

Guidelines for Report on National Follow-up
to the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)

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Introduction

Outline of the Report on the follow-up to the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of action on Aging (MIPAA) in (the country)

The Report for follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Regional Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) of the Republic of Macedonia has been drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with the Bureau for Social Affairs of Skopje and some NGOs and citizen associations involved in the promotion of the wellbeing of older persons such as Gerontology Association of the Republic of Macedonia, the Association of Women from Third Age of Macedonia (Veterans), the Union of Pensioner Association and the University for Adults. Those three organizations support older persons in the country through different programmes and projects to satisfy their economic, health, educational and social needs.

Within the framework of the Strategic Operational Plan of the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy for the period 2007-2009 a Program for Social Protection of Older Persons has been anticipated.

0. General Information

Name of the country: Republic of Macedonia

Name of and information on the author of the Report

Dusko Minovski, Secretary State of the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy

Contact details of the author the Report

dminovski@mtsp.gov.mk

Name of official focal point on ageing and contact details

Name, reference and date of adoption or status of preparation of the national strategy, action plan or similar policy document on ageing.

Strategic Operational Plan of the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy for the period 2007-2009.

Report on Follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in the Republic of Macedonia

1. Situations, Activities and Priorities related to Ageing

a) National Ageing Situation

In the period 1948-2006, the representation of the population between the age of 0 and 14 in the Republic of Macedonia has declined by 38.4%, whereas the representation of the population aged 60 and over has increased by 58.6%. Changes demonstrated in the representation of age groups in the Republic of Macedonia indicate to the fact that the aging population process has commenced. Namely, it is considered that, according to the indicator, the population commenced its ageing, if the representation of the population aged 60 and over has reached 12%. In other words, the age rate (the ratio between the population aged 60 and over and the total population) has reached its critical value of 12% for the population of the Republic of Macedonia in 1997 and it quotes 13.8%.

The conclusion that the population of the Republic of Macedonia is taken by the process of demographic (biological) ageing is also ascertained by the indicator of average age of the population and the age rate (determined as ratio between the population aged 60 and over and the population aged between 0 and 19). Namely, in the period 1953-2006 it is perceived that the average age of the population of the Republic of Macedonia increased from 25.9% in 1953 to 33.5% in 1997.

According to these criteria, the Republic of Macedonia is at the end point of bridging the full demographic age.

Namely, it is expected that the same intensity of the demographic ageing process of the population in the Republic of Macedonia continue in the further period as well. According to the most probable option of the Projection of the Population of the Republic of Macedonia to 2020, by the end of the projected period it is expected that the population aged between 0 and 14 represents 17.2% in the total population, having a decline of 28% compared to 1997. The population aged 15-59 will represent 60.9% of the total population, being a slight decline of 2% compared to 1997. Finally, the population aged 60 and over will represent 21.9% of the total population, with an increase of 57% compared to 1997. It means that the process of demographic population ageing will intensify to 2020 simultaneously increasing needs for social and health protection of older persons.

Except for the observations of the changes taking place in the process of demographic ageing, population projections indicate that changes with regard to gender structure in the course of the projection period will also occur. This change in the Republic of Macedonia shall be on the account of female population, mainly due to external migrations. It means that of 49.8% female and 50.2% male population within the period 1994-1996, in 2020 the female population would quote to 50.5%, and 49.5% male population.

If we refer to the analysis on the stages of demographic age and apply it to 2020, it will appear that the Republic of Macedonia will characterise the fifth stage or demographic age.

Such changes would occur as a result of decline of the birth rate, expecting to reach the level of 10.7 births in 1 000 inhabitants. Likewise, it is expected that the life cycle extends, reaching the age level of 73.6% for male and 77.6% for female population, as well as increased level of migration abroad.

The stage of demographic age includes 54 municipalities or 45.0% of the municipalities of the Republic of Macedonia. They are characterised by distinctively low birth birth-rate, high mortality and high level of representation of elderly population of 60 and over in the age structure of the population. Most of these municipalities, in the last few years, have had negative population birth-rate. They are also mostly rural municipalities, which in the past, and in particular in the period 1961-1971, were characterized by specifically high migration rate. This period corresponds to the period of industrialization of the country, with a lot of industrial capacities built in the city centres, demanding labour force. This headed to almost total depopulation of a number of rural inhabited areas, and in particular working-age people and young population. In addition, migrations abroad in that period greatly influenced the depopulation in these municipalities. Most characteristic was the permanent migration of population in overseas countries. The demographic age threshold is reached by 30 municipalities. It means participation of 25%. According to many criteria, a great number of these municipalities have same characteristics as those of the first group, and most of them are reaching the demographic age threshold.

The process of demographic age has affected 14 municipalities. They comprise 11.7% of the municipality structure of the Republic of Macedonia.

The demographic maturity stage includes 10 municipalities or 8.3% of the total number of municipalities in the country.

And the last group comprises municipalities which are in demographic young stage. Their number is 12 or participation of 10.0% in the total number of municipalities.

This is a serious problem for the further demographic, economic, social and technological development of the Republic of Macedonia; due to that in the next period it needs a complex, consistent and differentiated population policy to synchronize demographic, economic and technological flows.

b) Instrumental Assessment

Currently, the country is implementing reforms in the field of social security, in particular in the pension system, having burdened its capacity to respond the challenges related to ageing population trends in the country. These changes are based on two major concepts: deinstitutionalization and decentralization. Main measures concerning these reforms are focused to: (1) reducing the social costs on a level consistent to the financial situation of the country; (2) developing new rules and procedures related to granting social security by means of targeted and stricter convenient-based criteria, according to which higher level of financial contributions and social security will be provided for lower number of beneficiaries.

The Government in cooperation with the World Bank has taken huge steps related to reform in the pension system for older persons through reforming the currently mandatory funded pension insurance (Pass-as-you-go). This pension system may be also named public pension system and it ensures defined pensions on the bases of ahead determined formula facilitating replacement rate of 30% for full accrued time, and the rest of the pension will be obtained by capitally funded pension system. This type of insurance facilitates exercising the right to pension and disability insurance in case of old age, disability and death, in terms of payment of the portion of the old age pension, disability pension and family pension as well as the lowest amount of pension. The need for provision of long-term stability of the pension system is expressed through establishing second mandatory capitally funded pension pillar and through creating opportunity for developing third voluntary pillar. In April 2002, Macedonia put into effect the new Law on Mandatory Fully Funded Pension Insurance. The second pillar entered into force in January 2006 following extended preparations by introducing huge administrative reform in the Public

Pension Fund and establishing Regulatory Agency for supervision of private pension companies.

c) Identification of Area for in-depth Evaluation

In order to respond to the challenges related to ageing population trends in the country, the Republic of Macedonia needs to implement reforms focused to: deinstitutionalization and decentralization. The main measures of these reforms are directed to: (1) reducing social costs on level consistent to the financial situation of the country; (2) developing new rules and procedures for granting social security by means of targeted and stricter consistent-based criteria, according to which, a high level of financial contribution and social security of lower number of beneficiaries will be obtained.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia in cooperation with the World Bank **has taken huge steps related to the reform in the pension system for older persons** through reforming the currently mandatory funded pension insurance (Pass-as-you-go). This pension system may be also named public pension system and it ensures defined pensions on the bases of ahead determined formula facilitating replacement rate of 30% for full accrued time, and the rest of the pension will be obtained by capitally funded pension system. This type of insurance facilitates exercising the right to pension and disability insurance in case of old age, disability and death, in terms of payment of the portion of the old age pension, disability pension and family pension as well as the lowest amount of pension. The need for provision of long-term stability of the pension system is expressed through establishing second mandatory capitally funded pension pillar and through creating opportunity for development of third voluntary pillar. In April 2002, Macedonia put into effect the new Law on Mandatory Fully Funded Pension Insurance. The second pillar entered into force in January 2006 following extended preparations by introducing huge

administrative reform in the Public Pension Fund and establishing Regulatory Agency for supervision of private pension companies.

2. Methodology of In-Depth Evaluation of Identified Priorities

3. National Capacity for MIPAA/RIS Follow-up

The Republic of Macedonia has diversified but not optimal national capacity for monitoring its commitments arising from MIPAA/RIS. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the major authority competent for implementation of the policies and programmes for fulfilling, inter alia, the older population's needs and requirements as well as for the process of following-up the appearance related to ageing. The Ministry has close cooperation with the relevant Ministries and state agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

The social security in the Republic of Macedonia is regulated by the Law on Social Security and other relevant laws regulating older persons' social security and social protection. The older persons' social protection is provided through the pension and healthcare system.

The mandatory health insurance system covers almost all categories of older people. For the citizens over the age of 65 and without health insurance, funds of the national budget are secured through the social protection system.

According to the reformed health protection system, healthcare capacity in the area of primary healthcare were provided without cash participation by the beneficiaries and people over the age of 66 have a very low cash participation in secondary and tertiary services. Moreover, the right to health protection enables provision of medicines through the Positive List, developed by the Ministry of Health. People, also have access to orthopaedic aids and medical appliances.

Institutional and out-of-institutional forms of sheltering for older people:

National institutional capacities are neither suitable nor sufficient to respond the need of institutional sheltering for older. Currently, there are four state hospices, but their number is not sufficient to satisfy the need for sheltering in these institutions. Their capacity satisfies only the needs of 0.3% of the population over 65. Within the last two years, the number of private initiatives concerning construction of hospices has commenced; however, considering the costs they are not accessible for most of older people due to their low pension/income. There are also 38 pensioner clubs providing accommodation and care for old persons pension-beneficiaries.

Furthermore, in Macedonia there are out-of-institutional forms of sheltering for older persons, mainly including homecare, provision of financial care and benefit in kind realized through the centres for social work.

4. Review and Appraisal by Subject Area

RIS Commitment 1: Mainstreaming Ageing

a) What are the areas in which ageing is mainstreamed and to what extent is it done?

In the Republic of Macedonia ageing is integrated in the area of social and health protection as well as life-long learning of older population, and in the answers below it is concisely detailed to what extent it is done in different areas.

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

So far in our country there is neither actual strategy related to older persons, nor national body making use of holistic approach. Issues related to old age and ageing are treated by particular policies of sectoral ministries.

c) What initiatives has your country taken to tackle age discrimination? Which results have these initiatives achieved?

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia provides for non-discriminatory attitude to older persons, and this is implemented in all national laws. All this is supported in the National Employment Strategy where it is accurately determined that there is no discriminatory approach to older population. They have equal rights to participate in the labour market.

d) What is participation of older persons in taking part in the development of and strategies and in their implementation?

Older persons take active participation in the policy and strategy developments and in their implementation through the non-governmental sector; however, they are also in position to directly participate in adoption of laws and other decisions through participation in public debates, direct submission of initiatives and proposals to MLSP or to other state institutions.

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

The non-governmental sector and organizations of older persons, on the basis of projects funded by foreign foundations, endeavour to contribute to quality life enhancement of older persons in the Republic of Macedonia. The most outstanding concerning their activities are the Gerontology Association of the Republic of Macedonia, the Association of Women from Third Age of Macedonia – Veterans (within SOZM), the Union of Pensioner Association and the University for Adults (The House of Educators). They have close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other competent state institutions through initiatives, proposal of solutions and other type of cooperation.

RIS Commitment 2: Integration and Participation of Older Persons

a) What measures has your country taken to recognize, encourage and support the contribution of older persons to society (e.g. media campaigns, school curricula)?

The Republic of Macedonia continuously implements activities to enhance the contribution of older persons to society. These activities are often implemented in cooperation with the non-governmental sector and through the mass media, whilst the country provides opportunity in this field to older individuals to equally offer their force to the labour market pursuant to the National Employment Strategy. However, the country is still lacking actual curricula supporting young generation to familiarize with the ageing process and implications arising as a result.

b) Which mechanisms has your country put in place to take into account the view of older persons on the services provided to them?

The country has continuous and intensive cooperation with NGOs representing older persons' interests and rights and with a view to perceiving their attitudes related to the services offered by the governmental and non-governmental sector.

c) How has your country encouraged the participation of older persons in society, culture and economy?

In 2006 under the legal amendments older persons have opportunity to work and upon their retirement if they feel vital to further contribute to the society and economy flows. Older persons may also contribute in the field of culture participating in various associations and cultural manifestations.

d) Which activities have you taken to promote the political participation of older persons, and in particular of older women?

The non-governmental sector makes efforts in this field to affirm older women in politics through actual projects and campaigns.

e) What mechanisms and organisations exist in your country to provide a political voice for older persons and how have they been promoted?

Older persons raise their political voice through the Union of Pensioners of the Republic of Macedonia and the National Council of Women of the Republic of Macedonia (SOZM), having 90 units among which units of rural women and the Association of the Women from Third Age.

The abovementioned organizations promote themselves through particular projects and campaigns and with a view to raising the political voice of older persons as a basic mechanism in the promotion of their participation in the political sphere as a part of full social life.

f) Have you set up a national advisory body on aging or a similar institutional mechanism that includes older persons to ensure a dynamic and coordinated contribution of older persons to national policy responses to ageing?

The Gerontology Association which operates in the Republic of Macedonia has submitted request to the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia to establish national advisory body, waiting for reply. However, there are non-governmental organizations representing the older persons' interests on national level.

g) Have you adopted policies and programmes to improve the housing and living environment of older persons especially in rural areas? This includes access to and affordability of services, such as housing, utility, sanitation and in particular transportation.

Out-of-institutional protection in Macedonia is based on the principles of solidarity, humanity and reciprocity among people. It means home care for older persons, possibility to establish clubs for older people, and etc. This form of protection is more easily operational and acceptable in urban areas rather than in rural ones. Local community in cooperation with NGOs has already commenced

activities concerning public services and housing affordability. However, there is lack of projects realization in rural areas to achieve home and living environment for older persons as well as access to affordable services (housing, public services, sanitary facilities, transportation, and etc.).

a) What steps has your country taken to promote age-integrated commitments where facilities are made available to people of all ages and where they can meet and interact (e.g. joint community centres for the older and the young)?

In the Republic of Macedonia there are initiatives and joint projects for such type of integration and interaction among older and young persons by the non-governmental sector, public institutions and local self-government, in particular projects referring to opening Clubs for older persons available for all ages due to greater social interaction; thus enhancing inter-generational and intra-generational relations on higher level.

b) Has your country promoted volunteer activities to enable younger and older people to interact and support each other?

A Youth Service operates within the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia educated to serve and support older persons (in terms of provision of foodstuffs and other articles as well as other type of assistances). The Older People Week is precisely established in the calendar, when intensive activities are taken focused to promotion of mutual support, understanding and dialogue between older and young people.

a) What steps has your country taken to promote a positive image of ageing (e.g. media campaigns, incentives for employers to promote continued employment for older persons, initiatives within local communities and with participation of other social actors to facilitate dialogue and better understanding between the generations)? In this respect it is important to promote a differentiated and heterogeneous view of the life of older persons to better reflect reality.

Positive picture of the ageing process is lacking; however it is important that the social protection system allows establishing private hospices thus achieving wider coverage and quality services to be enjoyed by older population.

Among other things, the Macedonian National Television has provided space to broadcast positive sides of the ageing process, actually reflecting the life of older people in our country as well as perceiving all opportunities contributing to raising awareness among the other population concerning these persons.

b) What actions (in particular in cooperation with mass media) have been taken to encourage older persons to make the general public more aware of the positive aspects of ageing?

Each year, the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia carries out campaigns focusing publicity towards the positive sides of the ageing process; thus providing full support to older persons to undertake actual actions for the purpose of demonstrating, in real sense, the positive sides of ageing. All this is supported by mass media, but not in the course of the whole year and by all printing and electronic media.

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

a) What strategies has your country adopted to transform your economies with a view to eradicating poverty especially among older persons?

According to the 2007 Development and Social Protection Programme, 2010 National Employment Strategy and 2006-2008 National Action Plan for Employment, the Republic of Macedonia has enabled inclusion of older persons in all socio-economic flows. In this way, our country aims at realizing increase in employment and decrease in unemployment on national level and accordingly poverty decline among all population categories including older persons over the age of 55.

b) What measures has your country taken to review and adjust the macroeconomic policies to address the needs of a growing ageing population?

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

a) How has your country adopted social protection systems to societal and demographic changes?

Social protection as a special segment and instrument of the social policy has wide competences and responsibilities in the prevention of and resolving problems related to demographic and individual ageing risks. For that purpose, the Law on Social Protection facilitates many forms of institutional and out-of-institutional actions. Institutional social protection in the existing hospices in RM is still lagging behind the modern gerontology knowledge and practices in the developed countries. The capacity and dispersion of hospices in RM are not in compliance with the expressed needs for this type of social protection. Namely, the effectuated capacity is as twice as much to that of the projected in the four existing hospices and does not satisfy the actual accommodation requirements therein. Even such effectuated capacities cover only 0.3% of persons over the age of 65 being on very low level in relation with established standards in most of the developed countries in Europe, according to which 3-5% of persons over the age of 65 should have opportunity to be accommodated in hospices. For the several years there is occurrence of private initiatives that is to be encouraged and supported; however from the aspect of cost of the services, private hospices are not available for most of the retired due to the low pension level. Out-of-institutional forms are realized mainly through provision of support and care in home environment, financial assets for support and care provided by other person and benefit in kind realized through the centres for social work.

In 2008, our country shall adopt the National Programme for Development and Social Protection for 2008-2010, priority being focused to enhancement and development of social protection activity for particular groups of citizens through provision of social services concerning basic social risks, health risks, ageing risks, and etc.

b) What steps has your country taken to achieve a sufficient income for all older persons?

Older persons cannot survive without pensions and the pension system without reforms as well. Pension and disability insurance in RM is based on the following main principles: mandatory pension and disability insurance, reliance of the rights to obligations and the range of invested asset, social equity and observance of the International Labour Organization conventions and recommendations.

Reform actions have established new structure of the pension system in RM comprising the following three components:

- mandatory pension and disability insurance on the basis of generation solidarity (first pillar);
- mandatory capitally funded pension insurance (second pillar); and
- voluntary capital funded pension insurance (third pillar).

Multi-level pension system is in advantage compared to the current funded pension system, which due to the principle of generation solidarity does not encourage the population to save for old age. The mandatory pension and disability system ensures that part of the age, family and disability pension as well as the right to lowest pension amount is provided. The institute lowest pension amount is provided for those beneficiaries that obtain lower pension amount in order to provide minimum material and social security throughout the pension system.

The capitally funded system has long-term influence on increasing national savings whilst being an instrument for development of the financial market, thus reflecting the growth of investments and the economic growth as well. The introduction of mandatory capitally funded pension insurance will reduce the state system obligations so that public consumption is reduced. Furthermore, capitally funded pension system in contrast to current system is immune to demographic strokes, which will ensure long-term material and social security of aged generations.

The transparency of the reformed pension system is also one of its advantages. To be exact, each insured person from the date of his/her employment to the date of his/her exercise the right to pension will be acquainted to the amount in his own or personal account, what instrument it is invested in and what is the profit of such investment. It is important to emphasize that the reformed pension system does not cover pension beneficiaries who have previously acquired their right to pension. Namely, they further retain their rights to unchanged amount. In addition, social protection system provides the persons at the age of 65 and over (men and women) on the basis of unworkable age and without income with financial aid as well as permanent financial aid.

c) What policies has it adopted to address on time the needs of older person for a variety of social and health services, including shelter housings and long-term care?

According to the legal regulation in our country older persons over 65 are entitled to free health services provided for in the Law on Health Protection, while the Law on Social Protection provides for the right to financial aid, services and out-of-institutional forms of protection in terms of sheltering in foster families and all other social protection laid sown in the Law. In the territory of the Republic of Macedonia there are four shelter housings for older persons as public institutions and four private sheltering housings for long-term care. In addition, there are 38 pension clubs providing accommodation and care to older persons – pension beneficiaries.

d) How has your country promoted standards of living for persons with disabilities and for fragile older persons that allow them to maintain their independence and dignity?

The legal regulation in our country provides for enhancement of the standard of living of older fragile persons and it is necessary that they are entitled to financial

aid, allowance for support and care by other person as well as home services in order to maintain their dignity and independence within the social system. Except for the support by the Law on Social Protection, non-governmental organizations as well as local community put their stress to older persons in terms of improving their standard of living.

a) What steps has your country taken to establish or further develop a regulatory framework for occupational and private pension provision?

Occupational pension schemes and private (voluntary pensions) will come into force through establishing voluntary capitally funded pension insurance in 2008.

b) Which amendments have been implemented to the laws regulating mandatory retirement?

Reform in the system based on current funding consists of: change in the age for gaining the right to old age pension, replacement rate and reconciliation of pensions (indexing).

1. Major changes to conditions for gaining the right to pension

- Age limit as a condition for retirement will gradually rise from 60 to 62 for women or from 63 to 64 for men with 15 years minimum accrued time.

Since September 2000 in the Republic of Macedonia there is only one condition for retirement, and that is age limit.

- The insured who until 1 September 2000 reached 28 years accrued time for women or 33 for men may exercise their right to age pension with 35 years accrued time (women) or 40 (men) at latest of 1 September 2007.

The insured persons working under exceptionally hard and risky conditions to health (credited years of service) exercise their right to old-age pension through lowering the age limit depending on the degree of the increase of the years of service.

2. Changes in replacement rate

For persons who only remain insured in the public pension system (those who decide not to join the new pension system), and since 1 September have reached at least 15 years of service, the replacement rate for full years of service is 80% as under current regulations. For those persons who have not completed 15 years accrued time the replacement rate will decrease in the next 40 years up to 72% commencing as of 1 September 2000.

3. Pension Indexing

Reconciliation of pensions is an instrument for pension and disability insurance through which real value of pensions is maintained in line with the increase of the employees' average wage in Macedonia. Within the framework of the reform a change in the way pensions are reconciled has been made. So that pensions are reconciled following the growth of the living costs, that is 80% and the growth of the average wage in Macedonia, that is 20%.

a) What policies has your country adopted to ensure equal treatment of men and women in social protection system?

Adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia ensured equal treatment of men and women in the sphere of social living including the sphere of social protection.

b) What policies has your country adopted to ensure that social protection system support a better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities throughout the life cycle (e.g. through special leave arrangements for working parents and other caregivers, or supportive measures such as respite care services (professional care services provided on an ad-hoc basis to give the regular caregivers some time of)?

So far the system in the Republic of Macedonia has not created a policy to reconcile family and work responsibilities through the life cycle. However, the social protection system, in particular, offers families having older member that they may engage outdoor person (caregiver) to respite their role using financial contribution for support and care of other person.

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

Has your country taken measures to enable labour market access to employment opportunities and reduce unemployment rates especially for older persons, such as active labour market policies (job-search assistance, training, counselling, and etc.)? adoption of curricula to labour market needs, measures to ease the transition between formal education and work, efforts to reduce non-wage labour costs while protection workers' rights, easing of factors reducing demand for labour (e.g. too heavy administrative regulations, and etc.)?

Republic of Macedonia within its opportunities and activities has taken measures to ease the access to work places including older persons. In that direction, the National Employment Strategy 2010 incorporating employment policies, revised Lisbon Strategy and the EU Integrated Guidelines, provides for national objectives of the country to increase the employment rate of older persons (55-64) from 26.2% in 2005 to 33% in 2010. Due to that, the National

Action Plan for employment 2006-2008 as an operative document envisages adoption of the Law on Informal Learning, the Strategy of Adult Education and Life-long Learning. These activities shall create ground for organization of training and retraining in public and private institutions in the field of education.

In addition, the Law on Life-Long Learning has been planned.

Within the framework of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) in the multi-annual operative programme, which is in its drafting stage, training for long-term unemployed persons (55 and over) has been planned so that they achieve skills sought lacking offer in the labour market.

Furthermore, particular amendments to the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance, concerning past period or by August 2008, an opportunity was given for exercising the right to 35 year accrued time for women and 40 for men regardless the age. This legal solution enabled a great number of beneficiates to exercise their right to pension. As this provision ceases to apply, the right to pension under the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance may be exercised only with 62 years of age for women and 64 for man and at least 15 years of accrued time.

In parallel the Government of the Republic of Macedonia enforces Regulatory Guillotine that would surpass too strict administrative procedures thus reducing administrative costs to the approach of any types of services and rights for all citizens of the country.

Has your country taken measures to improve the employability of older workers, e.g. through vocational guidance and training, promoting life-long learning (delivery of job-relevant training to enable workers to adjust to changing labour markets), improvement of working conditions?

The employment rate among older workers (55-64) is 26.2%, and the unemployment rate is 21.9% for 2005. The transition process by itself contributes that older persons with their inadequate qualification are not able to respond to the modern needs of the labour market. Main reasons for such situation are lack of skills and knowledge, for instance (computer skills and etc.). Consequently, Republic of Macedonia at the moment is taking measures for reintegration of older unemployed persons and recovery of their employability in the labour market through establishing a system for reemployment or for starting a new business.

The multi-annual programme within the framework of Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) which is in ongoing draft stage envisages development of adult education and life-long learning ensuring systematic approach to adult education, activities coordination, improvement of the programmes for development of adult education and etc.

a) Has your country taken steps to raise participation rates in labour market for all women and men, e.g. through removing barriers and disincentives to stay in employment?

Republic of Macedonia indirectly through the 2010 National Employment Strategy ensures equal gender participation in the Macedonian labour market. Furthermore, it endeavours to surpass traditionalism among part of the citizens as well as the traditional picture of the role of woman in the family. For that purpose, in the next period, it makes intensive efforts to open public and private child-care institutions within the childcare system. This is aimed at removing barriers and disincentive affecting work cycle of Macedonian citizens.

b) Has your country taken specific measures to increase the labour force participation of women, e.g. through suitable education and training, measures to broaden their job opportunities and avoid discriminatory situation with regard to pension benefits or personal income?

The Law on Pension and Disability Insurance stipulates possibilities for women to exercise their right to old-age pension at the age of 62. The rights to pension and disability insurance are personal and material rights and are exercised by submission of application. Depending on the personal will, the insured woman may exercise her right to old-age pension before the age of 64 which is also regulated as single condition for insured man.

a) Has your country taken steps to offer incentives for the participation of older persons in the labour market (abolishment of incentives to take up early retirement, abolishment of disincentives to stay in the labour market)?

As of January 1994 a number of restrictive measures have been taken with regard to exercising the right to retirement among which abandonment of the institute buy-up years of service as a possibility for early retirement, and etc.

b) What mechanisms has your country adopted to promote a smooth and gradual retirement?

With regard to reaching the age as a condition for exercising the right to old-age retirement, a gradual increase of age limit has been applied as a condition for retirement, being gradually increased from 60 to 62 for women or 63 to 64 for men with minimum 15 years of service.

Years	Men	Women
01.09.2000 to 31.12.2000	63.5	58.5
01.01.2001 to 31.12.2001	64.0	59.0
01.01.2002 to 31.12.2002		59.5
01.01.2003 to 31.12.2003		60.0
01.01.2004 to 31.12.2004		60.5
01.01.2005 to 31.12.2005		61.0

01.01.2006 to 31.12.2006		61.5
01.01.2007 to 31.12.2007		62.0

Interim, the rights to pension and disability insurance are exercised upon fulfilling the conditions and upon individual application by the insured. The amendments to the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance of June 2006 envisage that the pension beneficiary may re-establish labour relation and whilst benefiting portion of the pension depending on the working hours engagement.

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

a) What steps have been taken to adjust education institutions to the needs of persons in retirement?

The Republic of Macedonia adopted the National Program for Development of Education (2006) within the Strategy for Adult Education (2005-2015), the Law on Adult Education is undergoing governmental procedure and the Project on Identification of Informal Education Providers within the CARDS Project (2006) is in the course of realization, the Law on Vocational Education, Qualification and Training has been adopted, in cooperation with social partners, providing for introduction of a Centre for Vocational Education and Qualification, which is in the stage of establishment.

b) What initiatives has your country undertaken with respect to pre-retirement programmes?

The existing Law on Pension and Disability Insurance does not lay down basis for exercising the right to pre-retirement but retirement may be reached on the basis of accomplishing certain age and minimum accrued time.

c) What learning methods have been developed to teach older persons the use of new information technologies?

It is important that the older population in the Republic of Macedonia responds to the modern information society. For that purpose the National Employment Strategy 2010 as strategic priority has clearly determined the need for increasing the access and inclusion to information communication technology of as many as economic entities, and people including older persons. The Project on Identification of Informal Education Providers is in the course of realization (CARDS project 2006).

d) Has your country adapted educational curricula to prepare people to lives of continuous change and equip them with the necessary skills and attitude favouring flexibility? The use of which new didactic methods has been promoted in this regard?

The Republic of Macedonia has adopted the National Education Strategy (2006) introducing the Strategy for Adult Education (2005-2015) making efforts to narrow the gap between the existing knowledge and skills, on the one hand, and market economy, on the other hand. Furthermore, according to the National Action Plan for Employment within the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia intensive day-to-day training, re-training and additional training of the labour force is carried out, promoting methods aimed at easier response to the challenges of modern life.

a) Has your country taken steps to establish closer links between educational institutions and employers and to encourage employers to provide on-the-job training for workers of different age, including older workers?

The Republic of Macedonia has adopted a Law on Vocational Education, Qualification and Training, and in cooperation with the social partners, it has commenced establishing Centres for Vocational Education and Qualification. Moreover, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia organises training, re-training and additional training for unemployed persons, including older persons if they are registered as unemployed. During the training the employers are provided compensation estimating MKD 2,000 per trainee to cover the training costs, and the persons are provided MKD 4,000 to cover the costs linked with the training. The second incentive for employers to employ registered as unemployed over one year in the Employment Agency and who are actively searching for job, including older persons, is the possibility of personal tax release for the period of three years.

Relaxation circumstance for employers is that whoever employs allowance beneficiary is entitled to a single pay-off of the rest of the employment allowance.

Except for organising training for unemployed persons, training for employed persons has been carried out for those who are at danger to be dismissed from work. Those persons receive training to gain knowledge and skills so that are posted to another employer.

b) What initiatives have been taken to increase school retention rates limit dropouts?

The Law on Primary Education lays down violation provisions for retention at schools and limiting dropouts as follows:

Fine of EUR 3 000 in denar equivalent value to a primary school for violation if it does not notify the State Educational Inspectorate of pupils

not enrolled or who do not regularly attend school or if it does not encompass the obligatory pupils from its region, while the parent or the guardian will be fined EUR 800 in denar equivalent value if the pupil is not enrolled or does not regularly attend school.

c) *Have any special programs been developed and/or promoted to facilitate the reintegration into the labour market of those who left early the formal educational system?*

Our country has envisaged adopting the Law on Informal Education, Strategy for Adult Education as well as adoption of the Law on Life-Long Learning, which will raise the citizens' awareness on life-long learning. This will further ease their access to the labour market, as reintegrated and more productive.

d) *Has your country taken steps to make formal schooling more gender-sensitive, e.g. through the introduction of gender-sensitive curricula, specific programmes for older women to support them re-enter the labour market?*

The Ministry of Education through the Bureau for Development of Education has created curricula without stereotype presentation of the role of men and women in the social environment. Teaching in the Republic of Macedonia is gender-sensitive.

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

What actions have been taken to integrate ageing issues into sectoral policies?

The Republic of Macedonia has taken actions to integrate ageing issues related to older and ageing process. Namely, they are processed in sectoral policies within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

a) *What targeted measures have been taken to decrease inequalities in access to health and social services, including for people in rural and remote areas?*

The Republic of Macedonia has a network of primary health protection institutions for all citizens of the country and social services accessible for all ages, including for older people. However, this network is not sufficiently accessible for persons who live in rural and remote areas.

b) *What initiatives have been taken to improve long-term care services for older persons, in particular community-based services mostly demanded in order to overcome the mismatch between home services asked for as against residential care services supplied?*

The Republic of Macedonia has not surpassed the inconsistency between residential and home care services. However, the Sector for Social

Protection within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and in accordance with the Governmental Programme 2007-2009 has envisaged development of care services as a pilot project in two urban and two rural areas in the country. Its aim is to improve the long-term services for older persons.

- c) *How has your country improved the coordination and integration of services provided to older persons (e.g. through case management system)?*

In our country 27 Inter-Municipality Centres for Social Work function, and they are mutually coordinated and integrated concerning provision of social services and financial assistance for older persons.

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

Training is permanently carried out in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia through NGOs (funded by the World Bank and by other international foundations) for professionals, volunteers who are stimulated to give their contribution in the development and provision assistance to older persons.

- e) *What efforts have been made to improve the skills of older persons with regard to self-care, health promotion, prevention of disease and disability?*

The Centres for Social Work provide psycho-social services to older persons. The Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia through voluntary actions includes volunteers and youth to enhance older persons' skills with regard to self-care, health promotion, prevention of disease and disability. In addition, education of older population with reference to all preconditions for maintaining healthy and peaceful life is intensified in the course of the calendar week for older persons and in the International Day of Older Persons.

What has been done to ensure efficient, equitable and sustainable financing of health and social services for persons of all ages?

What measures have been taken to facilitate the adoption of healthy life-style (e.g. information campaigns)?

Solely the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia, SOZM and other organizations from the non-governmental sector, focused to older persons and the ageing process, carry out campaigns for healthy life-style such as joint association (visiting movies, theatres), visiting cultural and historical monuments, hiking, maintaining healthy life-style through provision of advices for healthy nutrition and etc.

RIS Commitment 8: Mainstreaming a gender approach in an aging society to support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity among their members

- a) *What measures have been taken to mainstream gender, to remove all obstacles to achieving gender equality, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and to promote individual development of women throughout their entire life cycle?*

Under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, amendments to the Law on Election of Parliamentary Members, amendments to the Law on Local Elections as well as amendments to the Law on the Electoral Code, the Republic of Macedonia has taken specific steps for gender equity. Commission for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women has been established within the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and such commissions also exist on local level within each municipality.

The actual implementation of those Laws is regularly provided through organizing seminars and training in order to introduce gender mainstreaming on central as well as on local level

In this way our country makes serious efforts to fully eradicate all possible forms of discrimination against women thus promoting individual development of women in general and in the frame of the society as a whole.

- b) *What has been done to give particular attention to collection and analysis of gender and age-disintegrated data?*

The State Statistical Office keeps so-called gender statistics or analysis and processing gender data. The compiled data are gender selected and as such they are published in a brochure named "Men and Women in the Republic of Macedonia". This system of gender data collection will be continuously improved in the next period.

- c) *What measures have been taken to promote the economic rights of women (such as legislation to ensure equal pay for equal work, to protect other women rights at work place, and to reconcile family life with work life, and etc.)?*

In the existing legislation there are no legal arrangements and norms providing for different pays on the basis of gender and other labour relation rights.

In order to prevent the discrimination, the Law on Equity between Men and Women explicitly defines gender-based discrimination with regard to applications for work places and opportunity to appeal before the competent authorities to determine possible discrimination.

- d) *Have social protection policies been reviewed to ensure full and equal participation of men and women in social protection system?*

In 1997 legal regulation in the field of social policy was reviewed in terms of gender equity. The revision was performed by experts of the European Commission and national experts. In the further period the Sector for Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will review the legal regulation in the field of social policy once more from the aspect of gender equity. This is aimed at determining whether it is in compliance with EU Directives concerning gender equity.

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

In the next period the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in this field, will carry out research related to revealing the reasons for differences in family responsibilities between women and men as a result of prejudice and tradition that are characteristic for this region.

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

- a) *How has your country adjusted its family policies to changing demographic circumstances?*

Our country makes efforts to surpass the traditionalism under which women are care-givers looking after older family members. Nowadays the number of men undertaking the burden and caring for older family members is increasing. For Macedonian society as for any other society family is defined as basic cell, so that the non-governmental sector makes efforts, but not sufficient, to give incentive to family solidarity among generations.

- b) *What policies and programmes has your country adopted to respond to the needs of family members of different ages?*

The Law on Social Protection and the Family Law provides for special services to families caring for their older family members referring to different social aids (social financial aid, single financial aid as well as allowance for support and care by other person). Opening of daily Centres for older persons and care services in home environment is in its course. Furthermore, Inter-Municipality Centres for Social Work in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and local community has undertaken opening of peoples' kitchens in many cities throughout Macedonia aimed at all family members in need of food

- c) *What are specific elements of these policies and programmes to promote equality between men and women?*

Special elements of policies and programmes to promote gender equality refer to enhancement of the woman status in the Republic of Macedonia and establishing equal opportunities between men and women in practice.

- d) *Have you taken any awareness-raising measures concerning the contribution of older persons to family, community and society at large?*

The Republic of Macedonia passing through the transition process makes enormous efforts to abandon the traditional concept concerning the role of older persons in family, community and society at large. The traditional concept under which older persons are authorities and in privileged position is being gradually abandoned. Nevertheless, older population is considered as source of wisdom and experience what not always is accepted by young people and this sometimes leads to intergenerational gap between these two populations.

- e) *Have you adopted measures to support families deal with the growing responsibilities of care for their older members?*

All this is laid down in the Law on Social Protection through exercising the right to various types of aid (social financial aid, single financial aid, exercising the right to support and care by other person).

- f) *What mechanisms are in place to strengthen the role of communities, organizations and associations in providing support and care to older persons?*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy by implementing the envisaged Programme for Social Protection of older persons shall enforce mechanisms to strengthen the role of communities, organizations and associations aimed at joint provision of support and care to older population living and existing in the society as a whole.

What measures has your country adopted to support families in coping with social and economic consequences of demographic change (e.g. support to care-giving families, family friendly policies and services; adoption of the infrastructure of towns to the needs of families, and in particular the young and older persons, and to ensure that generations can live together; improvements in planning of services)?

There is a standardized network of institutions providing services to support older persons and their families, but it is not sufficiently developed in rural areas and remote places from the central urban

areas. Therefore it is necessary to carry out projects to cope with economic and social consequences of demographic change of the population having been characteristic for the previous years.

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

- a) *What activities have you taken to strengthen cooperation among UNECE Member States in the field of ageing (e.g. participation in meetings of the UNECE and the European Centre Vienna, exchange of information with Member States and UNECE Secretariat)?*

Social protection as special segment and instrument in creating social policy has comprehensive competences in preventing and resolving the problems concerning demographic ageing of the population and the related risks. However, following the Madrid Summit, as governmental institution, we have not had almost any cooperation with the Member States and UNECE Secretariat.

- b) *How have you provide opportunities for civil society to cooperate in this process?*

The non-governmental sector and organizations of older persons contribute to raising the quality of life of older persons by means of projects funded by international foundations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy gives its full support to carry out their activities related to older persons. The Law on Social Protection provides for opportunities for the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to appeal to the civil society with regard to funding certain project aimed at older persons.

- c) *Have you requested the assistance of the UNECE Secretariat and/or other entities of the United Nations system in the implementation of RIS? If so, what is your evaluation and how would you describe further needs for assistance?*

Until now we have not requested the assistance of the UNECE Secretariat and/or other entities of the United Nations system, and the need for assistance in this field is really huge. Institutional social protection in the existing hospices in our country is significantly lagging behind against the modern gerontology knowledge and practices in the developed countries. The capacities and dispersion of the hospices are not compatible with the expressed needs for this kind of social protection. Namely, the capacity of the four existing hospices is four times larger than the projected, but it does not meet the real requirements for accommodation of older persons.

The assistance by the UNECE Secretariat may include training to professionals and volunteers focused to older population, adoption of strategic documents under the EU policies, standardization of the services in the Hospices and necessary financial support for development of various types of out-of-institutional protection.

5. Conclusion and Outlook for the Future

a) *briefly summarize to what extent your country has addressed the challenge and opportunities of ageing since the adoption of the MIPAA/RIS in 2002;*

b) *indicate based on the assessment provided and in view of future demographic developments, future policy challenges and perspective related to ageing;*

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia under the Strategic Operational Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2007-2009 will realize the Programme for Social Protection of Older Persons. Currently the country implements reforms in the field of social protection, in particular in the pension system, bearing the major load in its capacity to respond the challenges linked with ageing trends. Those changes are based on two concepts – deinstitutionalization and decentralization, whilst the National Employment Strategy ensures that the older generation maintains quality in the field of labour and give effective and productive output in the market economy.

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

The national institutional capacities in our country are not sufficient to respond to the increased need for institutional care to older persons. Within the last two years the initiatives for construction of private hospices are increasing; however due to the high costs of the services they are unaffordable to a great number of older people with low pensions.

Nevertheless, the Republic of Macedonia takes intensive activities in the field of awareness-raising to the problems of older persons and ageing, whilst taking care of, by means of active employment measures, older population, which, if otherwise, will be threatened by the negative consequences of the ageing process, which by itself bears high mortality rate.

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

Ageing is included in the developing plans and political strategies on national, regional and local level. This in particular

refers to education aspiring to integrate ageing on the level of all areas so that harmony is created between the demographic changes and the society as a whole.

- e) *Propose adjustments to existing policies;*
To respond to the challenges related to ageing trends of the population of the Republic of Macedonia for the purpose of reaching adequate macroeconomic policy as well as continuation of the reform process in the field of decentralization and deinstitutionalization.
- f) *Identify policies for further policy research;*
In the future the Republic of Macedonia is required to make on-site research aimed at identifying the needs of older population, on which basis it will create policies for care and protection of older population.
- g) *Indicate capacity-development needs;*
The Republic of Macedonia has increased need for a number of sheltering and care institutions for older persons as well as widespread network of forms for out-of-institutional protection.
- h) *Describe the need and/or request for exchanges of experiences across countries;*
The Republic of Macedonia has increased need for exchange of experience with other countries leading positive processes concerning the problem of older persons and ageing (e.g. R. Slovenia, Great Britain and etc.).
- i) *Indicate your requests/needs/wishes with regards to the work of international organizations in the field of ageing;*
International institutions to take steps to ensure financial support for the social protection system.

Annex

1. List of contact details of organizations in our country directly involved in the preparing this report
The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia
PI Bureau for Social Activities Skopje
2. List of contact details of organizations in our country involved in the follow-up to MIPAA/RIS, by sector (government institution, NGOs, academia, private sector).

3. Attach, if applicable, the national action plan on ageing and the relevant laws on ageing