

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

INTRODUCTION

Most statistical data used were collected by the Statistical Office of the RS and Eurostat. This ensures the comparability for all countries in the UNECE area.

In 2006, Slovenia achieved favourable economic results and accelerated economic growth (in the fourth quarter the economic growth was 5.5% and in 2006 5.2%), which are even more favourable in 2007 (the highest rise in GDP among the EU27 in the second quarter). The global and European economic trends, export orientation of the Slovenian economy, the growth in productivity, balanced public borrowing policy, heavy investments in infrastructure and the transition to the euro provided for further growth and implementation of sustainable and suitable, not yet reformed social policy, for older population, pensioners and other materially deprived people.

However, there were (2006) and remain the warnings of the European Commission and other factors about the long-term sustainability of the pension system given the unfavourable demographic development in the country. The natality rate in 2006 did improve and the controlled and balanced employment policy (immigration) from the Union members and other countries continues. The 2006 witnessed and recorded problems in obtaining labour force. The control of social transfers is improving. The number of active working population is increasing.

Slovenia does not yet dispose with the necessary, sufficiently structured, complete statistically relevant overview of the status and indicators for this category (50+). Official statistics are properly organised according to European and international (UNECE) standards as well as comparable, and thus enable more analyses than are otherwise carried out by the state in relation to this issue. But we often cannot agree on the consequences of some proposed legal solutions, the analytical function lags considerably, in spite of the Government's efforts (Development policy measures - in relation to social policy for employing the older population, and especially Measure 35), nor do we have any solutions for social policies and particularly for the issue of including the older population in employment.

The ageing trends in Slovenia are similar to Central-European (Germany) and the issue of including older persons as well as their social security is similar.

However, it is estimated that the 2002 reforms are already showing results and that the percentages will no longer increase considerably (until 2020). The issue is transferred to the health care reform and legal regulation of care.

Poverty threat, 9 February 2007; First publication in 2004 there were **12.1% of population** living below the poverty threshold; **in the EU the respective figure was 16%**. In elder women above 65, the indicator is much higher, i.e. 26%. Slovenia conducted the Survey on Living Conditions for the first time in 2005. For monitoring the development of individual EU Member States in social field, specifically as regards social exclusion and poverty, the European Council at the end of 2001 set 18 statistical indicators. Two years later Eurostat prepared the methodology of the new Survey on Living Conditions (EU-SILC), which replaces the previous national sources and thus ensures the comparability of sources for the calculation of indicators between the EU Member States. Slovenia conducted the Survey on Living Conditions for the first time in 2005. The calculated indicators referred to 2004 and were published in 2006 (still usable).

It is important that along with privatisation and denationalisation, the current older population (babyboomers) also - in fact for the most part - became the majority owners of their housing units, which in part blurs the condition and the estimate of poverty threat for older persons who as the middle generation in the early 1990s bought the rented social flats at great discounts. According to the estimate the most at risk are older retired women living in a single household (Eurostat).

Status of active population SOURCE Statistical Office of the Republic Slovenia, the publication is available directly at <http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/07-si-008-0703.pdf>

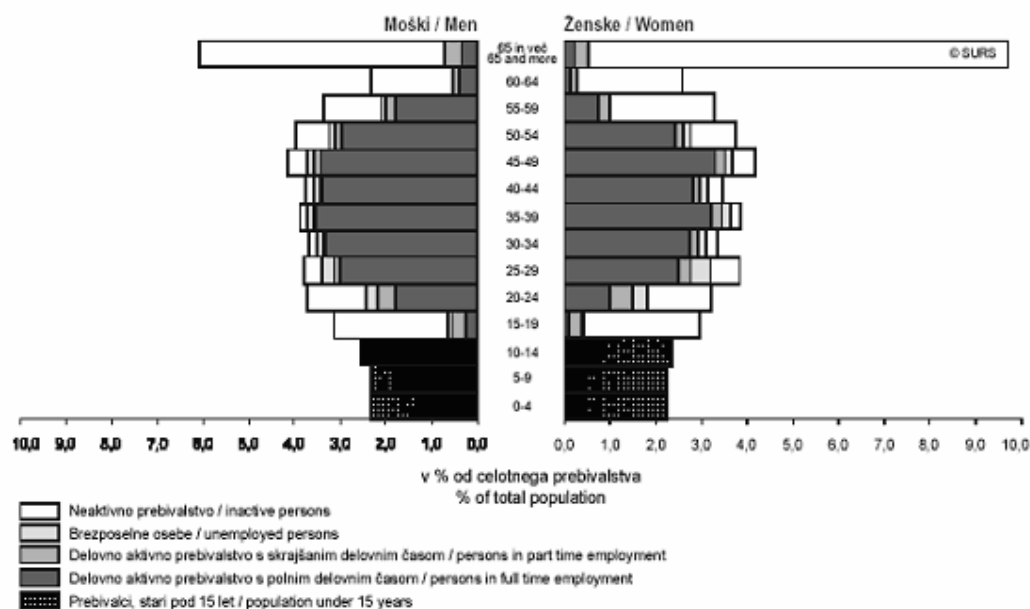
In 2006, the labour force in Slovenia numbered 1,022,000 persons and there were 701,000 inactive persons. Among the labour force there were 961,000 persons in employment and 61,000 unemployed persons. Among persons in employment there were 47,000 unpaid family workers. The unemployment rate was 6.0% (4.9% for men and 7.2% for women).

In the previous year there were 67,000 unemployed persons and the unemployment rate was 6.5% (6.1% for men and 7.1% for women). At that time there were 949,000 persons in employment (of that 47,000 unpaid family workers) and 698,000 inactive persons.

Chart 1: Activity by sex and age groups, Slovenia, 2006,

This chart reveals problems mainly in employment and activities of the population aged between 55 and 64, where Slovenia still lags behind the agreed and expected Lisbon goals. In 2006, there was even a minor set back as the older population feared the announced and partly implemented pension reforms which the Government prepared and previously announced (in 2004).

Chart 1: Activity by sex and age groups, Slovenia, 2006



Several initiatives and documents have been adopted for taking action and introducing changes, among which a series of measures for implementing development policies with the contents that announced considerable changes. Social partners (Government, trade unions, employers and poorly represented non-governmental organisations) have difficulties in communicating and communicate slowly.

On the level of the RS Government the "NATIONAL STRATEGY OF CARE FOR QUALITY AGEING OF THE POPULATION AND SOLIDARY COEXISTENCE OF GENERATIONS IN SLOVENIA" was adopted in 2006. To a high degree it adopts the contents and purposes of the Madrid document. (The proposal was prepared by the interministerial working group; Date: 5 June 2006, adopted in 2007 after a fast-track procedure). The implementation is being prepared in the framework of sector Ministries.

Measures based on the construction of suitable databases (Evidence based management of ageing) and indicators are being developed and are not suitable. There are particularly insufficient structural data for the increasing category of the older generations, i.e. 50+.

In order to decrease the price of work for older persons, changes were introduced and automatic incentives for remaining in long-term employment reduced. Project work is introduced and enabled to a high degree (work for a limited period of time) as are similar organisational forms, however, complete understanding of the announced flexiurity has not yet been achieved.

There are several lectures and activities taking place within the NGOs and in particular the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Organisations (ZDUS) to raise the awareness and introduce possible actions of the older persons as regards the inclusion and continued employment until the age of 67 or longer.

The state legally regulated incentives for employers (subsidies) for older persons to remain at work.

COMMITMENT 1 - MAINSTREAM AGEING

A)

Due to the ageing of the population in the scope of wider demographical changes Slovenia is facing new challenges. On the basis of the conclusions and the provision of the Madrid Conference and the Green paper of the EU Council on ageing as well as other documents, Slovenia adopted two key documents. The Slovenian parliament adopted the "Resolution on the National Social Assistance Programme 2006 - 2010 (Offic. Gaz. of the RS, no. 39/2006)" and on 21 September 2006 the Government passed the document "Strategy for Protection of the Elderly by 2010 – solidarity, coexistence and quality ageing" and the other key documents: Development Strategy of Slovenia, Framework of Economic and Social Reforms for Increasing the Welfare in Slovenia and the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. The main areas of our activities in relation to the ageing society are: long-term sustainable pension system, long-term care for the ageing population, promotion of intergenerational cooperation and solidarity. The users establish that the pension act passed years ago has led to the expected results, however, the system organisation of long-term care is being shaped too slowly. In their opinion many good legal solutions related to social care do not yet bear the expected results.

B)

The Government of the RS founded the Council for Solidary and Coexistence of Generations, whose aim is to connect all competent governmental departments, the profession, who are working with elderly, NGOs and representatives of the older population so as to improve coordination of policies on the level of the entire country and involve older persons in the formulation of these policies.

C)

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs established a council for the issues of discrimination and violence and it employed 14 coordinators (social workers) in social work centres to monitor the incidents of violence and discrimination. In addition, the Office for Equal Opportunities was founded on the governmental level, within the scope of which the "Advocate" is operating. The Equal Opportunities for Woman and Men Act was issued and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act is being drafted. Furthermore, the Institute of Gerontology and Intergenerational Coexistence was founded, dealing with professional issues in this field. We estimate that the passed legislation will provide an important basis for preventing age discrimination, however, in this field the state has additional tasks to perform so as to implement this legislation in practice.

D)

The older persons were invited to prepare key documents, however, in their opinion this cooperation was not sufficient, which is the reason for improving mutual cooperation.

E)

Non-governmental organisations participate in the creation of documents. All key documents are during the discussion published on the Ministry's website.

COMMITMENT 2 – INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PERSONS

A)

The key documents envisage numerous activities for recognising and supporting the contribution of older persons to the society. These activities will according to the programme of the Council for Solidary Coexistence of Generations become more intense in the second half of the year 2007.

B)

By inclusion in individual work groups dealing with the implementation of services provided to older persons we increase the influence of the older persons on the contents and quality of performed services. We have to improve also the monitoring and establishing of the satisfaction of all users with the accessibility and quality of services.

C)

In Slovenia, we only just started more intensive promotion of the older persons' inclusion in social events, which is why the criticism of the older persons (in the sense that there are no incentives for keeping older persons in the work process or reactivating the retired persons, that there are no flexible forms of work, that there are obstacles in project management and research work of retired experts, etc.) is often justified. The older persons can participate most in the scope of the non-governmental sector. The state has seriously set out the activities to improve this situation, also by preparing the Strategy of active ageing (which is being harmonised within the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs).

D)

Political involvement of the older persons is organised in the framework of individual political parties where the groups of older persons are organised. Slovenia also has a political party which joins mainly the representatives of the older population. These are much more present in managing the politics on the local level than on the national level.

E)

It would be difficult to claim that the parties significantly promote the older persons. The older persons also acknowledge that they have not yet developed a system for pressuring the decision-makers, even though they are aware of the power they have due to their great number, if they only knew how to properly take advantage of it. The stances of the older persons are promoted most through the Association of Pensioner Societies of Slovenia, which already connects more than 50% of pensioners.

F)

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is setting up Council for Solidary and Coexistence of Generations, however, the older persons cannot be satisfied with the representation given their great number.

G)

The programme of "home assistance" is implemented by public institutions, concessionaires and private undertakings. It provides social care to about 2% of the population older than 65. The prices are not completely uniform in municipalities due to different subsidies. In spite of co-financing of the municipalities and the exemption system, many older persons see this possibility as an acknowledgement of poverty and do not opt for it.

Sheltered housing is being constructed, which in part replaces the need for institutional care. Slovenia has achieved a satisfactory coverage by old people's homes (approximately 4.5% of people older than 65 years of age), however, owing to the increasing number of older persons, the network of these homes will have to be upgraded to preserve this coverage in the future. New forms of various housing communities are slowly gaining ground. Public transport connections with more remote towns are a major problem, which is why this issue will require special attention in the future.

Member States also committed themselves to promote the inclusion of the older persons by promoting their active integration in the local community and by promoting intergenerational connections.

- a) What steps has your country taken to promote local communities where the premises are available to people of all ages to meet and establish connections communities (e.g. joint local centres for older persons and youth)?
- b) What steps has your country taken to promote voluntary activities to enable the youth and older persons mutual connections and assistance?

A)

The Strategy for Protection of the Elderly provides for intergenerational centres. In some areas preparations are underway for their construction. Connection of generations in local communities takes place through joint programmes for environmental protection, cultural events and meetings, but these do not receive enough media coverage. The promotion of volunteerism is definitely not supported by the tax burden which the Government in 2005 introduced on rewards for volunteers.

B)

Volunteerism is mostly promoted by recognition for volunteer work, but there is insufficient financial support for training of volunteers and their mentors as well as for organisation of volunteer work.

Intergenerational connections have a long tradition in Slovenia characterised by cooperation of schools, pensioners' societies, other NGOs, old people's homes and other social institutions. (On the initiative and under the organisation of the Slovenian Philanthropy-a society promoting volunteerism in 2005 they started systematically establishing connections between the volunteers of pensioners' societies and local schools all over Slovenia, participating in a joint project "Fruits of the Society".)

Commitments adopted in Madrid include also the need for promotion of a positive attitude to ageing.

- 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 of older persons, initiatives within local communities and with participation of other social actors to facilitate dialogue and a 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.

- 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?

A)

Since the year 2000 the meeting of all generation under the title “Third generation festival” has been organized each year in the capital of Slovenia. One of the main goals of the Festival is to promote better cooperation and understanding among generations. Festival is organized with the participation of several governmental ministries, NGOs and private enterprises and special media promotion of issues related to the elderly is organized during the festival.

B)

The public media broadcast shows about ageing and older persons, to which they invite older persons to talk about or discuss this issue. The Government has not yet developed a comprehensive programme for promoting intergenerational coexistence.

COMMITMENT 3 – PROMOTION OF EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN RESPONSE TO POPULATION AGEING

A)

Slovenia achieved good economic results and fast growth in 2006. (The economy grew by 5.5% in the last quarter of 2006 and 5.2% in 2006). Even better results were achieved in 2007 (the fastest GDP growth in EU-27 in the second quarter). Favourable global and European economic developments, export orientation of the Slovenian economy, growing productivity, the policy of balanced public borrowing, big investments in infrastructure and adoption of the euro instead of the tolar have enabled further growth and implementation of appropriate if as yet unreformed social policy including that for the elderly and pensioners as well as other socially vulnerable groups.

According to the data for 2004, 12.1% of Slovenian population lived under the poverty line while the respective number for the EU was 16%. The share for the elderly was not significantly different.

The strategy for establishing the level of poverty is a precondition for any activity in this area. The harmonisation has been partly made (SORS, Eurostat) and the data for 2004 show that the regional level of poverty risk in Slovenia is below the average for the euro zone. Single-member households and retired women are the most at risk. Slovenia has developed a system of social transfers and collection of data on such transfers as well as established adequate social and volunteer networks. The system is currently still sustainable.

B)

Activities and measures are a part of the reform package of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia from 2004 and are being gradually introduced. They also include the necessary provision for expanded data base used for implementing harmonised and development-oriented economic and social policies. Favourable economic conditions and accelerated economic development could provide a boost for implementation of the reform.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the "National Strategy for Quality Population Ageing and Solidarity Coexistence of Generations in Slovenia until 2010". The Strategy has to a large extent included the contents and intentions of the Madrid Document. Concrete measures are prepared by the competent ministries, non-governmental organisations and experts.

The measures related to the development of appropriate databases (Evidence based management of aging) and indicators are in preparation.

The activities for stimulating staying in workforce longer were initiated in order to reduce the cost of employing the elderly. Project work (part-time work) and similar organisational forms are being introduced and enabled and a number of activities were implemented with regard to flexicurity.

Non-governmental organisations, and in particular the Association of Pensioner Societies of Slovenia, have implemented a number of lectures and activities aimed at raising awareness and highlighting choices of the elderly with regard to inclusion and staying in formal employment until the age of 67 or more.

The government has also regulated stimulations for employers (grants) rewarding employing of the elderly.

COMMITMENT 4 – ADJUSTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN RESPONSE TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

- a) How has your country adapted social protection systems to societal and demographic changes?
- b) What steps has your country taken to achieve a sufficient income for all older persons?
- c) What policies has it adopted to address on time the needs of older persons for a variety of social and health services, including sheltered housing and long-term care?
- d) How has your country promoted standards of living for persons with disability and for fragile older persons that allow them to maintain their independence and dignity?

A)

Discussions about demographic changes and their consequences on social protection have been going on in Slovenia in recent years and the social security system is more and more being adapted accordingly.

B)

Slovenia has already introduced the "state pension" for those without any other income. The possibility of widow's pension was introduced improving the financial standing of some widowers and above all widows. Subsidised rent also improves financial safety of the elderly as does the allowance for assistance and nursing in cases when older people need help in all or at least the basic tasks. Nevertheless, a lot of older people still live on the edge of poverty, which is true in particular of single households of the older people, notably women, who are among the most deprived population groups by the poverty index.

C)

The Government is drafting Long-term Care the Insurance Act and promotes construction of sheltered housing. There is a lack of domestic help centres and hence all needs of elderly who

needs help in local community cannot be met. Discussions should be held about potential new forms of domestic help.

D)

The legislation includes provisions under which real estate developers must comply with standards eliminating obstacles for motion-impaired persons, domestic help centres provide for quality living and independence, and the allowances for assistance enable the use of that help. NGOs with their volunteer work make a crucial contribution to better quality of living and to independence.

Member States also committed to establishing a regulatory framework for occupational and private pension provision.

- a) What steps has your country taken to establish or further develop a regulatory framework for occupational and private pension provision?
- b) What policies has your country adopted to ensure that social protection systems 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 caregiver some time off)?

A)

Slovenia is still among the countries facing unequal pay for men and women occupying the same posts, which also results in lower pensions for women, however the differences are gradually being reduced and eliminated. The main reasons for that situation is related with the fact that woman care for children and other dependant family members, so their career is suffering.

B)

Slovenia encourages family members to employ themselves as family assistants to their family members with severe illness, or severe mental or physical disability, which has been regulated by legislation. Health care insurance in Slovenia has always included the right to paid leave from work for care for a family member. In the market economy, that right has often been limited by illegal pressure from employers, which has not been sufficiently monitored and sanctioned. In the case of older people requiring long-term care, it puts employment of younger family members at risk. Therefore initiatives have emerged in Slovenia to combine the efforts of relatives, professional domestic help providers and volunteers, in particular those from pensioner societies, Caritas and the Red Cross.

COMMITMENT 5 – ENABLING LABOUR MARKETS TO RESPOND TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION AGEING

The group of unemployed persons in Slovenia aged between 55 and 65 is particularly at risk as it finds it much more difficult to find a job than younger persons. Slovenia ranks very poorly in employment of older people. We must begin to develop a new attitude towards retirement, acknowledge the productive potential of older people and give them additional skills and new qualifications, and keep them in enterprises. We must begin to appreciate wisdom and experience in addition to speed and agility.

The issue of labour cannot be resolved by the market alone. Not working aggravates social and economic consequences: it has a negative impact on the culture of coexistence between people and leads to social exclusion.

Slovenia has only begun to prepare the strategy for active ageing. All factors of the society are to be included in its programmes where a particularly big role should be played by civil society and in particular members of the third generation.

In its strategic and action documents, Slovenia adopted guidelines and programmes for improving employability of older workers. However, all too often there is a discrepancy between their legislative (declaratory) and actual implementation. Slovenian programmes of active employment policy are based on the first EU guidelines related to employment adopted in Luxembourg in 2000.

During accession negotiations, Slovenia adapted to the European legislation in order to reduce obstacles to employment of older people.

The following active employment policy measures are especially intended for older people: encouraging new employment of older people, reimbursement of employer's contributions, local employment programmes, public works and subsidising employment in domestic help.

By the strategy for active ageing, the government undertook to implement special programmes in order to eliminate discrimination on the labour market and in employing of older persons.

Legislated discrimination must also be abolished (notably in the Pension and Disability Insurance Act and the Research Activity Act). The Slovenian legislation is the most restrictive with regard to part-time provision of intellectual services by retired persons. Part-time provision of expert services is undesirable in Slovenia. Slovenia applies abnormally high tax rates on provision of intellectual services by individuals (and hence also retired persons).

A retired person cannot have the status of a researcher and even has problems with inclusion in Cobiss.

Slovenia has yet to adopt mechanisms for promoting stress-free and gradual retirement.

COMMITMENT 6 – PROMOTION OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING AND ADAPTATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ORDER TO MEET THE CHANGING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS

Member States committed to facilitate and encourage life-long learning.

A)

There are no plans for specific adaptation of education institutions with regard to retired persons as institutions for adult education usually operate on the market and tailor their offer to target groups. People's universities co-operate with universities of the third age in joint forming of programmes tailored to learning of older adults. These institutions can apply for public funding of their programmes on tenders of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Special attention is given to improving access to education for all population groups with the support of regional adult education information and counselling centres, and 13 life-long learning centres in local communities intended primarily for developing ICT skills were also established.

B)

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is preparing the strategy for active ageing, which envisages various options for the transition from active employment to retirement. As regards education programmes for that group, programmes for promoting intergenerational transfer of knowledge as a part of staff training and education programmes for enhancement of intergenerational coexistence are currently under preparation.

C)

Substantiating education by selecting attractive topics and appropriate work methods is of key importance in motivation of participants for inclusion in education. Distinctions of that population are taken into account in preparation of adult education programmes. Education regarding new information technologies in particular uses methods such as: group training under the leadership of a mentor instructor, organised individual learning with mentorship and other methods providing adequate individual attention to participants.

D)

Slovenia has prepared a literacy strategy, which envisages preparation of such programmes. Five training programmes for life success have been developed so far, which provide for basic skills related to literacy (reading, writing and arithmetic), social skills, improving learning skills and promoting active citizenship, and learning computer-related skills. The specific contents of the programmes are based on the educational needs and interests of individual target groups.

Special attention is given to the development of basic and new basic skills. The latter primarily includes the development of ICT skills.

The Member States also committed to ensure that the education system achieves better employability of all persons.

- 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 ages, including older workers?
- b) What initiatives have been taken to increase school retention rates and limit dropouts?
- c) Have any special programmes been developed and/or promoted to facilitate the reintegration into the labour market of those who left early the formal educational system?
- 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 girls and women, and specific programmes for older women to help them re-enter the labour market?

A)

In Slovenia, the entire system of basic and advanced vocational training is set up so that it encourages participation of employers not only in preparation and adoption of education programmes at the level of basic and advanced vocational training but also in implementation. The emphasis is given on interconnection between learning and work, and the opening of formal curricula to local needs is also becoming increasingly important. Establishing of regional partnerships is encouraged where schools, enterprises, employment service offices and other interested players participate and jointly assess the needs for skills and seek opportunities for meeting them. Forming of consortiums, which usually comprise education institutions, enterprises and local development agencies, is encouraged with regard to obtaining national and international funds for introducing innovations in vocational training

and adult education. An example of good practice where special attention was given to less educated and older employed persons is the "Life-long learning model in the Northwestern Goriška region" project implemented by the Posočje Development Centre in co-operation with the Idrijsko Cerkljanska Development Agency. The project was co-financed by the PHARE programme. The project included a study of necessary training for target groups in enterprises, which in addition to key staff encompassed less educated employees in eight companies from the region. Enterprises, education institutions and development agencies co-operated in providing training for the target groups on the basis of the analysis of needs for education.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education in co-operation with certain enterprises developed in 2006 a state-approved education programme for improving basic skills called "My Work Post" intended for less educated, including elderly, employees. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education also prepared, on the basis of findings of the national survey on adult literacy in Slovenia, expert bases for the strategy aimed at increasing investments of employers in education and training of less educated employees. Various activities were carried out in co-operation with employers and trade unions in order to include a part of the proposed measures in the Social Agreement concluded between employers, trade unions and the government.

As regards the measures aimed at encouraging employers to increase investments in education of employees, the active employment policy measures are particularly important, enabling (co-)financing of staff training in enterprises from industries undergoing restructuring and promising industries aimed at improving employability and preventing employees from being made redundant.

D)

Slovenia has traditionally had a high rate of female participation in the workforce – the highest in Europe – and women also rarely leave the labour market after childbirth, therefore such education programmes have not been established, unemployed women seeking a job are included in education and training programmes provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia as a part of the active employment policy measures. Data show that women form the majority of participants in such education programmes. In certain areas where employment opportunities are created primarily for women (domestic social care, complementary activities in agriculture, etc.) standards of knowledge and skills were established enabling obtaining of a state-approved certificate on national vocational qualification with determining and acknowledging all acquired knowledge and skills regardless of the method of obtaining (the National Professional Qualifications Act 2000-2006).

COMMITMENT 7 – STRIVING TO ENSURE QUALITY OF LIFE AT ALL AGES AND MAINTAIN INDEPENDENT LIVING INCLUDING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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

A)

A number of activities at the government level were related to the issues of the ageing society in the past. With regard to its area of competence, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs was the most active. Older people were not completely satisfied with their share and role in drafting of the documents, however their role has been increasing lately.

We believe that the Council for Solidarity and Coexistence of Generations and Quality Ageing will become a place of intertwining of ideas and plans, a place where the executive branch of the government, users, implementers and experts will meet.

- 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?
- 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?
- c) How has your country improved the coordination and integration of services provided to older persons (e.g. through case management systems)?
- d) What efforts have been made to improve the training of care providers: professionals, volunteers and family members?
- 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?

A)

In principle, there is no difference in availability of social services in rural and urban areas. Some "inactive" municipalities were explicitly warned this year about their obligations in this field. However, the issue of integration of health and social care remains unresolved. Many activities have been implemented with that regard in recent years, and drafting of the act on long-term care insurance is drawing near the end this summer.

Non-governmental organisations play an important role, notably the Association of Pensioner Societies of Slovenia, which has been introducing systematic monitoring of life of people over 69 living in single households. When their needs are established they are submitted to the relevant bodies. Co-operation with social work centres is well established. Inclusion of representatives of users is seen as an important assistance in detecting social problems of the elderly.

B)

The act on long-term care has been under preparation in Slovenia for a number of years. Drafting is in the final stage. We believe that this act will give a significant boost to domestic help, which will also reduce excessive demand for accommodation in old people's homes.

C)

The integration of services is a subject, which requires consent of the providers. Government departments will also need to show more understanding for joint actions in this area.

D)

The education of caregivers is systematically managed. Nurses are educated in the regular education system. Social care assistants are trained in a well-defined education system at people's universities. The government supervises education of social care assistants.

E)

Non-governmental organisations, the pharmaceutical industry and the Ministry of Health are those most active in this area.

Member States also committed to ensure appropriate financing of health and social services for persons of all ages.

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

Equal access to social services is also provided through the system of exemptions. Persons liable (if any) or the municipality covers the difference in payment of services for users with low income.

In addition, Member States pledged to enable people to make healthy choices.

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

A great number of various campaigns, information, media shows and publications are aimed at self-education and raising awareness of the population about health, prevention of disability, preventive measures and providing of information on where people can turn for help.

This is partly implemented by competent ministries, but the major part of work is done by various societies in which the users organise, i.e. societies of patients and older people. There is a great number of help lines, which is a substantial contribution to raising awareness of the population of all ages and older people in particular. An increasing number of informative publications on health is available at outpatient clinics. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health co-finance such programmes.

Non-governmental organisations and health-care institutions in Slovenia also implement a number of international programmes introduced by the World Health Organisation.

Member States also committed to ensure appropriate financing of health and social services for persons of all ages.

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

According to the panel survey on living conditions (EU SILC 2005) health situation of population is generally estimated as good. A large majority of the population is insured for the basic and supplementary services. Despite some NGOs claims that uncontrolled privatisation of the primary and secondary health care systems increases the cost of health care and reduces availability of the system for people with lower income.

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COMMITMENT 8– MAINSTREAMING A GENDER APPROACH IN AN AGEING SOCIETY TO SUPPORT FAMILIES THAT PROVIDE CARE FOR OLDER PERSONS AND PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTRA-GENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AMONG THEIR MEMBERS

A)

The Slovenian society has become aware of the issue of inequality and gender discrimination early and the government and political institutions dealt with those issues early on. We are faced with a paradox that women in Slovenia are better educated than men yet very few of them occupy senior posts, which is particularly true of politics. Establishment of the Office for Equality of Women, now the Equal Opportunities Office, in the mid-Nineties has increased the amount of public discussion on the issue, including campaigns and written information published. Gender quotas for candidates for political office have been introduced. Women are increasingly finding their way to the top posts in enterprises and are receiving education in various fields of expertise, however too few of them occupy posts and political offices where decisions on the development issues are made.

B)

Official statistical data on education and occupation of work posts are also available. A number of researches investigating why women cannot get to senior posts has been conducted. NGOs supported primarily by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs have been raising these issues and collecting data. However, too little was done in raising awareness of the general public and informing on the significance of including women on senior posts.

C)

Much has been done in the past for protection of women at the workplace. Unequal pay for men and women was reflected primarily in feminised occupations losing their relative position in pay between sectors. The legislation is adequate, however we have noticed that employers in the market system have a tendency to disregard the legislation (women signing that they will not become pregnant for a certain amount of time, forcing women on maternity leave to quickly return to their job, negative attitude of employers towards men taking fatherhood leave, negative points for taking sick leave because of a child, etc.).

D)

There are no specific distinctions between men and women in exercising of social protection rights. It is interesting, however, that unemployed women, both young and old, are more flexible, find a job and retrain more easily and accept any work while men are less flexible, have no motivation for retraining and are less involved in social activities.

E)

Equal participation of both parents in the family has been supported for a long time at the declaratory level in Slovenia. In reality, male participation in the family has been only slowly improving in recent years, primarily because of demands of the market economy. Slovenian women have accepted an equal role as breadwinners of the family since the Second World War, while men are only gradually accepting their share in taking care of children and the household.

COMMITMENT 9 – SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES THAT PROVIDE CARE FOR OLDER PERSONS AND PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTRA-GENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AMONG THEIR MEMBERS

The family was described as the basic unit of society in Madrid. Member States committed to provide support to families that provide care for older persons and to promote solidarity among its members, to respond to the needs and changing roles of individual family members. They also committed to increase support to intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity.

A)

The work-life balance is one of the key issues faced by today's families and employees throughout the EU. Measures adopted by the government, employers and other institutions are crucial for this balance as they enable more flexible working conditions, support to families with children and families providing care to older family members or disabled persons and equal division of household obligations between men and women.

Family-friendly policy measures such as flexible working hours, division of the work post, work at home and alignment of working hours with school obligations of children will result in reduced burden of parents. The aim is to provide employees with the opportunity to align work and family obligations without the former coming at the expense of the latter. It is the only way for parents to show and prove that they can be good workers while at the same time paying attention to their family.

More activities will need to focus on helping and stimulating families providing care to a sick, disabled or decrepit member.

B)

The government has adopted legislation concerning social transfers providing child benefits and other forms of assistance. Given the increasing burden placed on parents at work, a young family finds it hard to provide care to older people on their own and therefore cannot perform the function envisaged in the Family Act and the Constitution. Therefore the introduction of domestic help and the institution of family assistant represent a step in the right direction. The housing policy is slowly adapting to contemporary trends.

D)

There are TV shows for the elderly. However, a more systematic approach is needed to raising awareness of the viewers in general about demographic changes and the necessity for intergenerational coexistence.

E)

Introduction of family assistants and domestic help are undoubtedly the correct measures. Additional activities will be needed in order to enable the use of these activities in providing care to sick parents.

F)

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs provides financial assistance to the development of supplementary social protection programmes supplementing the public network. Supplementary programmes are primarily implemented by non-governmental organisations, which usually originate from local communities, and include the Association of Pensioner Societies of Slovenia. So far they have managed to cover a third of older people in Slovenia with this programme.

The government will have to pay greater attention to media in resolving of family-related issues thus creating positive societal and family relations and social culture in the environment's institutions and in neighbourhood relations.

Member States also committed to supporting the families in coping with the social and economic consequences of demographic change.

- a) 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; adaptation 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)?

A)

The government's measures were listed in previous sections. A significant new impulse is expected from the already mentioned Council for Intergenerational Coexistence.

More attention is needed in improving the flow of information, notably the information flow from the government to NGOs in order to raise knowledge, improve co-operation, enhance trust and increase respect.

COMMITMENT 10 – PROMOTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION

A)

Cooperation at the expert and partly at the political level takes place primarily in the use and harmonisation of the data required for comparison and understanding of various regional policies related to the field. Familiarity with various models and practical consequences is extremely important due to the nature of the matter, however inadequate. The absence of a suitable analytical department has yet to be resolved.

Several solutions as well as the assorted and proposed UNECE indicators, proposals of the European Centre (Conceptual database, etc.) and others are being studied. Recommendations of OECD, IMF and WB were issued recently. There is not much cooperation with the neighbouring countries, however it would be necessary if only due to uncertain future (services for older people). Slovenia also faces the issue of its pensioners, who remained in other countries after the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Slovenian non-governmental organisations engaged in the issue of ageing are a part of four international networks: the NGO network of accession countries under the auspice of the international organisation Help the Aged, the NGO network of countries of Southeastern Europe under the auspice of the international organisation Help Age International, EURAG, and the international umbrella organisation AGE.

B)

The civil society in this field has not yet been established in full, however it may represent a necessary pillar and provide for work coordination in the field through large organisations (the Association of Pensioner Societies of Slovenia certainly being the most important) and special co-ordinations (KOSOS) and other associations, including councils envisaged in the strategy. NGOs do not receive sufficient support for their work also due to the so-called project work (only programmes are financed). It is crucial to note that NGOs need more time to participate and prepare comments.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

a) Briefly summarize to what extent your country has addressed the challenges and opportunities of ageing since the Madrid Conference.

Slovenia is aware of the challenges of the ageing society and has made the initial steps towards intergenerational coexistence since 2002. However, we will have to increase and enhance our activities in the future. First of all, we will have to establish firm and constructive cooperation with non-governmental organisations, which are very active in Slovenia.

b) Indicate, based on the assessment provided and in view of future demographic developments, future policy challenges and perspectives related to ageing.

- We will have to support efforts of older people for their re-inclusion in all levels of planning and decision-making;
- More should be done for motivating older people to engage in healthy lifestyles;
- We will have to enhance the introduction of various forms of assistance to older people and their families so that we will be able to raise the quality of living in the third age and reduce the cost of long and painful dying; We will have to achieve quality cooperation between various experts, public bodies and numerous volunteers;
- Older people should be allowed to re-enter the work process without losing their pension;
- Media programmes for promoting intergenerational coexistence and realistic presentation of economic participation of older people should be set up .

c) Indicate major strengths and weaknesses of Slovenia in the field of ageing.

Older people in Slovenia are more or less active, their umbrella organisation is independent from political parties and seeks cooperation with the government, and it will therefore not be difficult to set up effective joint projects – it is a strength we have in Slovenia.

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

Balanced pension policy;

- Improving intergenerational dialogue by media promotion of coexistence between generations;

- Promotion of re-entry of older workers and pensioners in the work process;
- Promoting introduction of various forms of domestic help for older people;
- Enhanced integration of services providing for quality living of older people.

e) Propose adjustments to existing policies.

More respect of policy planners for the needs of older people;

- Increased inclusion of older experts in drafting of strategic and implementation documents;
- Improving conditions for older people with regard to mutual assistance;
- Improving interdisciplinary coordination for intergenerational coexistence at the local level.

f) Identify priorities for further policy research in planning of changes

Research of biological and medical aspects of ageing;

- Research of social aspects of ageing;
- Research regarding assistance offered by older people to other generations;
- Research of living conditions of older people;
- Research regarding satisfaction of the needs of older people by the providers of public services;
- Research on the possibilities for active citizenship of older people;
- Research regarding abuses of older people.

g) Indicate capacity-development needs

h) Describe the need and/or request for exchanges of experiences across countries

We must increase international exchange of good practice in intergenerational coexistence.

i) Indicate your requests/needs/wishes with regards to the work of international organizations in the field of ageing.

- We greet periodical conferences;
- We propose establishment of a uniform international monitoring of common indicators;
- We propose that the EU and the UN allocate some funding for infrastructure of non-governmental self-assistance organisations and projects regarding intergenerational cooperation, which will be available to NGOs. In particular, we should encourage projects of self-assistance of older people so that we will utilise more efficiently the knowledge, experience and energy of older people.