

**REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
(RIS) OF THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING (MIPAA)
IN LITHUANIA**

ABSTRACT

This report presents Lithuania's progress in implementing the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The key national document regulating the Lithuanian policy actions relating to the ageing problems is the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing adopted by the Government in 2004 and its Implementing Measures for 2005–2013. The Strategy is implemented by respective state institutions within the limits of their competence. Seeking to ensure the possibility to assess the progress achieved, to determine the obstacles and the problems, the monitoring system for the implementation of this Strategy has been developed. Consequently, the working group has been formed from the representatives of state institutions and non-governmental organisations concerned, which monitors the implementation of measures.

When preparing this report, the abovementioned monitoring group convened to discuss its preparation and submit the material, evaluations and proposals – both by state institutions and non-governmental organisations. This report has thus been based on the material presented and the proposals submitted. Moreover, it reflects the results of consultations with the permanent Council of Pensioners Affairs at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, non-governmental organisations of older persons, and other permanent tripartite and bipartite dialogue institutions.

Over the period after approval of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the country has advanced. Adoption of the Strategy prompted taking a complex view of the ageing process, having regard to its determined strengths and weaknesses in many policy areas.

With a view to ensuring consistent and sustainable economic growth, adjusting the social insurance system to the ageing society and reconciling the present needs of older persons and the future challenges, progress has been made by increasing the income of older persons. At the same time, a pension reform has been carried out, which created a pension accumulation element that will help to ensure financial stability of the future pensions. This measure gradually fulfils the aim to ensure steady income for older persons in the future with guarantees to retain huge part of the former standard of living and allow living full-fledged life.

When adjusting the labour market to the needs of the ageing society important changes of the employment policy have been carried out – measures have been taken to promote employment and entrepreneurship of older persons, develop their opportunities of lifelong learning, create favourable working conditions to them and respectively modify employment relations, as well as to eliminate discrimination in terms of age.

With the view of guaranteeing equal opportunities and gender equality, measures relating to

employment and reintegration into the labour market have been implemented, in particular taking notice of older or socially vulnerable women, women's entrepreneurship has been encouraged, and efforts have been made to reconcile work and family life.

Seeking to ensure the necessary life quality for older persons, not only their income is increased but also the social services sector is constantly developed. Particular notice is paid to guaranteeing accessible social and health services of good quality, and assisting older persons to live full life for the longest possible period in their usual living environment. Also, health prevention programmes oriented to the risk groups of older persons are implemented. The matters concerning regulation of adapting the living environment and provision of older persons with transport have advanced, and the measures to ensure their safety, in particular in rural areas, have been applied.

Concerning the commitment to help family members who take care of their relatives, the service of short-term social care – the so-called respite care service – has been legalised. Persons who are taken care of at home are provided with short-term social care services at the person's home or in social care institutions, so that family members of these persons have a possibility to go on holidays, take care of their own health or simply to have a rest.

For the first time the campaigns have been organised in the country, which aimed at creating a positive image of older persons and emphasizing cooperation and solidarity between generations. Participation of older persons in relevant decision-making has been consolidated, and international cooperation of their organisations has developed.

The National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing has been implemented for yet a short time. The listed actions are therefore only the first steps in pursuing the ageing-oriented policy. There are still problems unsolved. It is not easy to reconcile the current need to increase social benefits and the financial stability of the pension system in the future. Intensive emigration of people of working age also aggravates this task. Employers form a positive attitude towards older employees comparatively heavily, and those older employees are not confident about their possibilities to fully participate in the labour market. Due to insufficiently developed infrastructure, social, transport and other services are hardly accessible to the residents of rural areas. Participation of older persons in relevant decision-making processes should be intensified, and they should be encouraged to express their opinion actively and knowledgeably.

The action directions provided in the Strategy should help to solve many problems. Unfavourable changes of demographic proportions may be mitigated through the family-friendly policy that allows better reconciling family and work duties, as well as ensuring gender equality in the family. This should positively affect the births rate and significantly contribute to the solution of the problems caused by ageing.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Republic of Lithuania

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National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing (Ageing Strategy) (2004) (attached) and Measures for its Implementation for 2005-2013 (2005).

1. SITUATION, ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES RELATED TO AGEING

a) National ageing situation

Analysis of the demographic country data reflects progressive ageing of the society and the process of depopulation. According to the preliminary data of the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Statistics Lithuania), at the beginning of 2007, population in Lithuania amounted to 3 million 384.8 thousand, i.e. by 18.5 thousand less than a year ago. Population reduced by 3.6 per cent during the recent seven years.

As population numbers reduce, the share of the elderly (aged 60 and over) keeps growing. According to the preliminary data of Statistics Lithuania, at the beginning of 2007 one fifth of the country's population (690 thousand) aged 60 and older, whereas the comparable figure of the beginning of 2000 was 668 thousand (19 per cent). Last year there were 124 elderly people per hundred of children under 15 years of age, and in 2000 – only 94.

About one fifth of urban and one fourth of rural population are persons of 60 years of age and older account for about one third of the population.

Demographic ageing is characteristic of both, men and (even more) women. At the beginning of 2006, there were 250.5 thousand men and 443.5 thousand women over 60 years of age in Lithuania. At the beginning of 2006 the male demographic old age indicator (age 60 and over) was 15.8 per cent, and that of female – 24.4 per cent. One of the main features of ageing of the country's population is that women represent the great majority of older people. The age structure of rural women is the worst in demographic terms – every third rural woman has already reached

the age of 60 or is even older.

The key reason for ageing of the population in Lithuania is low birth rate. The total fertility rate in Lithuania which in 1990 stood at 2.03, has reduced even more and now is lower than 1.3. Another reason for the reduction in population numbers is large emigration. Emigration of people of working age making up the great majority of emigrants accelerates the tendencies of ageing.

Meanwhile, the ageing implications of changes in the average life expectancy are minor. Between 2000 and 2005, the average life expectancy development tendencies among the population of Lithuania were controversial. Distinct and consistent growth of this indicator of the past few years was replaced by stagnation and fluctuations. Moreover, there is still very large difference between the average male and female life expectancy, which however is mostly attributable to the mortality of younger men. The female average life expectancy in 2005 exceeded by 12.06 years the male average life expectancy, whereas the difference of this indicator for men, who have reached the age of 60, is 6 years.

According to the forecasts of Statistics Lithuania, population numbers will further reduce in Lithuania. In 2050 the numbers of population in Lithuania will reach 2 million 881.1 thousand and every third person will be elderly. The forecasts of Eurostat are similar: its demographic projection for Lithuania for the period until 2050 has shown that between 2004 and 2050 population in Lithuania will reduce to 2.9 million, or by 16.4 per cent. Reduction from 17.7 to 13.7 per cent is also expected among the population between 0-14 years of age, among working age individuals (aged 15-64) - from 67.3 to 59.6 per cent, whilst numbers of elderly persons (aged 65 and over) will grow from 15 to 26.7 per cent.

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence the country experienced rapid social, economical and political transformation. The democratic political regime established in the country and functioning of the market economy guarantees the basis for stable economic development. Lithuania took over and adapted the practices accumulated in the sphere of social policy by the European and other countries with long-lasting democratic traditions. Having become a Member State of the European Union (EU), Lithuania avails itself of the benefits of the single market in which it participates and of the advantages provided by the EU public policy. As the ageing problem is highly relevant to the entire EU, many ageing-related political decisions of the country are predetermined by the general EU policy on this issue.

At present, the economy of Lithuania is undergoing a rapid growth. In 2006, gross domestic product went up by 7.5 per cent, compared with 2005. Similar growth was also characteristic of the past few years. Continuously increasing income (wages went up by 17.6 per cent) further accelerated the growth of consumption expenditure. Rapid growth was observed in final consumption (12.6 per cent) and gross fixed capital formation (12.3 per cent). Consumption expenditure of the central government experienced lower growth rates of 4.9 per cent.

Pursuant to the Convergence Programme of Lithuania of 2006, the long-term sustainability of government finances will depend upon changes in the demographic structure of the population.

In 2005 Lithuania worked out complex budgetary projection of sustainable government finances, which facilitates determination of impact of demographic changes on the long-term sustainability of pension, health and education systems. According to this projection, the growing share of older persons and the reducing share of children and working age individuals will stimulate increased budget spending of the government sector (share of GDP) on pensions and health care, and will reduce budget spending on education: in particular, in 2005-2050 expenditure for pensions will go up by 2.27 per cent of GDP, for health care – by 1 per cent of GDP, whereas expenditure for education will drop by 1.58 per cent of GDP. Expenditure for unemployment benefits will change only slightly. Expenditure related to ageing of the population in general will grow by 2.02 per cent of GDP. Expenditure for pensions will experience the most rapid growth rates.

b) Instrumental assessment

During the period since the Berlin Conference, the country has adopted numerous strategic documents aimed at addressing the ageing problem in complex manner or related to this problem in one or another aspect. The following strategic documents are of the highest relevance:

- **National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing (Ageing Strategy) (2004) and Measures for its Implementation for 2005-2013 (2005).** The Strategy was approved by Resolution No 737 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 14 June 2004. The Strategy elaborates on the population ageing situation in Lithuania and related problems, defines the vision of the future perspective, formulates the aims with regard to mitigating the consequences of ageing, objectives and implementing actions thereof covered by and specified in the *Implementation Measures of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing for 2005–2013* approved by Resolution No 5 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 10 January 2005. The Strategy addresses the population ageing problem in complex manner, envisaging the implementation of measures in various fields of activity: guaranteeing adequate income in old age; providing adequate social protection; arranging labour market so as to take maximum advantage of the professional skills developed by older persons, promoting life-long learning; ensuring equal access to high quality health and social care; promoting intergenerational solidarity; supporting individuals and communities taking care of older people; and also envisaging to stimulate older persons to be more active in the society, foster their social inclusion and independent living.

- **National Strategy of Demographic (Population) Policy (2004) and Measures for its Implementation for 2005-2007 (2005).** This Strategy was approved by Resolution No 1350 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 October 2004. The main purpose of this Strategy is to promote the establishment of the independent and viable family based on mutual support and shared responsibility among family members, ensuring the interchange of generations. This should contribute to the improvement of the country's demographic situation, which is a very important precondition in addressing the problems of ageing. This Strategy analyses in detail the demographic situation of Lithuania, defines the aims and objectives of the key elements of the

demographic (population) policy (family well-being, public health and population migration), presents a vision, discusses the state's mission by 2015, and regulates the implementation of the Strategy. By Resolution No 572 of 23 May 2005 the Government approved the *Plan of Measures aimed at Implementation of the National Demographic (Population) Policy for 2005-2007*. The development of the Plan of Measures for 2008-2010 is also under way.

Also, the challenges posed by ageing of the population are elaborated and their settlement actions are set forth in the following documents developed within the framework of the EU:

- **Lithuania's National Strategy Report on Adequate and Sustainable Pensions (2005)** The Report deals with the country's pension prospects in the light of the foreseeable demographic and social-demographic challenges and measures to ensure the adequacy and financial sustainability of pensions.

- **National Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion of the Republic of Lithuania for 2004–2005** submitted to the European Commission and Measures for Implementation of this Plan (approved by Resolution No 1002 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 13 September 2005).

- **National Report on Strategies of Lithuania for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2006–2008** submitted to the European Commission and the related Measures for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2007–2008 (approved by Resolution No 46 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 January 2007). These two documents take into account the prospects of ageing and provide for special measures to eradicate poverty and social exclusion of older persons and to improve their social inclusion.

Several important programmes have been approved in the country during the period since the Berlin Conference. They are related in one or another aspect to the ageing problem or guarantees for the elderly.

- **Programme on Adapting Housing Facilities to the Needs of the Disabled for 2007–2011** (approved by Resolution No 638 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 June 2006). The Programme is aimed at persons with movement disabilities who have difficulty in taking care of themselves at home and for whom the need for adjustment of housing facilities has been established.

- **National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2003–2004** (approved by Resolution No 712 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 3 June 2003) and **National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2005–2009** (approved by Resolution No 1042 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 26 September 2005). The two Programmes take into account the gender mainstreaming strategy applicable in all spheres with a view to realising equal opportunities for men and women.

- **National Antidiscrimination Programme for 2006–2008** (approved by Resolution

No 907 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 19 September 2006) aimed at ensuring the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination against age. One of the goals of this programme is to investigate the manifestations of discrimination against age in all spheres of life, develop the tolerance of the society, improve awareness-raising among the public and different social groups on non-discrimination, equal treatment, equal rights and opportunities.

The following key measures could be distinguished among the most important policy measures implemented during the past few years and directly related to ageing problems:

- Pension reform implemented in 2003-2004 which has the greatest potential effects with regard to mitigating the negative ageing effects on the financial sustainability of the pension system. As a result of this reform part of financing of pensions was transferred from payg to the funded system. This facilitated in reducing future commitments of the insurance pension system and the expected budget deficit thereof.

- Gradual increase of social insurance and assistance pension amounts with a view to restoring at least to a certain extent the material well-being of pensioners of which they have been deprived during the previous years of transformation and economic decline.

- The tendency which is increasingly prevailing in the employment policy area to take maximum advantage of the potential of older persons, promote their employment, entrepreneurship, life-long learning while adapting to the rapidly developing needs of the labour market.

- Extensive development of the sector of social services in order to guarantee its accessibility to all residents and to modernise the priorities of social services refocusing them from stationary care to services enabling older persons to remain as long as possible in their usual living environment and community.

- Strengthening intolerance with regard to all manifestations of discrimination against age and enhancing the mainstreaming of a gender approach in all spheres of life.

All of the aforementioned policy measures are based on the adoption and practical implementation of the respective laws and other legal acts.

c) Identification of areas for in-depth evaluation

The main aim of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing is to create and establish the society of equal opportunities for people of all generations; in observance of the principle of active ageing, to create conditions enabling older persons now and in the future to live a full-fledged personal social, professional and cultural life, to ensure that their experience is valued and they are respected and certain about their future.

The following priority objectives have been formulated with regard to:

- **Income guarantees** – to ensure for all older persons sustainable income that do not humiliate their dignity, guarantee the major part of their previous standard of living and enable them to live a full-fledged life.

- **Employment** – to retain older persons active in the labour market for as long as possible, reduce their unemployment and increase participation in the labour market.
- **Health and social services** – to guarantee maximum health of older persons, and to ensure good quality health care services for people suffering from health disorders; to create conditions through measures of health care and social services for older persons to live at home, with their family and community; to guarantee free access to health care and social services to everybody in need of the above services.
- **Ensuring the possibilities to live a full-fledged life** – to create conditions for older persons to live a secure and full-fledged social, cultural and personal life and to seek continuous development, enjoying cultural values, opportunities provided by the information technologies and free movement.
- **Participation and creation of the image of older persons** – to ensure participation of older persons in social, community life and in self-help initiatives; to inform older persons on the decisions relevant to them and ensure that such decisions are taken with their participation; to promote the development of NGO's and strengthen their influence.

2. METHODOLOGY OF IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

With a view to facilitating the evaluation of achieved progress, identifying the obstacles and problems, the System of Monitoring the Implementation of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing has been developed. To this end the working group for monitoring the implementation of the measures was formed from representatives of the public authorities and NGO's concerned. In consideration of the monitoring results and seeking to ensure precise implementation of this Strategy, the working group renders proposals to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania as to the improvement of the measures.

The standing Pensioner Affairs Council under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, consisting of pensioners and representatives of the Government, provides regular counselling on ageing and other related matters. The Council meets at least once per quarter. In addition to the representatives of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Council meetings are attended by the invited representatives from other ministries, public authorities and municipal bodies (institutions). Matters relevant to the elderly are discussed during these meetings, e.g., the issues deliberated in 2005-2006 concerning the improvement of the state social pension system and increase of social pensions, land ownership rights restoration opportunities, health and odontology services, transport privileges for the elderly, possibilities of increasing state pensions, allocation of the second degree state pensions of the Republic of Lithuania to mothers of many children, new procedure for the provision of social services.

The ageing-related matters are also discussed in other standing bodies of bilateral and trilateral dialogue.

The Strategy defines the qualitative criteria for the assessment of its implementation which are directly related to the provided aims and objectives allowing to assess the progress made:

- pension income replacement rate;
- expenses for pensions, share of GDP;
- at risk of poverty rate for older persons after social transfers (by gender);
- at risk of poverty rate for older persons before social benefits (by gender);
- employment rate of older persons (by gender);
- total life-long learning indicator;
- average life expectancy of residents of 60 years of age (by gender);
- number of older persons receiving social services at home.

3. NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR FOLLOW-UP TO MIPAA/RIS

Implementation of the Strategy is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour with the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science as well as Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior participating within the limits of their competence. As already mentioned before, by order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour the working group has been formed from the representatives of the aforementioned institutions and individuals representing organisations of elderly people, which monitors the implementation of the measures of this Strategy for 2005–2013 and submits proposals to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania as to the improvement of the aforementioned measures.

Organisations representing the interests of older persons participating in the working group include the Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Lithuania “Bočiai”, the Lithuanian Elderly People Association, the umbrella organisation for elderly people – “Gabiija” and other organisations functioning in the entire Lithuania.

It is envisaged that as from 2007 reports on the implementation of the Ageing Strategy measures will be developed every two years and furnished to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The first report has been submitted and approved in April 2007.

In order to assess the process of ageing and to provide for the adequate measures, the reliable data and forecasts are required. Consequently, surveys of the social sphere carried out in the country are also aimed at identifying the ageing aspect. During the past five years Lithuania carried out a considerable number of large- or small-scale surveys.

Demographic surveys were aimed at assessing and forecasting the tendencies of population numbers, their age and gender structure. For example, in 2003 a survey was carried out to develop the demographic policy strategy. Subsequent surveys were also very extensive. The in-depth and significant survey of the structure and demographic development of the Lithuanian population was one of the most important surveys and its results were presented by end 2006.

Surveys of the coverage and financial sustainability of the pension system dealt with the assessment of the pension system prospects, the existing and future coverage for pensions as well as their adequacy. Particular attention in the survey and analysis works is devoted to the issues pertaining to the sustainability of the pension system. In 2005 the project of the Ageing Working Group (AWG) of the Economic Policy Committee of the European Commission on the public spending implications of the ageing was carried out which involved the development of the revenue and expenditure forecasts of the state social insurance and state pension systems until the year 2050. The PRISM (Pension Reform Illustration and Simulation Model) macro simulation programme was adapted for the purpose of analysis of the pension system and assessment of its prospects. The medium- and long-term forecasting model of the State Social Insurance Fund budget indicators was elaborated in November 2006 and its application has just started. This model has been developed in implementing the joint project of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania and of the Swedish Social Insurance Board (RFV) financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Surveys in the area of employment policy focused on the analysis of mechanisms stimulating economic activity of the population, paying particular attention to the promotion of employment of individuals who encounter problems of social integration, also seeking to assess the vocational training and counselling programme needs of older persons, and considering the issue of adaptation of jobs and labour relations to the above people.

Another trend of surveys was related to the provision of services and full-fledged life guarantees to the disabled and older persons. This trend involved the analysis of the type of social services and the establishment of their standards, adaptation of housing environment to the needs of the disabled and older persons, changes of transport infrastructure, etc.

The measures of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing are financed from the state funds and municipal budgets, State Social Insurance Fund's budget, and Compulsory Health Insurance Fund's budget. Certain measures are also financed with the EU structural funds' proceeds.

4. REVIEW AND APPRAISAL BY SUBJECT AREA

RIS Commitment 1: Mainstreaming ageing

International commitments of Lithuania with regard to ageing as well as the adoption of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing in 2004 stimulated greater attention to the ageing aspect in the great majority of policy areas.

In the sphere of social security policy, the prospect of ageing influences decisions on the current and future income guarantees for older persons and social services development tendencies, as well as on availability and quality of these services. In implementing the pension policy, attempts are made to match the interests of the existing pensioners to increase the purchasing power of pensions with future commitments of the pension system as well as with its financial sustainability.

Therefore, part of the payg commitments is transferred to funding and personal accounts of the potential pensioners. Concurrently the guarantees of receiving at least minimum income are provided to all individuals who have reached the old age. Social services are being developed and modernised so as to ensure their sufficiency for the increasing number of beneficiaries, high standards and quality and to ensure that social services as such help older persons to live a full-fledged professional and social life for as long as possible in their usual living environment and community.

The employment policy is also strongly influenced by the reduction in the share of working-age people which calls for maintaining older persons economically active – retaining them in business or labour market – as long as possible. Therefore, continuously increasing attention is paid to stimulating older persons' interest in active life and life-long learning guaranteeing adequate adaptation to the changing needs of the labour market. Labour relations and jobs are also subject to modifications and are adjusted to the needs of older persons enabling them to work according to their capacities.

More and more attention is paid to modifying the family policy seeking to increase birth rates and concurrently mitigate forecasted demographic disproportions. To this end support to families growing children is strengthened with a view to implementing the family-friendly policy enabling family members to reconcile their professional aspirations with family obligations.

In the field of health policy increasing attention is being devoted to the prevention of potential health disorders of elderly people and to medical rehabilitation capacity-building.

The ageing dimension is also taken into account addressing the issues of environmental and housing adaptation, measures of access to transport, security and cultural policy matters.

The need to take maximum advantages of the elderly people's professional skills and social activity opportunities renders age discrimination entirely intolerable. Consequently, the previously adopted legal acts (e.g. the Labour Code) which provided for such discrimination at least to a certain extent are being revised and amended and new legislation directly prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of age are adopted.

Organisations of older persons are also expanding their activities and becoming gradually directly involved in the social dialogue and in the process of decision-making on the issues relating to them.

RIS Commitment 2: Integration and participation of older persons

The National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing identifies such outstanding aims as guaranteeing the possibilities of full-fledged life for older persons, their participation in social and community life as well as their positive image. Attempts are made to ensure that older persons are informed about and involved in taking relevant decisions; to promote the development of NGO's and enhance their influence. In implementing these provisions, in 2005-2006 state budget appropriations were allocated to support the activities of three older persons'

organisations, the objectives and main trends of activities of which help them to achieve the best results in representing the interests of older persons in terms of creating a positive and active image of the process of ageing focused on development. These organisations are the Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Lithuania “Bočiai”, Lithuanian Elderly People Association and organisation of elderly people “Gabiija”. These organisations unite elderly people at the country level and have their branches (subdivisions) established in great majority of the cities and districts of Lithuania. The aforementioned organisations of older persons encourage them to be more active in joining non-governmental organisations, involve them into active life through cultural events, promote their cooperation and mutual support, intergenerational relations; seek participation of the representatives of elderly people in different advisory councils at state and municipal levels deliberating the projects of public authorities and municipal institutions concerning elderly people; communicate and exchange information and experience through their branches (centres, clubs, etc.) not only between themselves, but also with people of different generations with similar interests; satisfy cultural needs of elderly people and organise events for them, take care of active involvement and participation in social life of elderly people in rural communities; provide support to single people.

The Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Lithuania “Bočiai” and the Lithuanian Elderly People Association launched the publication of the newspapers for elderly people “Senjorų žodis” and “Lietuvos Bočiai”. In addition to publishing articles on the issues topical to older persons, these newspapers also promote a positive image of older persons, develop the understanding among society (in particular, children and youth) that the contribution of the elderly to social life is of particular importance, familiarise the public with positive aspects of ageing, and illustrate wisdom and advantages of the elderly. Earlier there was no special newspaper exclusively published for elderly persons in Lithuania.

Seeking a full-fledged participation of older persons in cultural life, the Lithuanian Cultural Administrators Training Centre implemented the “Wide image network” project aimed at involving both adults and older persons in art training programmes.

Older persons benefit from privileges offered to them by the institutions of culture. The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre semi-annually organises the Seigniors’ Days on which ticket prices are considerably reduced. This Theatre maintains close relationship with all organisations of elderly people, has the lists of all the above organisations and invites to the performances the specified number of members from one or another organisation. The developed subscription system applies large discounts and is very popular among the pensioners. People of retirement age can reserve seats with the National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania which sells tickets with large discounts; the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra applies discounts of up to 80 per cent of the average price of tickets to Friday concerts. The National Drama Theatre offers a regular 50 per cent discount to people of retirement age. Analogous discounts are also applied in other theatres of Lithuania. The Contemporary Art Centre, museums of national and local subordination have the right to establish the excursion price as well as the ticket price per visit

offering pensioners a 50 per cent discount. From 1 January 2006, public and municipal libraries render free Internet services to their visitors.

In 2005, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour together with Vilnius Art Academy launched the campaign “Give a smile to youth”, aimed at promoting the intergenerational solidarity, drawing greater attention of the public towards older persons, developing responsibility in the society for older persons. This campaign encouraged youth to take photos of older persons; the national and regional newspapers invited to create artistic photos depicting the above people. The inauguration of the exhibition of the most artistic photos was held. In 2006, the photo album “Give a smile to youth” was published covering the two generations and encouraging devoting greater attention to the seigniors.

RIS Commitment 3: Promotion of equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing

The period of transformation at the end of the last century, which was extremely painful to Lithuania, and the subsequent economic decline considerably impaired income of older persons. Consequently, when the situation in the country has changed and its GDP began going up rapidly, it was necessary to use the economic growth to increase income of older persons, to ensure to the maximum possible extent the matching of their purchasing power with the growing purchasing power of employed people. Economic progress alongside enhanced administration of social insurance and collection of contributions enabled to allocate increasingly more funds for the improvement of the situation of pensioners. The purchasing power of social insurance pensions increased as much as that of the employees’ wages and salaries and even outpaced them in certain periods. Between 2002 and 2006, social insurance pensions as well as state social assistance pensions paid on the basis of the principles of social assistance were gradually increased. In 2002-2006, social insurance pension was increased from LTL 310.04 (data of December 2001) to LTL 507.64 (data of December 2006) or by 63.7 per cent. Average earnings in the country during the same period went up by 59.3 per cent. The 2002-2006 increase of the state social insurance base pension and of the insured income of the current year necessitated additional allocations of about LTL 850 million from the State Social Insurance Fund budget.

Eradication of poverty among older persons is a component part of programmes aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion. It should be noted that according to the most recent data of the Population Income and Living Conditions Survey conducted in 2004 and published by Statistics Lithuania, at risk of poverty rate (17.0 per cent) for persons aged 65 and over is lower than the country’s average at risk of poverty rate (21 per cent) and at risk of poverty rate (19 per cent) for people of the same age in EU-25 Member States. Reduction of poverty is an important trend of the income guarantee aim established under the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing. The aforementioned documents including the National Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion of the Republic of Lithuania and Measures for Implementation of this Plan for

2005–2006, the National Report on Strategies of Lithuania for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2006–2008 and Measures for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2007–2008 related to the Report have provided and are providing for important actions aimed at the reduction of poverty among older persons. These measures will facilitate in stimulating more active participation of older persons, creating adequate working conditions for them to stay in employment for as long as possible without losing their professional skills, upgrading them in good time and remaining active in the labour market. Particular attempts are made with regard to integration of socially vulnerable older women into the labour market. Financing allocated for the employment of women aged over 50 and capable to work will increase long-term employment opportunities for older persons. Measures improving the disabled and older persons' access to quality services will be applied further, continuously developing progressive forms of the provision of social services at community level.

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

The pension reform implemented in 2003 was essentially the most important measure aimed at guaranteeing the financial sustainability of the pension system in the ageing society, which resulted in the creation of the cumulative stage of the pension system. The participants in the social insurance pension system are eligible to freely participate in the accumulation part of the pension system (tier II of I pillar), transferring part of the mandatory contributions to the pension funds. The share of the rate of paying contributions which accounts for 5.5 per cent of the participant's income subject to the calculation of the state social insurance contributions is transferred to private pension funds. Consequently, the participants started accumulating pension assets accounting for part of the social insurance pensions in their individual accounts managed by private pension accumulation companies.

As a result of closer links between pension benefits and contributions established by virtue of the reformed pension system (its cumulative part in particular), it will motivate persons capable to work to stay longer in the labour market and consequently to guarantee larger income for themselves. This reform was aimed at taking advantage of the favourable demographic situation and accumulating part of the social insurance contributions in the individual accounts of the pension system participants, concurrently saving them for "bad times", in case of deterioration of the demographic situation. At the same time part of state commitments is gradually transferred to the commitments of the private sector for future pensioners, alleviating the burden falling on the payg system and guaranteeing financial sustainability thereof.

In 2006, Lithuania had 10 pension accumulation companies rendering pension accumulation service. 63 per cent (data of the beginning of 2007) of the insured of the state social insurance pension system chose to participate in the accumulation of pensions and are already accumulating part of the mandatory social insurance contributions in their individual accounts. The loss of

revenues of the State Social Insurance Fund budget caused by the pension reform (in 2007 and in the coming years the budget will lose about 0.9 per cent of GDP) will be financed with funds received from sale of state property, state budget funds and other sources of financing. It is envisaged to finance part of the lost revenues of the State Social Insurance Fund budget from the surplus of the State Social Insurance Fund budget generated by the temporary improved demographic situation and economic growth.

The third pillar of the pension system – supplementary voluntary accumulation of pensions – is only gaining momentum in Lithuania. In 2005 (data of 1 September) 5763 individuals have concluded pension accumulation agreements with funds of supplementary voluntary accumulation of pensions of III pillar, and according to the data of QIV 2006 the average number of such individuals amounted to 20.1 thousand. The rates of growth both in terms of transfers and numbers of participants are accelerating rapidly.

In 2006 another law supplementing the pension system was adopted, that is the Law on the Accumulation of Pensions aimed at stimulating the employers to provide their employees with additional social guarantees for old age. The willingness of employers to set up the supplementary pension schemes established by this Law will facilitate in developing and enhancing the loyalty of employees to their company. Additional social guarantees provided to employees will help to retain them in Lithuania and in companies for which they work. This Law will also contribute to the strengthening of the social dialogue between employers and employees. Occupational pensions are envisaged as another part of the pension system securing sufficient income in old age.

Among other changes of the pension system amendments to the Law on Social Assistance Pensions should be mentioned here. With a view to ensuring that all older persons have income necessary for satisfying their first-priority needs, as from 1 January 2006, the allocation of social assistance pensions has commenced from the Republic of Lithuania State Budget funds to persons who have reached the retirement age and who are not eligible to social insurance or other pensions that are larger or of the same amount. According to the data of municipal social assistance offices, in 2006 such persons comprised about 3.3 thousand of disabled individuals (of whom almost 700 received the allowance up to the amount of the assistance pension) and about 5.2 thousand of pensioners (of whom almost 1.2 thousand received the allowance up to the amount of the assistance pension).

With a view to protecting the pre-pensioners who are not able to find a job for longer period than one year, the allocation of pre-retirement old age pensions has commenced from 1 July 2004. This measure has opposite effects compared to the required extension of the retirement age. Therefore, in adopting this Law care was taken to avoid unreasonable incentives to benefit from the advantage offered by it: pre-retirement old age pensions are subject to 0.4 per cent reduction for each full month remaining until the retirement age of a person. In 2006 there were 8 537 beneficiaries of pre-retirement state social insurance old age pensions, and the average pension

amount was LTL 393.28.

According to the previously applied procedure full pension insurance cover was provided only to employed persons. This procedure posed threat to the amount of future income of self-employed persons who were not insured or who benefited only from partial insurance cover. Consequently, since 1 January 2002, self-employed persons, other than individuals and farmers holding business licenses, are provided with full state social insurance pension insurance.

Older persons earning lower income receive social assistance on the basis of the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Low-income Families (Single Residents). In 2006, the monitoring of this Law was carried out. On the basis of alternative data sources the situation of social assistance beneficiaries was assessed alongside factors influencing their economic and social situation, proposals were provided as to the improvement of the system of social benefits and compensations, reduction of poverty among employed and unemployed persons, as well as development of services stimulating the activity and social integration of a person.

According to the survey data, the largest group of beneficiaries receiving compensations of expenses for dwelling heating and water comprises pensioners whose main source of income is old age pension. Almost two thirds of the beneficiaries of compensations are single individuals with single female pensioners accounting for the largest share. The aforementioned Law will be improved on the basis of conducted survey, with a view to reorganizing the system of allocation of dwelling compensations so that it also includes other required expenses for dwelling maintenance. Having approved the new Rules on State Aid for Upgrading of Multi-dwelling Buildings and Determining Energy Efficiency of Investment Projects it was established that additional state aid will be provided to low-income families participating in the implementation of a multi-dwelling building upgrading project for payment of the initial investment contribution (up to 10 per cent), credit insurance contribution and part of credit and interest thereon depending upon energy efficiency of the project.

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

Under conditions of ageing of the society, it is of the utmost importance to retain older persons in the labour market for as long as possible, to increase their employability and to adapt working conditions and jobs to them.

Recently, the general employment of the Lithuanian residents, including older people, kept increasing. According to the Population Employment Survey data of Statistics Lithuania, in 2006, compared with 2002, the share of employed individuals grew by 6.6 per cent, and unemployment rate reduced more than twice. As a result of the growth in total number of employed individuals, the employment rate of people aged 15–64 went up from 59.6 per cent in 2001 to 63.6 per cent in 2006. The unemployment rate among elderly residents (aged 55-64) augmented from 41.3 per cent in 2002 to 49.6 per cent in 2006. Lithuania has already exceeded the elderly people employment

targets for 2005 established in Lisbon and Stockholm and is already very close to the targets (50 %) set for the year 2010.

Employment situation in Lithuania is sufficiently good, however, given the country's demographic situation it is necessary to further stimulate the employment of the elderly people and to implement the measures encouraging active involvement in the labour market. Measures implemented to retain older persons in the labour market are described below.

Older persons are being continuously integrated in the implementation of active labour market policy measures. Individuals referred to the active labour market policy measures during 2006 comprised 32 thousand of persons older than 50 years of age, or 82 per cent of individuals enrolled with the territorial labour exchanges. 16.5 thousand of unemployed individuals aged over 50 acquired jobs after participation in the active labour market policy measures, having refreshed their employment skills and upgraded their qualifications.

To make it easier for older persons to stay in the labour market and to acquire popular professions specialised counselling and motivation increase programmes are being organised and implemented. In 2005 the vocational counselling programme "Development of abilities and skills for successful competition in the labour market" was prepared. In 2006, the informal vocational guidance and counselling programme "Social integration of elderly people" was developed with a view to stimulating retired persons aged over 60 to be active, seek employment, training and participate in the labour market. Having completed this programme, its participants will develop more positive attitudes towards changes taking place in their lives, will be able to adapt themselves to such changes, strengthen self-confidence, assess personal strengths and competences and will acquire planning skills.

All 46 territorial labour exchanges organise annual business environment maps enabling older persons to get familiarised with the opportunities of organising the provision of missing and prospective services in a particular location and of the rent of premises. The developed business environment maps are displayed in the Information and Counselling Centres as well as in Youth Job Centres established at the territorial labour exchanges. Training on business fundamentals was organised for the purpose of increasing employability of older persons. The aforementioned training introduced legal, business environment research, financial accountability and other matters to the unemployed individuals of older age. During 2005-2006 the courses on business fundamentals were completed by 8.9 thousand of job-seekers, of whom 20 per cent comprised unemployed persons aged over 50.

To motivate older unemployed persons in rural areas to engage in alternative agricultural business, active cooperation is maintained with the Chamber of Agriculture and agricultural branches of municipalities. Consultations and target training on the matters of organising alternative activities in rural areas are held together with the aforementioned bodies.

Job-seekers, as a rule, start individual business by acquiring business licenses. In 2005-2006 preferential business licenses were issued to 29.7 thousand of persons (in 2005 and 2006 – 14.7 and

15 thousand of persons respectively), of whom 5.7 thousand of persons aged over 50 independently created jobs for themselves.

Attempts are made to strengthen job motivation among older persons. In May 2005 the Lithuanian Labour Exchange organised the conference “Older age is not an obstacle for employment”, during which conclusions of the target survey with regard to job motivation of older persons as well as opportunities to participate in the labour market measures were presented and proposals were provided on increasing their employment.

The country is successfully implementing projects of local employment initiatives. Priority is given to those projects which create conditions for increasing employment of older persons. Territorial labour exchanges are offering jobs created through projects of local employment initiatives to those unemployed who face the greatest difficulty in integrating themselves in the labour market. In 2005 78 such projects were implemented, jobs were provided to 40 persons aged over 55, and 37 persons over 50 years of age were employed in jobs created through the aforementioned projects of local employment initiatives in 2006.

In 2006 the Lithuanian Labour Exchange launched the “Seigniors’ Bank” programme in its Internet website. The purpose of this programme is to help older job-seekers to get jobs. The created database helps employers to select the required employees. The “Seigniors’ Bank” programme is promoted in local press, information about it is posted on the Internet pages of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and territorial labour exchanges, in public information zones and on the stands erected in the neighbourhoods. Territorial labour exchanges render information and counselling services to the job-seekers of retirement age, apprising them about vacancies and employers’ requirements for applicants.

To promote employment of older persons considerable attention is given to the gender equality dimension. Having created favourable conditions for women and men to seek equal opportunities, counselling and training services were rendered to women willing to start up small or medium businesses, seminars were organised for the would-be and existing women entrepreneurs, and educative measures intended for training of social partners were carried out. The Law on Equal Opportunities obligates the employer to implement equal rights of women and men at work, providing, however, that women are subject to occupational safety requirements which taking into consideration the female physiology are aimed at preserving women’s health.

Favourable conditions for women and men to seek equal opportunities must also be created in the sphere of employment. The greatest majority of these measures have been focused on training of social partners. In order to facilitate the reconciliation of family and employment obligations social partners benefited from seminars organised on the issue of application of the flexible forms of employment for women and men raising children. The difference between female and male employment in Lithuania is smaller than the EU average, however it reduces very slowly, therefore

in implementing the programme measures women willing to start up their small or medium businesses were provided with counselling and training services.

The legal framework is being improved with due regard to the specifics of employment of older persons. In 2002 The Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Code) was approved which came into effect on 1 January 2003. In addition to other requirements, from the very outset of its adoption this legal act regulating legal relationships between persons working on the basis of employment contracts enshrined the following legal guarantees for the elderly:

one of the principles of regulation of labour relations is the equality of subjects of labour law irrespective of their age (as well as of gender, race, origin, etc.);

the Law includes the provision stipulating that the employment contract with employees with maximum five years remaining until becoming eligible to the full old age pension may be terminated only in exceptional cases;

the Law establishes the guarantee for employees with maximum three years remaining until the old age pension – these employees have the priority right to retain their jobs in cases of redundancies due to economic or technological reasons or structural reorganisation of their workplace.

Important amendments to the Code were introduced in 2005 and 2006. The previous version of the Code established that the age may not be a legitimate reason to terminate the employment, except in cases when the employee has already acquired the right to the full old age pension or receives such pension. The legislator considered this provision as being discriminatory with regard to elderly employees; consequently, by virtue of the aforementioned amendment to the Code, the provision was changed to eliminate this derogation. The Code contains an explicit provision establishing that age may not be the reason for the cessation of labour relations on the employer's initiative. Also, the previous version of the Code stipulated that one category of individuals eligible to additional support in the labour market comprises persons with maximum five years remaining until retirement age. This provision was amended and transferred to the Law on Support for Employment, stipulating that individuals eligible to additional support in the labour market include persons aged over 50 who are able to work.

The Labour Code creates the opportunities for the development of flexible forms of employment, establishes miscellaneous guarantees (with regard to working hours and rest time when concluding different employment contracts) and provides for the possibility to apply shortened working hours. Pre-pensioners (5 and less years remaining until retirement) and pensioners benefit from reduced work burden being allowed to work shortened business hours on agreement of the employee and employer. All these measures facilitate in more flexible adaptation of labour relations to the needs of older persons.

Amendments beneficial for elderly people also concerned those individuals who work not according to employment contracts but enjoy the legal status of civil servants. Amendments introduced in 2005 to the Law on Civil Service provided guarantees for those civil servants who

have attained retirement age (62 years and 6 months) – the length of service for these civil servants may be extended to one year, and the total extended length of service may not exceed five years.

In implementing the employment policy for older persons consistent cooperation is maintained with relevant organisations also involving scientific studies of the problem.

In 2005, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange signed the cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Pensioner Affairs Council. This agreement provides for improving awareness-raising of older persons about the situation in the labour market, employment or retraining opportunities, participation in the individual measures organised by the labour market. On 8 June 2006 the Lithuanian Labour Exchange organised the video conference “Increasing labour market integration opportunities for persons facing labour market integration difficulties”. Representatives of the Lithuanian Pensioner Affairs Council and of the Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Lithuania “Bočiai” participating in the conference were familiarised with the concept of the older persons’ databank on the LLE Internet website and new employment opportunities provided for older persons by the Law on Support for Employment. The video conference reports and other material were sent by e-mail to all participants of the conference and to the territorial labour exchanges.

In 2006, the scientific study “Analysis of the labour market situation of persons facing labour market integration difficulties and measures for increasing their employment” was conducted. During the survey the labour market situation of persons who face labour market integration problems was analysed and proposals how to increase their employment were provided. The surveyed groups of individuals included older unemployed (age 45-62.5 years) enrolled with labour exchanges and persons of retirement age willing to return to the labour market. The survey has shown that about 80 per cent of older unemployed have insufficient motivation for work. Consequently the motivation for work of all unemployed age over 50 was stimulated while helping them to regain self-confidence and to compete in the labour market.

Additionally, in 2006, the research work “Development of recommendations for the adaptation of jobs, work and rest regime to older people” was carried out. This work took into account the physiological working capacities of older persons exposed to different factors of working environment, which are likely to negatively affect health of older employees in the working environment. The most frequently identified working and industrial environment factors exposing older people to the greatest risk of the general and occupational harm were assessed and the list of working environment factors posing higher risk to the health condition of older persons was compiled. Experience of the EU and other countries with regard to the adaptation of working conditions, length of the working day, shift work, and work and rest regime was analysed and presented.

RIS Commitment 6: Promotion of life-long learning and adaptation of the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions

Promotion of life-long learning, as well as of the education and training of older people is one of the priorities reiterated in many strategic documents of Lithuania: the National Long-term Development Strategy (2002), the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing (2004), the National Lisbon Strategy Implementation Programme (2005), etc.

In implementing this priority by order of the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Social Security and Labour issued in 2004, the National Strategy of Life-long Learning of Lithuania was approved establishing the goals for the vocational training and continuous learning and access to training. In addition to other objectives, attempts are made to guarantee that learning of adults is based on matching general and special skills – this would facilitate in guaranteeing the multifaceted development of the individual’s personality and its occupational flexibility, mobility and employability. It is also envisaged to eliminate restrictions imposed on adults seeking to acquire professions popular in the labour market and to upgrade the level of their competence.

The Draft Strategy for the Use of the European Union Structural Funds for 2007–2013 covers the provisions on retraining of older employees. Older persons (both, employed and unemployed) as a target group were included in Priority I “Quality employment and social inclusion” of the Human Resources Development Action Programme of 2007-2013. Older persons represent a horizontal target group qualifying for prioritisation under all measures of Priority I.

Pre-pensioners and older persons have difficulty in adapting themselves to the changes of labour market. In the rapidly changing market the previously acquired professional qualifications and work experience become outdated. People have no skills of work with modern information technologies and in the first instance – with computer, which often is an obstacle in getting employed. Absence of foreign language (English in particular) skills also prevents from addressing employment problems. To settle this matter the programme of “Window to employment” for older unemployed was developed and approved in 2005–2006. The purpose of this programme was to develop skills necessary for work with modern information technologies. In implementing the measures of this plan, older people attending training sessions organised in the territorial labour exchanges are trained to work with modern information technologies: computer-based self-search information system - SIP (“Find information yourself”), vocational guidance system – PIC, open information network – Internet Labour Exchange. The Lithuanian Labour Exchange, together with the “Window to the Future” alliance of business support in developing information society has launched the project firstly aimed at teaching the unemployed as well as older people the computer literacy fundamentals during direct sessions in computer classes and in the public internet centres. During 2006, 1.3 thousand of the unemployed improved their computer literacy in this way, and half of these people were older than 50 years.

Considerable attention is given to adult education. In 2005 and 2006 tenders of non-formal

adult education projects were held with 21 and 18 non-formal adult education projects financed in both years respectively. One of the priorities of this tender was organisation of adult training on the basis of local community needs. Support was allocated to the projects promoting activities of non-formal education of older people. The amount allocated for the financing of the non-formal adult education projects exceeded LTL 350 thousand.

The project financed by the European Social Fund “Development of education institutions for adults providing modern competences in regions” was launched. In the course of this project between 2006 and 2008 formal adult education institutions of ten municipalities will organise training of the English language, computer literacy, entrepreneurship and legal literacy. It is planned to provide training for 100 pedagogues of adults and 800 adult trainees. The project will contribute to the improvement of the quality of education institutions’ activities developing non-formal education services which will also be available to older people.

With a view to creating favourable conditions for older people to acquire a popular profession and to upgrade their qualifications, in addition to other measures the distance training opportunities are being developed. At present the implementation of the project “Development of distance learning and its integration into the traditional education in the labour market training system” is under way under Measure 2.4. of the Single Programming Document of the Republic of Lithuania for 2004–2006. The main purpose of this project is to increase access to services rendered by the training system of the Lithuanian labour market for representatives of different social groups, employed people and residents of all regions of Lithuania. The project addresses the issue of creating conditions for life-long learning and is aimed at upgrading the competences of the Lithuanian labour market training centres and profession teachers as well as at improving the quality of training courses provided by these teachers. In 2006, 100 profession teachers were trained according to the developed training programmes aimed at upgrading their practical skills in computer literacy necessary for elaboration of distance training courses.

To promote self-learning, older people possessing practical skills and required knowledge acquired through self-education, were provided with the opportunity to take qualification examinations without attending a vocational education and training establishment and to acquire a professional qualification recognised in the country. In 2006 the right to examine without attending training courses was granted to 26 educational establishments entitled to provide labour market vocational training. In 2006 qualification examinations without attending training courses were taken and qualifications were acquired by 1769 persons according to 22 labour market vocational training programmes exceeding thrice the comparable figure of 2005. The right to take exams without attending training is granted to persons from 18 years of age who have practical skills (work record of minimum 1 year), consequently, it can be concluded that conditions for taking examinations without attending training have been created both for younger and older persons.

The Open System of Information, Counselling and Guidance introduced in 2005 guarantees access to quality information about training opportunities for people of all ages.

Respective research is carried out with a view to better identifying the vocational training and counselling programme needs of older persons as well as to preparing and implementing vocational training programmes which would also develop general abilities of such persons. To this end the investigation of vocational training and counselling programme needs among older persons was conducted in 2006. The representative survey of respondents whose composition corresponds to the distribution of the county's residents aged 60-80 and older by gender, age, educational background and nationality has shown that almost one third of the seigniors in Lithuania would like to remain socially active citizens. About 15 per cent of all respondents, mostly persons aged under 70, would like to get employed, and the same percentage – to participate in the activities of NGO's and clubs, amateur art, study and educate themselves.

On the basis of survey results, elaboration of 10 training and counselling programmes for older people is planned for 2007. Training programmes will be prepared in observance of provided recommendations on training and counselling programmes for the Lithuanian residents older than 60 years. Educational curricula will match the interests of older people and will be focused on the development of general abilities. The survey has shown that the most popular training courses among the seigniors are computer literacy and foreign languages.

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

On 1 July 2006 a new version of the Law on Social Services came into effect. One of the aims of this Law is to guarantee access to social services for all residents (including older persons). To provide each person with the established need for social care with the opportunity to receive such care at home as well as in a special establishment (care provided in day centres and care homes) the municipal budgets are allocated a special targeted subsidy from the state budget. The person's need for social services is determined on the basis of the methodologies approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour and is uniform throughout the country. These methodologies establish that in the first instance it is necessary to use all possibilities of providing social services to a person at home and in the community and that only completely dependent people should be placed in the in-patient social care establishments. Additionally, within the framework of the health system the provision of home out-patient nursing services for older people will be further developed to protect them against exacerbation of a disease or rapid development of the existing symptoms.

In developing the infrastructure of social services financing is provided to the community centres. These centres, in addition to other functions, deliver services to older people. Even in 2005-2006, 25 such community centres development projects were financed.

With a view to ensuring equal quality of social care provided in separate municipalities and

establishments of different subordination, the Catalogue of Social Services was approved by order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour distinguishing and defining home care services and social services of care homes, enabling older people to receive social care at home. Also, the Minister issued the order approving the Social Care Norms the observance whereof should guarantee the required life quality for persons provided with social care in social care establishments or at home. In addition to regulating quantitative requirements for buildings, premises and person's meals, these Norms establish the principles of the protection of the rights of these persons and quality requirements for services rendered. Creation of the Social Care Norms Assessment System for all types of social care and for all social groups will facilitate in guaranteeing that social care provided in different regions and different social care institutions is consistent with the qualitative requirements of social care. This will make social services more popular and encourage persons who take care for the dependent family members to reconcile through social care services their obligations to the family with the effective involvement in the labour market.

In improving professional training of the professional social workers and assistant social workers the Guide to the Procedure for Upgrading Skills of Social Workers and Assistant Social Workers was approved. Theoretical training of social workers as well as their practical skills will be improved in methodical centres of social work – establishments of social services, which alongside their main functions also perform the functions of practical training, implementation and testing of innovations as well as sharing “good practice” with other establishments of similar type. The Training Centre for Social Workers is implementing the social workers skills upgrading project financed from the EU Structural Funds. It is expected that 3 thousand of social workers and 500 assistant social workers will be able to raise their qualifications in the course of this project.

The ageing problem imposes additional requirements on the health system. Preventive measures of health care and prosthesis in particular, become highly relevant in the ageing society. In implementing the measure of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing to diagnose more precisely chronic non-infectious diseases for older people and to improve their treatment and access to services, the following preventive prophylactic programmes of breast, cervical and prostate cancer are being implemented. The programme of financing of the selective and preventive measures for persons attributed to high-risk group of cardiovascular diseases is under way. The purpose of health examination of residents carried out at the national level is to reduce morbidity by cardiovascular diseases (myocardial ischemia, myocardial infarction, cerebral ischemia, insult, peripheral arterial thrombosis), to select people suffering from atherosclerosis or diabetes before they experience any manifestations of health disorders, with a view to precluding the development of these diseases. The amount of LTL 13.5 million was allocated for the preventive prophylactic programmes.

Another trend of health promotion measures is to guarantee free of charge prosthetic dentistry services for older people, concurrently reducing the number of people queuing for

endoprosthesis. More and more funds are allocated for the implementation of these measures, also making all effort to build capacities of medical establishments.

In promoting the development of medical rehabilitation services provided to older people, priority is given to patients suffering from diseases that are most frequently diagnosed for persons of retirement age who benefited from about 60 per cent of all rehabilitation services rendered in 2006.

Taking care of the needs of older people and of the disabled and in consideration of observations and proposals submitted by organisations of the disabled, in 2006 the construction technical regulation was supplemented introducing additional requirements for the independent entry of the disabled to non-residential buildings, erection of handrail, and permissible unevenness of coverings in buildings.

Given the growing share of older people, it is necessary to improve their movement possibilities. In Lithuania, likewise in many other countries older people benefit from transport privileges. Pensioners with high level of established special needs as well as persons aged 70 and over are eligible to acquire all transport tickets with 50-80 per cent discount. Persons of retirement age with movement disability are entitled to a monthly compensation of transportation expenses in the amount of 0.25 of minimum subsistence level (MSL). It is planned to increase this benefit to 0.4 MSL in the nearest future. Pensioners suffering from movement disability and driving a car themselves are eligible to receive once in 6 years a compensation of expenses in the amount of up to 32 MSL (LTL 4160) for the acquisition and technical maintenance of special cars.

The ageing of the population resulting in different transport needs necessitates respective modifications of the transport system. In order to identify the required modifications of the transport infrastructure, in 2006 a scientific study was carried out aimed at assessing the conformity of all types of transport and elements of transport infrastructure as well as their adaptation to persons with special needs (older persons, disabled and people of limited mobility) seeking to improve their access to transport services and reduce their social exclusion. The summary of the conclusions drawn during the study served as the basis for the development of recommendations.

Personal security of older people is of great importance for the quality of their lives. Older persons, in particular in rural areas, sometimes become victims of criminals and do not have required means to call for help. In view of these problems local preventive programmes and projects of the territorial police offices are being prepared within the framework of the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing aimed at guaranteeing the security of older people. These measures will contribute to the security of rural residents, facilitating more operative and professional response to the notifications of residents about violations of law and reducing the average time of the arrival of police officers to the place of emergency or incident. For the purpose of implementing this programme special cars and cross-country police vehicles were procured to

enhance the operative response of rural police inspectors. A “One Button Safe Guardian Helpful Device” officially introduced in June 2005 is adapted for guaranteeing emergency assistance and is aimed at the least secured and most vulnerable part of society – the older persons and the disabled. These emergency call devices will be freely distributed to people living in individual farms and more remote areas.

The public awareness-raising measures carried out in 2005–2006 involved continuous dissemination of information about the ways and means of protection against criminal acts, new property protection measures and their application, as well as police services that are also aimed at guaranteeing the security of older persons.

Speaking about the quality of life of older people, they must be encouraged to seek a full-fledged life themselves. To this end, a non-formal vocational guidance and counselling programme “Social integration of older persons” was prepared in 2006 to motivate pensioners aged over 60 to be more active, seek employment, learning and participation in the labour market. The programme comprises practical training, theoretical education and consultations. Older people will benefit from training on the following subjects: analysis of the mature life period, factors influencing personal success, harmonious interpersonal relationships, development of adaptability to changes, fullness of life and giving a sense to it, formulation and implementation of the goals of life. After completion of this programme its participants will be able to accept changes taking place in their lives more positively and to adapt to them, strengthen their self-confidence, assess their strengths, available competences and develop planning skills.

RIS Commitment 8: Mainstreaming a gender approach in an ageing society

The mainstreaming of a gender approach in Lithuania was enforced by virtue of the Law on Equal Opportunities passed in 1998. The Law empowers all public authorities to apply the gender equality principle in the areas of their competence. Bodies of state power and administration must guarantee in all legal acts drafted and implemented by them the equality of men and women, prepare and implement programmes and measures aimed at realising equal opportunities in their regulated spheres, support activities of women’s NGO’, stimulate the interest and awareness of the public in this matter.

According to the statistical data situation in Lithuania is comparatively good in many aspects of gender equality. Female employment in 2006 reached 61 per cent and has already outpaced the target of 60 per cent established by the Lisbon Strategy. In terms of employment of older women Lithuania occupies the eighth place in the EU, and in terms of employment among women raising children younger than 12 years of age – the second place. The gap between male and female employment has reduced as well as the female unemployment rate, which now is lower than that of men. Women managers account for 43 per cent of persons occupying leading posts; this indicator is the second by size in the EU. The female education level is higher than that of male, and

in terms of this indicator Lithuania is the fourth in the EU. The present difference of 18 per cent between wages and salaries of men and women reduces slowly however; certain professions where wages and salaries are lower (social work, childcare, health care, education) are dominated by women.

Gender equality is one of the priorities of the State implemented through the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2003). The aim of this programme is to consistently and systematically guarantee the equality of genders which is a cornerstone of democracy in all spheres of life. The programme is aimed at practical implementation of the provisions of this Law, distinguishing and addressing existing specific problems of inequality between men and women. The policy of gender equality is meant to ensure equal influence and participation of both genders in decision-making, as well as in the country's economic, political, cultural and social life.

The key areas covered by the measures of the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men comprise employment and labour market reintegration with a particular focus on older or socially vulnerable women; promotion of entrepreneurship among women; application of equal pay for equal work; providing possibilities to match work and family obligations; balanced participation in economic and political decision-making; equal opportunities in studies and education; health and environmental policies consistent with gender specifics and equality; overcoming gender inequality stereotypes; eradication of violence against women. Additionally, the programme envisages the development of gender equality assessment methodology, methods and indicators. This is an important part of the programme monitoring, which will facilitate in measuring the progress achieved and in identifying the existing and new challenges.

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

With a view to supporting caregivers nursing their family members, in 2006 the Minister of Social Security and Labour issued the order enforcing a temporary social care service – also called “respite care” service. The purpose of this service is to provide persons nursed at home with a temporary home or institutional social care services of up to 30 days a year, so that family members of such persons have the possibility to go on holiday, take care of their personal health or simply to have a rest.

The state allocates a targeted subsidy for social (home or institutional) care to older people suffering from severe disability. On the basis of assessment of personal needs, a person is assigned the required social services subsidised from the state budget. This measure is aimed at avoiding regional differences, because until present not all municipalities had financial possibilities to provide quality social care services to their residents who experience need for such services. As from 1 January 2007 persons who have attained the old-age pension age and for whom the need for special permanent care has been established are paid a targeted compensation of care expenses in

the amount of LTL 500. This measure might alleviate the burden of families taking care for their old and disabled family members and facilitate the involvement in labour market of their family members who are capable to work.

RIS Commitment 10: Promotion of the implementation and the follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy through regional cooperation

Cooperation of Lithuania with the UNECE member countries on the ageing matters is mostly carried out within the framework of joint projects of the European Union. As already mentioned in the introductory part, the drafting of the National Strategy Report on Adequate and Sustainable Pensions, National Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, Report on Strategies of Lithuania for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, Lisbon Strategy Implementation Programme and other documents is an effective way to share experiences and assimilate good practices of other EU Member States in the sphere of the ageing policy.

Lithuanian NGO's of older people participate in the international projects and international organisations. For example, the Elderly Women's Activities Centre (set up in 1994 in Kaunas) is a member of the international organisations HelpAge International and AgePlatform. The Centre participates in the international projects of UNECE member countries. WWW-Golden.Age project carried out in 2004-2007 functions as the international information technology platform. Seven EU Member States participate in this project. In 2005-2007 the international project "From isolation to inclusion: integration of older people into the community life" is being implemented.

"Gabija" organisation established in 2001 is also actively involved in the international cooperation. This is a voluntary non-profit organisation set up to address the problems of older people. At present "Gabija" is engaged in the project "Increasing the influence of older people in shaping the strategy of the reduction of poverty and social exclusion". 5 workshops have taken place on the basis of "Get Heard" methodology developed in Great Britain. Their results will be disseminated in all Member States of the EU.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

Ageing of population in Lithuania is taken into account by shaping social security, employment, health care and other policies. They are coordinated by the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing adopted in 2004. During the period after 2002, the country has:

carried out the future-oriented pension reform, which created a pension accumulation element and will help to ensure the future financial stability of pensions; expanded the right for all disabled persons and persons who have attained the old-age retirement age to receive at least the minimum pension;

sought to ensure to every older person steady income not degrading their dignity with guarantees to retain huge part of the former standard of living and allowing to live full-fledged life;

implemented important changes of the employment policy – measures have been taken to promote employment and entrepreneurship of older persons, develop their opportunities of learning, create favourable working conditions to them and respectively modify employment relations, as well as to eliminate discrimination in terms of age;

consistently developed the social services sector, in particular non-stationary services, in order to ensure accessible social and health services of good quality, and help older persons to live full-fledged life for the longest possible period in their usual living environment;

conducted health security prevention programmes oriented to the risk groups of older persons;

intensified actions that form a positive image of older persons, their participation in relevant decision-making processes, and cooperation between the generations.

Many of the above policy directions are just the first steps in pursuing the ageing-oriented policy. Demographic forecasts show that further and more intensive changes are needed in social security, health care, employment policies, adaptation of infrastructure, etc.

National awareness of the ageing problem is rather strong, respective policy directions have been shaped and their implementation started, the necessary legal framework has been created, and the administrative capacities constantly strengthened. Rapid economic development allows increasing the financing for pensions and social security. However, social security and health care are allocated the GDP share that is still significantly smaller than the EU average, and a hard task has emerged to reconcile the current need to increase pensions and other social benefits and the future prospects of financial stability of the pension system. The situation is aggravated by intensive emigration of people of working age. Employers form a positive attitude towards older employees comparatively heavily, and those older employees are not confident about their possibilities to fully participate in the labour market. Due to insufficiently developed infrastructure, social services are hardly accessible to the residents of rural areas. The solution of the problem of care of persons who are in need of permanent nursing care also faces difficulties.

With the view of overcoming the enumerated weaknesses the following directions provided in the National Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing should be further taken:

to pursue a well-balanced pension policy that reconciles the present and future needs;

to promote employment of older persons by adapting their working places, forming their positive image as employees so that the share of people remaining in the labour market is as big as possible;

to develop health and social services, in particular in rural areas, by focussing on integrated care and nursing care at home, which provides older persons with an opportunity to live full-fledged life in their usual living environment.

Besides, the family policy is revised and made as family-friendly as possible and better stimulating the births.

Successful implementation of the indicated policy measures requires research that gives recommendations how to interest older persons and their employers, to retain older persons in the labour market and provide them with an opportunity to retrain; to evaluate how employment of older persons may be encouraged by the provision of social services to the family members they take care of in day care centres, and creation of family-friendly employment; to what extent the funds diverted to the active measures of the labour market are used more effectively than those diverted to social assistance.

Taking account of the relevance of the ageing problem in Europe, best practice should be regularly disseminated among the countries. This would create the opportunities to prepare national strategies that combine policies in all spheres of life that are relevant to older persons.

ANNEX

State institutions

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Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, J.Tumo-Vaižganto str. 8a/2. Vilnius LT-01512, Lithuania, E-mail: finmin@finmin.lt

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, J.Basanavičiaus str. 5, Vilnius LT-01118, Lithuania, E-mail: culture@muza.lt

Ministry of Social security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, A.Vivulskio str. 11, Vilnius LT-03610, Lithuania, E-mail: post@socmin.lt

Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, Gedimino av. 17, Vilnius LT-01505, Lithuania, E-mail: transp@transp.lt

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilniaus str. 33, Vilnius LT-01506, Lithuania, E-mail: ministerija@sam.lt

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, A.Volano str. 2/7, Vilnius LT-01516, Lithuania, E-mail: smin@smin.lt

Police department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Saltoniškių str. 19, Vilnius LT-08105, Lithuania, E-mail: info@policija.lt

Non-governmental organizations

Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Lithuania „Bočiai“, A.Goštauto str. 5/2, Vilnius LT-01106, Lithuania, E-mail: lietbociai@micro.lt

Age focused network „Gabija“, Aušros vartų str. 12-112, Vilnius, Lithuania, E-mail: info@seniores.lt

The Activity Centre of Senior Women, A.Juozapavičiaus str. 77, Kaunas LT-45264, Lithuania, E-mail: arbanijo@takas.lt