivation of legal capacity. The range of services provided to families with older members is as developed as the financial possibilities of local self-governments allow.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac highlight the high level of satisfaction with the development of a particular social welfare service: home assistance, which became the pillar of support to older people households and families who care for their sick and dependent members. This service is defined as a basic service, which indicates that other services must be introduced as well: home delivery of cooked meals, various forms of household services depending on the specific needs, psycho-social support to families, etc.

c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad deem that the activities on improvement and promotion on family solidarity should be transferred to the next strategic framework as well. Some shortcomings were noted too: for instance, financially and socially vulnerable families of older people (so-called older people and single households)



do not receive enough financial support at the moment. At the same time, there is not enough support for the informal caregivers, i.e. family members who care for their older people parents or relatives.

Employers could provide support by harmonizing the working hours and family obligations of caregivers (by providing the option for part-time work and similar). The non-profit sector as service provider hasn't been sufficiently developed. This sector is cost-effective and flexible enough and it can provide different services to these families – from carrying out household chores to caregiving services, companionship or respite. In addition, organization of trainings for family members who care for the older people with various illnesses, Red Cross programs, and activities of centers for social welfare focused on prevention of neglect and abuse of the older people must also be improved.

There are certain steps forward in developing the community services for the older people, but this development must continue in accordance with the population ageing

dynamics – what is needed is development of home assistance services, and also clubs for the older people with different kinds of additional services provided there. The healthcare system is such that older people households still do not have sufficient access to home treatment and visiting services within healthcare centers, so it is necessary to particularly build these capacities in all healthcare centers.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade assess the current situation as worse than it was when the Strategy was adopted, because families nowadays bear much more burden than ten years ago. There are strong arguments to support the request for the urgent organized community response to this issue.

Here, the good practice example mentioned at the beginning of the event was emphasized again. This example is relevant both to this strategic direction, and to advocating for support to families that care for their members suffering from dementia. There is certainly a strong need to support families with older persons suffering from

dementia, especially given that we can expect an increase of this condition in the upcoming period. This means that specific improvements in capacity building of all appropriate healthcare and social services must be planned, as well as informal education of both professionals and family members – caregivers of persons who suffer from different types of dementia or other grave illnesses. The rights of these families to receive financial support should be expanded, and the home care and palliative care services network should be developed. The caregivers must have flexible and shortened working hours and they must receive support to adapt their living space.

However, given that nowadays there are more new problems coming up, it is not possible to provide a wholesome and timed response to the existing problems. To support the older people households, we should involve more volunteers, and among these volunteers there should be older people persons themselves who could use their personal experiences to contribute to solving the difficulties that the older people households are facing.



X. MONITORING OF THE NSA IMPLEMENTATION, IMPROVEMENT OF ACADEMIC WORK, AND DEVELOPMENT OF NGOS

In order to implement this strategic direction of the NSA, the planned activities were mostly focused on improving all records keeping systems that serve to monitor the NSA. There were also activities aimed to improve academic work in the fields of gerontology and geriatrics, as well as activities to encourage the establishment and work of the NGOs dealing with the older people. Educational activities were particularly highlighted as they promoted the personal responsibility of each individual for the conditions in which they would spend their old age. This involves promoting the concept of active ageing and healthy lifestyles that improve the quality of life in the old age.

a) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Niš highlight that the non-profit and private sectors of service providers for the older people must be involved as soon as possible, in line with the current regulations, in order to assure a unique and integrated monitoring system within the social welfare system at all levels, from the national to the local levels. Only then will we have a complete and precise picture about this aspect of life of the older people.

At the local level it is necessary to develop the research-based scientific approach to resolving everyday problems of adapting the society to the concept of population ageing. In addition, the resources of the older people in this region are still underused and their potential to work in NGOs and in self-help and peer-support groups should be better utilized.

b) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Kragujevac noted the importance of keeping records on implementation in all different sectors, as well as collecting this information in a network which would serve a unique database at the local level. The recordkeeping system in social welfare and healthcare is improved, and the work on its further improvement continues. However, there's still no efficient cross-sectoral cooperation and networking at all levels, from the local to the national.

In this region, towns and municipalities mostly support the development of the NGO sector by co-funding projects for service provision and better quality of life for the older people. However, there are exceptions, like in the municipality of Čačak where it was noted that the allocated funds were insufficient, which consequently meant that this sector remained underdeveloped. In addition, the

accountability of all stakeholders partaking in the process must be increased, in order to properly implement the strategic plan.

- c) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Novi Sad noted the lack of a unique database on implemented activities of the strategic plan, as well as the lack of periodic reviews of the NSA implementation, primarily at the local community level in towns and municipalities. On the other hand, the monitoring at the national level, in the context of international cooperation for the relevant stakeholders in local communities, was not sufficiently transparent.

Given the importance of the topic of aging in the development of our society, the academic thought was not sufficiently developed or utilized. In this strategic direction, „some things can be copied from the current NSA because they haven't been implemented at all“. The NGO sector that provides caregiving services to the older people must be developed further so that, along with the private sector, it can become an equal partner to the public sector of social welfare. This is the only way to provide the adequate community responses in adapting our society to the consequences of population aging. In the upcoming period, it

is mandatory to improve the planning activities themselves, as they are of utmost importance for a modern and organized society.

- d) The evaluation conclusions of these activities in Belgrade stated that the expected improvements were not achieved. At the city level in Belgrade, not enough work has been done to monitor the implementation of the NSA, or to monitor the local plans in the appropriate, similar fields. There is another particular problem: in the very text of the NSA, the appropriate funds needed to implement the activities were not listed alongside the activities themselves. This was done in the aftermath, along the way, in line with the possibilities of each individual stakeholder or community, and it had an impact on the implementation of these activities in practice. This is also a direct reason why it was not possible to more seriously consider the introduction of social pensions, or to define and establish a joint long term care policy.

To monitor the NSA in the upcoming period, it is important to establish a specific new body. Its members should be representatives of the implementation stakeholders and its task should include monitoring and fostering of a more effective and efficient implementation of the

planned activities. Before that, in the planning phase, the necessary funds for the implementation should be roughly defined as well.

One of the good results in this line of activities is that the academic demographic study „Demographic Profile of the Elderly Population in Serbia“ was uploaded on the website of the Republic Statistical Office. This study presents the set of relevant characteristics of this population group and explains the appropriate trends and forecasts which are important both for the evaluation and for the further planning process. In this context, the importance of aging of the older people was emphasized, as well as the need to define the oldest older people as the „fourth age“ citizens.

In this area where academic work is more than needed, there are not enough engaged, adequate human resources, nor are there sufficiently connected and planned activities in gerontology. Judging by the number of surveys in the period covered by the Strategy, it seems that the NGO sector became more dominant, even though it would be very important to make the studies on ageing and old age a more important part of the regular program activities of the state academic institutes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the first time in the Republic of Serbia, we are finishing one planning cycle which concerned the adapting of our society to the consequences of aging. Now the process of creating a new strategic framework has begun. After elaborating on the results of discussions focused on each individual goal of the National Strategy on Aging 2006-2015, we should highlight several important recommendations about the priorities for the next document. These recommendations were, in different manners and from several aspects, accepted by the majority of participants in all four round tables dealing with evaluation of the NSA implementation.

The strategic framework of development related to population aging should remain within the boundaries of the previously set goals, or 10 strategic directions of activities, because they cover all priorities of our society in adapting to the consequences of population aging. These strategic goals are also included in the European Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the form of ten commitments, and their implementation is arranged at the level of the United Nations by the year 2022.

Poverty reduction among the older people is certainly a priority in all actions related to aging. Absolute poverty should be eliminated and actions should be undertaken to reduce the risks of the older people finding themselves below the poverty line (by introducing legal provisions on the rights and financial benefits, community services and measures and social pensions). Family values and family solidarity should be strengthened, burden should be lifted and vulnerable families should receive support.

The principle of sustainability must be consistently respected when planning activities for the older people and with the older people. This means using reliable data and forecasts made by experts from relevant areas (labor market, education, social welfare, healthcare, etc.) as the basis to timely plan and allocate all the available resources, including the financial ones, needed for the implementation of the strategic activities.

The legal framework for pension and disability insurance should be harmonized with the strategic framework on population aging and international obligations in the field of aging (The Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging and The European Implementation

Strategy for the Madrid Plan). Among other things, this means pushing back the retirement age and introducing flexible and gradual retirement.

The long term care policy must be established. The initiative for funding social welfare and healthcare services, and other services and rights of the older people and persons with disabilities, must be encouraged, as these persons need long term everyday assistance and support. The law must regulate coordination and cooperation between healthcare and social welfare, establish the funding manner of the activities, define the appropriate rights and services and ***increase the capacity of services***, in particular the healthcare services. In all these sectors among all service providers, a ***quality system*** must be introduced. ***Non-profit and private service providers should be strengthened*** in order to become equal partners of the state ***and they should all be included in the unique national network*** for support to the older people and persons with disabilities who need assistance on daily basis.

Investments must be made into lifelong learning of the older people. This entails the implementation of educative

programs for the older people within the formal education system, education for work with the older people (gerontology, geriatrics) and academic surveys and evaluation in the sphere of aging. In the informal education, it is necessary to provide professional development and training for older workers, active aging programs, third-age university courses, and programs for learning self-care skills.

It is necessary to undertake measures of prevention and protection from discrimination, neglect and the abuse of the older people. Systematic and individual age and gender-based discrimination must be eliminated from the daily life of the older people, and the rights of the older people must be guaranteed in the sphere of labor and in the labor market, in healthcare and social welfare, in education, culture, consumer protection and in other areas.

The environment should be adapted to the specific physical capacities of the older people and persons with disabilities, from personal to public living spaces (apartments, houses, public institutions, streets, public transport, squares, parks, etc.). In addition, the state must assure the security of the older people, whether in everyday life (crime-related risks) or in emergency situations in particular (disaster-related risks and similar).

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