

## Executive summary

In 2008 the UNECE Working Group on Ageing decided to include the development of Road Maps on Mainstreaming Ageing in its work programme. Based on an in-depth appraisal of the concrete situation in a country, these Road Maps will develop recommendations on how to enhance country-level implementation of the internationally agreed policy framework of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Armenia was selected as the first country to develop such a Road Map, with the assistance of the UNECE secretariat. Recommendations were developed based on a field study, review of relevant documents and a fact-finding mission during which interviews were carried out. The exercise pursued a participatory approach, in that representatives of all stakeholder groups — including government, civil society, trade unions and the private sector — were consulted in the process. As the development of the Road Map coincided with a national process of developing a National Strategy on Ageing and a corresponding Action Plan, the recommendations developed for the Road Map were channelled directly into the drafts of these documents. In spite of the challenges that Armenia is currently facing due to the financial crisis, the Government has upheld its commitment to the area of ageing. Given the difficulties with which other age groups — youth and the working age population — are confronted, it remains a challenge to design policies that generate equal opportunities for all age groups.

Recommendations are given in relation to several different substantive policy areas, including integration and participation of older persons, social protection, health, institutions, housing and independent living, education, the labour market, gender and monitoring and evaluation. These areas were chosen as the most relevant in reflecting the essence of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) and the concept of mainstreaming ageing, which was the main theme for the Road Map.

Given the current situation in the country, implementation of the pension reform will certainly entail a major effort and require considerable financial input. However, such a reform could become the most promising strategy to achieve an income beyond the poverty threshold for all pensioners. Other elements of social protection, such as family benefits or systems of special privileges for selected groups, should be channelled into one unified, integrated system. Service provision should be made more transparent, with easy access to information on eligibility criteria and selection processes. Complaints mechanisms should be functioning and their existence widely advertised, catering to applicants who feel they have been treated unjustly. Capacity-building and awareness-raising on all levels will be central, including among the authorities at the local and provincial levels and in the national ministries, among staff involved in health or social service provision and among trade unions, the private sector and civil society. Volunteers may be trained and included in service provision. Specific emphasis should also be put on capacity-building in the area of monitoring and evaluation. At the institutional level, responsibilities between different entities should be clearly set out and responsible bodies should be empowered to fulfil their roles. At the same time, more exchange should take place between ministries and other stakeholders at the national, provincial and local levels. Partnerships between State- and non-State actors should be further promoted and coordination with the country offices of various United Nations agencies should be intensified. More emphasis should be put on public relations and awareness-raising. The Ministry of Labour and Social Issues is encouraged to pursue an active information policy, so that new policies made in the spirit of MIPAA/RIS are widely publicized.



## Statement by Armenia

*Statement made by Ms. Anahit Martirosyan, national coordinator of the Armenian Road Map project and Vice-Chair of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing, on the occasion of the second meeting of the Working Group on 24 November 2009.*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to UNECE on behalf of the Government of Armenia for this opportunity to develop the Road Map on Ageing for our country. Special thanks go to Andres Vikat and Viviane Brunne for their active involvement and support during the whole process.

I should say that the assistance of UNECE in developing the Road Map came at the perfect time, for various different reasons.

The Sustainable Development Programme, which is one of the fundamental strategic documents for Government activities, indicates the main principles and directions of socio-economic development of the country. It provides the basis for policy development and implementation in different spheres. The policies in various areas should lead to the realization of the Sustainable Development Programme's goals and targets.

This has led to the need to develop a comprehensive document for sustainable development in the social sphere. For this purpose the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues has formed 11 different working groups, one of which was responsible for development of the Road Map. The draft Strategy on Ageing was reviewed and amended by UNECE experts in order to ensure its compliance with the MIPAA principles and to ensure the development of a sound Road Map. I am not going to go into details on development process of the Road Map, as Viviane Brunne will provide information on that later.

I just would like to mention that the Road Map in fact is the Action Plan for the new Development Strategy on Ageing, and these two documents will be introduced for the Government's approval together as one comprehensive document for the country's ageing policy.

I would like to underline one very important fact — that, while drafting the Road Map, both international and local experts use as a guiding principle the aim of being realistic, in order not to have just a nice paper but to make sure that the actions indicated there will be realized in order to promote implementation of MIPAA goals in Armenia. The experts took into consideration the current legislation in different sub-spheres, such as new pension reform, social assistance and employment policies. The monitoring and evaluation indicators of the Road Map were developed by the international expert who was involved in development of monitoring indicators for the Sustainable Development Programme, and is very well acquainted with our country's situation. The monitoring and evaluation indicators were developed with both a short-term and a long-term perspective, which will enable us to evaluate the implementation process and, if necessary, to make relevant amendments, particularly keeping in mind the current financial-economic crisis and the rapid changes it entails.

During the process of the development of the Road Map various different institutions have been involved, such as officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, experts from the National Institute of Labour and Social Research, representatives from the main non-governmental organization (NGO) acting in the sphere of ageing ("Mission Armenia") and representatives from international organizations responsible for adult learning. This ensured that different points of view were taken into consideration, resulting in more comprehensive documents.

After the mission of the UNECE experts and discussions by the Working Group on Ageing, the draft of the Road Map is currently in the process of a final adjustment. Actually, just some translations are left. Then the document will be officially submitted to different stakeholders, such as other ministries, local governments, NGOs, social partners, international organizations and elderly people, for their suggestions and comments. After receiving comments, a round-table discussion will be conducted in order to finalize the document and submit it for the Government's approval.

The development of a Road Map is not just a benefit for one country. I would like to bring to your attention two important facts:

- First of all, it has built capacities in the country, and the model, the principles and the approaches of the Road Map will be used for designing Action Plans for other sub-sphere strategies that are in the process of development.

- Secondly, it can be used in other countries of the region for development of local Road Maps. Of course it cannot be taken by other countries as a completely ready document for them, but it can be efficiently adapted to local situations and needs, as the fundamental principles of the document are internationally accepted ones.

The situation and existing legislation do not differ too much, particularly among CIS countries. We have a good example of using existing local capacity which was built by international organizations in other countries of the region. Right now, our local expert, along with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs experts, is working in Tajikistan to conduct a household survey following the example of Armenia. I hope that the Ageing Road Map of Armenia developed with the assistance of UNECE will be a useful basic document for extending the idea in the region to bring national policies into compliance with the principles of MIPAA.

Thank you for your attention.

## Introduction

In 2008, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) established a Working Group on Ageing which convened for the first time in December of the same year. During this meeting, Government representatives of UNECE member States adopted a two-year work programme that contained as one item the preparation of Road Maps on Mainstreaming Ageing. Countries could request participation in this exercise, the objective of which is to provide recommendations for policy directions, based on an in-depth appraisal of the situation in a specific country. This exercise aims to help to translate into action the internationally agreed policy frameworks of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), taking into consideration specific national circumstances.

The first country to submit an expression of interest and to be chosen for participation in this exercise was Armenia. Ms. Anahit Martirosyan, National Focal Point to the UNECE Working Group on Ageing, was nominated as the national coordinator of the Armenian Road Map project.

The present report provides an overview of the outcomes of the project as it comes to a close for UNECE. This report has been prepared to summarize experiences over the course of the project, so that they can be shared with other countries in the region. The first chapter outlines the project methodology and describes the different stages of its implementation. The second chapter introduces the general situation in Armenia, and the third chapter provides an overview of the most important documents that shape the overall policy framework on ageing in the country. The fourth chapter summarizes the results of the fact-finding mission and concludes with an outlook into what lies ahead. A bibliography guides the reader to some useful material. The list of interviewed stakeholders, the questionnaire used during the fact-finding mission, the draft Strategy on Ageing and the Action Plan are included as annexes.

## Method

The Road Map exercise was carried out in several steps. In April 2009, an initial visit took place. UNECE was invited to contribute to the work of a workshop aimed at presenting and discussing the early stages of the Armenian Strategy on Ageing, which was to become a cornerstone of ageing-related policymaking. It was agreed that the Road Map exercise should feed directly into the drafting process of the Strategy. Following the initial visit, a desk study was carried out during which relevant available material was collected and reviewed by the UNECE secretariat. The material analysed included sources available in English as well as in Armenian. Relevant Armenian documents were translated into English. Based on a review of these documents, hypotheses regarding the ageing situation and the corresponding policy framework were developed. These were verified during a field study that consisted mainly of interviews with national experts on ageing-related policymaking. Experts for interviews were selected from all sectors, including government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, trade unions and international organizations represented in the country. A total of 24 interviews were carried out; a list of the experts interviewed can be found in annex 3. Interviews attempted to assess the general importance attributed to ageing-related policymaking in Armenia, as well as specific laws and programmes and their implementation. Respondents were asked to describe good practice examples and to identify areas of progress. The interviews addressed such issues as budgets, institutional responsibilities, data availability, stakeholder participation and integration in international processes. The guidelines for interviewing are presented as annex 2. While following the guidelines, interviews retained a certain degree of flexibility in order to take account of what the interviewees themselves felt was most relevant. In addition to the interviews, several institutions were visited, for example the Nork Older People's Home and the Social House in Zeytun. This report is based on the findings of both the desk and the field studies.

In the meantime, the Armenian Government continued its work on the Strategy on Ageing and the corresponding Action Plan, coordinated by a previously established national Working Group. Participants of the national Working Group came from the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, the Institute of Labour and Social Issues and the NGO “Mission Armenia”. The recommendations included in this report have already been channelled into the development of both the Strategy and the Action Plan. A team of international experts, coordinated by UNECE, received an English translation of the Strategy and provided comments along the lines of this report’s recommendations. Within the scope of this exercise, international experts prepared a first draft of several chapters of the Action Plan and also provided suggestions for other chapters of the document. At the same time, the Armenian Working Group drafted assigned chapters of the Action Plan and provided additional proposals for other chapters. In October 2009, a working meeting of international experts and the national Working Group took place to discuss proposals and to develop a joint document reflecting the input of all participants. In addition to merging individual chapters, the aim of this working meeting was to check the feasibility of the goals, objectives and actions formulated, in terms of available financial, institutional and human capacities.

The Strategy applies to the years 2011–2021, to be consistent with the time frame of the overarching Strategy for Sustainable Development. It sets out a number of goals divided into more specific objectives. The Action Plan is based on these goals and objectives, suggesting concrete actions to achieve them. For each action, the timeframe, responsible entity, budgetary implications, potential partners in international organizations and indicators were defined. The Action Plan was made for an initial period of two years and will be subject to revisions after the end of that period. The Strategy and Action Plan that are expected to be adopted by the Government are included as annexes 4 and 5, respectively. Their formal adoption marks the Government’s commitment to their implementation. UNECE will be available to accompany Armenia in monitoring progress.