



Republic of Cyprus

**NATIONAL REPORT FOR THE FOURTH REVIEW
AND APPRAISAL CYCLE
OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING
AND ITS REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
(MIPAA/RIS)**

2018-2022

General Information

1. Country Name: The Republic of Cyprus
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The Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare prepared the present Report, as during reference period, were the National Focal Point on Ageing. Since February 2022, the new National Focal Point on Ageing in Cyprus is the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

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4. Name, reference, and date of adoption or status of preparation of national strategy, action plan or similar policy document on ageing (please attach relevant documents in the annex)

N.A

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Part 1

Executive summary

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus through its policies aims to create the necessary conditions for a society of all ages, allowing the elderly to live in an environment that enhances their potential, promotes their independence and provides them with the appropriate support and care.

The Governmental policy concerning the elderly is based on the following pillars:

- Encouraging the extension of working life and maintaining the ability to work.
- Promoting and ensuring participation opportunities.
- Non-discrimination and social inclusion of the elderly.
- Promoting and safeguarding the dignity, wellbeing, health and independence of the elderly.
- Maintaining and strengthening solidarity between the generations.

The Social Welfare Services, acting as the National Focal Point on Ageing at the UNECE's Standing Working Group on Ageing, invited all the relevant governmental, non-governmental organisations and Local Authorities involved in ageing issues in Cyprus to contribute to the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS and the preparation of the present Report. The stakeholders were invited to contribute towards the Report, by submitting in writing the latest developments and changes on issues on ageing.

The present Report covers the period 2018-2022 and is structured, according to the Guidelines for the preparation of the National Reports, around the three main goals of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration, namely 'Recognizing the potential of older persons', 'Encouraging longer working life and ability to work' and 'Ensuring ageing with dignity'. In each section, there are subsections which address the relevant developments in Cyprus, the good practices and the achievements in the area of ageing.

The table below presents some of the major achievements since 2017 and at the same time some important aspects to be improved concerning the commitments of MIPAA/RIS:

Major Achievements since 2017

1. Health Care System: With the aim to improve the quality of health care system and to tackle effectively the expected increases in public health expenditure due to population ageing, the government introduced the National Health Scheme (GesY) and the restructuring of the public hospitals into autonomous establishments. The pandemic showed the multiple benefits and the usefulness of the scheme which serves people universally and equally, with particular focus in the inclusion of vulnerable groups. The scheme introduced the institution of a personal doctor for each individual and provides medicines as cheap as one euro through private pharmacies. At the same time, patients have access to expensive drugs for the treatment of specialized health issues.

Since its introduction, more than 836,000 beneficiaries visited their personal doctor, 685,000 have purchased medicines through the scheme, and another 604,000 carried out lab tests. Another 81,000 people received inpatient care. More than 70 per cent of healthcare professionals in Cyprus provide their services through the scheme while 88 per cent of clinics participate in GesY and 99 per cent of pharmacies nationwide. The implementation of the GESY is having a positive impact on the accessibility and availability of LTC services since private providers will be able to contract with GESY and provide their services to the beneficiaries. The new system includes some LTC services such as homecare, medical rehabilitation, and palliative care.

2. Establishment of a new Advisory Board on Ageing:

The Council of Ministers in June 2018 approved the establishment of the Advisory Board on Ageing, with advisory role to the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance for policy issues related to third age.

The Advisory Board on Ageing is composed of organizations' delegates (social partners and NGOs) responsible for ageing issues and is chaired by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Its primary objective is to develop a strategy for the elderly, which will focus, inter alia, on active and healthy ageing, on the promotion of the rights of the elderly, on the provision of best access to services for the growing population of the elderly, on their valuable contribution to the society and on overcoming the barriers of ageism.

3. Long-term financial sustainability of the Social Insurance Scheme:

One of the most important achievements during the last 20 years was the packet of measures introduced to address the effects of demographic ageing and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Social Insurance Scheme. According to the latest actuarial study with reference year 2017 the

Social Insurance Scheme will be sustainable until 2080.

The main measures introduced:

- an actuarial reduction of pension entitlements from the General Social Insurance for retirements earlier (at 63) than the statutory retirement age (65), stricter insurance conditions for entitlement to a statutory pension.
- Gradual increase of contributions every 5 years until 2039.
- Introduction of an automatic adjustment of the statutory retirement age every 5 years in line with changes in life expectancy at the statutory retirement age.

Important Aspects to be improved in the future

Increase in the number of quantitative and qualitative data regarding older persons' needs, in order to design and implement more suitable and targeted policies and better address emerging needs in ageing societies.

Since informal care occupies a dominant position in the provision of LTC in Cyprus, it is considered useful to promote training activities for informal carers.

Investment in long-term care services.

The enhancement of long-term growth and of the standard of living for all citizens, the maintenance of macroeconomic stability and the provision of adequate and efficient services to the public, represent an ongoing objective of government policies. The ageing rate is projected to increase further in the future, therefore, it is necessary to apply effective monitoring and be decisive whereas policies and reforms must be implemented in order to meet the challenges and opportunities that derive from economic and demographic changes.

1. National ageing situation¹

The population of the Government controlled areas, according to the latest available statistics is estimated at 888.000 at the end of 2019, compared to 875.900 at the end of 2018, recording an increase of 1,4%.

An ageing trend in the population is shown by the proportion of children below the age of 15, which decreased at 16% (it was 16.4% in 2014 and it significantly declined compared to 25.4% in 1992 and 22.3% in 2000), while the proportion of persons aged 65 and over increased to 16.3% in 2019, compared to 11.3% in 2000 and 14.6% in 2014. The gradual increase in the proportion of old-aged persons and the decrease in the proportion of children, demonstrates the ageing process of the population.

The total fertility rate remained fairly low during the past few years and it was estimated at 1.33%, remaining at the same level as in the previous year. Since 1995, the total fertility rate remains below the replacement level of 2.10%.

The employment rate of persons aged 65-year-old and above was reported at 10.2% in June 2021. This records an increase from the previous number of 9.9% for March 2021. For the period from January 2021 until August 2021 the total registered unemployed people were 223.453 out of which 2.756 were people above the age of 65 and represent the 1.23% of total registered unemployed. Out of the 2.756 unemployed, 1.254 were women (representing the 46%) and the rest 1.502 were men. For the same 8 months period in 2018 (January 2018 to August 2018) the total registered unemployed people were 221.028 out of which 1.459 were people above the age of 65 representing a 0.66%. Out of the 1.459 unemployed, 586 were women (representing the 40%) and the rest 873 were men.

The COVID-19 crisis took a toll on the economy and its social impact is extensive. The restrictive measures introduced by the Government have significantly reduced economic activity across all sectors of the economy. While the restrictive measures slowed down the economy, the ultimate aim was to contain the spread of the pandemic within the population so as to protect public health by preventing dramatic loss of life and a collapse of the national health system.

Given the above-mentioned facts and the unprecedented spread of Covid-19 the statistical figures above may not be conclusive on their own.

2. Method

Social Welfare Services of the newly established Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, as the National Focal Point on Ageing during the reference period, invited in written all the relevant Ministries and Governmental Departments, Semi-governmental organisations, Employers' and Employees' Organisations,

¹ The data were retrieved from the webpages of EUROSTAT and the Statistical Service of Cyprus in October 2021.

NGOs, Academia, Local Authorities and Organizations representing the interests of older persons and older persons bodies and associations, to contribute towards the preparation of the current Report.

Specifically, through the written procedure a letter has been sent explaining the background, the purpose and the procedure for the preparation of the present report, including an invitation to contribute towards the Report by submitting their position(s) on priorities and developments on ageing issues.

The Report is structured around the three main goals of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration namely 'Recognizing the potential of older persons', 'Encouraging longer working life and ability to work' and 'Ensuring ageing with dignity'. In each section there are subsections which address the relevant developments in Cyprus with regards to the commitments and questions included in the relevant Guidelines for preparing the national Reports. Additionally, in each section relevant good practices and achievements implemented by the various stakeholders have been incorporated.

Part II: 20 Years of MIPAA/RIS

Main actions and progress in implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals

1. Recognizing the potential of older persons

Ageing, has been mainstreamed in policies such as economic, social protection, labour market and health

❖ **Fostering effective consultations with, and involvement of, older persons and their representatives at the national, regional and local levels in designing policies**

Participation in policy making: Seniors participate in the development of policies and strategies and their implementation, through the social dialogue between their organisations and the government, especially regarding issues that concern and affect the elderly.

In 2018, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the Advisory Board on Ageing, with advisory role to the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance for policy issues related to the third age.

The Advisory Board on Ageing is composed of organizations' delegates (social partners and NGOs) responsible for ageing issues and is chaired by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Its primary objective is to develop a strategy for the elderly, which will focus, inter alia, on active and healthy ageing, on the promotion of the rights of the elderly, on the provision of best access to services for the growing population of the elderly, on their

valuable contribution to the society and on overcoming the barriers of ageism.

Furthermore, there are various Bodies which aim to bring up issues and recommendations relevant to the elderly, such as the Elders Parliament, the Coordinating Body for Older Persons and the Advisory Board. The Pancyprrian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC) the umbrella organisation of all voluntary organisations, has also an advisory role on the planning of social policy, including issues concerning the elderly. Through its activities (Annual Forum of the Elders' Parliament, which is an annual event to discuss, promote and resolve issues that affect the quality of life of persons and to assess the impact of policy actions), it fosters the active participation of older persons in policy making.

(See Annex 1: Elder's Parliament)

❖ Promoting a positive image of older persons, acknowledging their contributions to society

Moreover, the Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB) disseminates information regarding good practices in various topics, including active ageing policies that have been successfully implemented in enterprises in Cyprus. As a result, many policies and good practices have been adopted by Cyprus enterprises including the following:

Good Practice
Retaining employees at work even after their retirement, precisely because of their valuable experiences and their ability to offer to the companies but also to transfer their knowledge and experience to younger members of the staff.

In November 2018, the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee dedicated a week for raising awareness concerning the elderly and 60 seminars from various practitioners took place all over Cyprus focused on social, economic, health and psychological issues. This raising awareness week was under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus and the Minister of Health, portraying the dedication and the importance given by the Government on the policies affecting the elderly and their contribution to the society, which is highly appreciated and valued.

(See Annex 2: Voluntarism)

❖ Ensuring that older persons can attain and maintain their highest possible level of health and functional capacity by supporting the development of age-friendly environments and housing.

Under the mandate of the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights, as the Independent Mechanism for the Promotion, Protection and Monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, the Commissioner's Office submitted a series of

Reports regarding the right to accessibility of persons with disabilities and older persons to the structured environment (e.g public beaches, theatres and sports centers), as well as to audiovisual media services. The whole spectrum of these interventions aims to ensure that Cyprus takes all appropriate steps so that older persons and persons with disabilities live independently and participate in all aspects of life.

In addition, from 2016 there is a goal to replace old buses with new low-floor buses in order to be accessible to disabled persons and to older persons with reduced mobility capacities. Regarding access to the beaches for the people with reduced mobility capacities, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism under the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities and in the context of implementing its own Action Plan, collaborates with other stakeholders in various actions aimed at improving accessibility and the implementation of sponsorship schemes for Recreation Centres in order to facilitate accessibility.

(See Annex 3: Accessibility)

Most Important Achievement during the last 20 years
<p>The important achievement of Cyprus as shown above, lays in the active participation of older persons in policy making. Seniors participate in the development of policies and strategies and their implementation, through the social dialogue between their organisations and the government, especially regarding issues that concern and affect the elderly. This major step combined with the acknowledgment of seniors' contributions, it's the starting point to make a more age-inclusive society.</p> <p>(See Annex 1: Elder's Parliament)</p>

2. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work

❖ Promoting Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Lifelong learning is recognized as essential for the access of older people in the labour market and their integration and active participation in society in general.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MoECSY) undertakes a number of initiatives falling within the adult learning sector, which is an integral part of the lifelong learning continuum. The most important initiative in the field of lifelong learning in general and in adult education in particular is the development of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy (CY LLLS) for the years 2021-27. The work carried out by the MoECSY is facilitated by experts from the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). The Strategy aims to face challenges, such as the low participation of adults in lifelong learning, which is below the EU average. Moreover, it is expected that the new Lifelong Learning Strategy will enhance the efforts of upskilling and reskilling of low-qualified and low-skilled adults. In addition, programmes implemented by the competent Departments of the MoECSY aim to facilitate participation of adults in lifelong learning, while providing provision to those in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. One of them is the Evening Schools which fall within the spectrum of formal adult education sector. The new framework for the operation of these schools is more flexible and adult friendly so as to encourage adults' participation in lifelong and continuing education enhancing their basic skills and empower them, regardless age.

Lifelong Learning consists one of the main goals of the government policy regarding Higher Education in Cyprus. The establishment of the Open University of Cyprus² constitutes an important step towards the promotion of lifelong learning. With continuously increasing in number programmes of study and continuously widening the spectrum of covered areas, the Open University gives the opportunity to older people to study in a distance learning mode despite their age. The government subsidises financially the University so as to offer affordable tuition, scholarships and a flexible economic policy in order for everyone (including elderly people) to have equal access opportunities in studying.

Furthermore, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the MoECSY offers a wide range of technical and vocational education, initial training, lifelong training programmes and higher vocational education and training to adults through multiple pathways. Three of the five pathways offered address adult learners of all ages, in the context of lifelong learning including the Post-Secondary Institutes of VET (Public School of Higher VET), the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning Programmes of VET.

Moreover, the Adult Education Centres is a programme that falls within the non-

² www.ouc.ac.cy

formal adult education sector. As almost all state-run programmes, participation in the provided courses is low cost or free of charge in an effort to encourage participation. The main objective of the Adult Education Centers is the general development of each adult's personality as well as the social, financial and cultural development of citizens and society, in general. The objectives of this programme express the State's developmental policy and the wider aims of the MoECSY regarding the provision of "Lifelong Learning" opportunities for all the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus as well as the combating of educational inequalities so that citizens may be successfully integrated and able to act effectively within the European community.

The Adult Education Centers offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses, which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as well as on the teaching of vocational skills. Furthermore, every year the Adult Education Centers organize learning activities free of charge for various groups, such as people with special needs, mentally ill and elderly people in an effort to encourage participation. More than 21.600 citizens attended the Adult Education Centers during the year 2018 - 2019, with over 19% of the participants to be 65+ years of age.

The provision of training in Cyprus is based on the expressed principle of equal access to all. Both the legislation providing for the establishment and operation of the Human Resource Development Authority (HDRA), as well as the policies and measures of the organization ensure that there is no discrimination regarding vocational training of persons according to their age, race, sex, religion, national extraction or social origin or any other characteristic. Participation in training and development activities approved and subsidised by the HRDA is open to all, as defined in the Policy and Procedures Guide of each scheme, including people aged 65+ in specific schemes.³

The adoption of new innovative tools, such as the Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), is expected to favour participation of persons in lifelong learning activities, such as older people, who do not participate in a satisfactory extent. Cyprus is expected to give priority to vulnerable groups, such as older people, to participate in individual learning accounts. The development and implementation of ILAs is included in the Cyprus Operational Programme «THALIA» 2021-2027 under the European Social Fund (ESF+).

Digitalisation

In the framework of the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, the Cyprus Productivity Center of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, will implement, during the period 2022-2025, the "Project for the Training of People aged 55 and over" which aims to address digital exclusion of this group of people by improving their digital skills and boosting their confidence in the use of technology. The Project aims to address digital

³ www.anad.org.cy

exclusion of the people aged 55 and over by improving their digital skills and boosting their confidence in the use of technology.

(See Annex 4: Digitalisation)

The HRDA is also promoting the implementation of training programmes for the acquisition of digital skills in the context of the national Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026. The scheme aims at the acquisition of new and upgrading of existing digital skills of the human resources of Cyprus (public and private sector employees, the self-employed and the unemployed), through participation in training programmes to be implemented by certified vocational training centres.

❖ **Fight unemployment at all ages, reducing financial inequalities and poverty, taking up measures to reduce the gender pay gap**

A. Fight unemployment at all ages

The Department of Labour, of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, promotes the implementation of various Schemes providing incentive of unemployed people over 50 years old, please see Annex 5 Employment Schemes.

B. Reducing financial inequalities and poverty

The Social Benefits Administration Service of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, implements two important policies towards reducing financial inequalities and poverty:

1. Guaranteed Minimum Income

In Cyprus, the right to decent living and access to social protection is effectively safeguarded by the Guaranteed Minimum Income and other Social Benefits Law and Decrees. The Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) is a social benefit that guarantees that all citizens or families have an income sufficient to live on, provided that certain eligibility conditions are met.

The aforementioned legislation provides the right to a housing allowance to cover, amongst other, basic needs and the housing needs of the entitled persons, including households who face difficulties in paying off their mortgage. Under this Law, support is also provided to persons in extraordinary need even if they do not satisfy the eligibility criteria set by the Law.

2. Scheme supporting pensioners' households with low income

Through this Scheme a cash benefit is provided to pensioners' households whose total annual income is below the poverty threshold. The minimum resource is decided based on the annual poverty threshold as estimated in the

EU SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) survey conducted by Eurostat.

The benefit is granted for households with persons who receive pension from the Social Insurance Fund (Statutory, Incapacity, Widow etc.), Social Pension, or Pension from any occupational pension scheme applicable in Cyprus. Also, there should be one (1) year residency in Cyprus before the submission of the application. The grant is adjusted every year upon revision of the poverty threshold.

Indicative table with the amount of benefit for a household with one person, for the year 2019 (Decision Council of Ministers dated 23/01/2019) is shown below:

Annual income	Monthly benefit (€)
€0 - €5,162	220
€5,163 - €5,678	210
€5,679 - €6,195	200
€6,196 - €6,711	190
€6,712 - €7,227	180
€7,228 - €7,742	160
€7,743 - €8,259	150
€8,260 - €8,775	140
€8,776 - €9,291	130
€9,292 - €10,324	up to 95

Apart from the above, based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers dated 09/12/2020, it was aimed to have a low-income pensioner whose total income is not less than €710 per month. The amount given is an additional increase to the one approved on 23/1/2019.

Indicative table for a single person is shown below:

Monthly amount of pension and income (€)	Monthly benefit based on the increase of 21/12/2020 including the increase of 2019 (€)		Total amount of pension and income after the increasing (€)
341	Up to 369	(+149)	710
360	350	(+130)	710
400	310	(+100)	710
450	271	(+71)	721
500	244	(+54)	744
550	216	(+36)	766
600	189	(+29)	789
794	41	(up to 21)	834

C. Measures for the reduction of gender pay gap

The percentage of the gender pay gap in Cyprus has been gradually and continuously improving over the years and according to the latest available data of the Statistical Service of Cyprus for 2018, it now stands at 10.4%, compared to 14.1% which is the EU average. This positive development has resulted in Cyprus ranking in the 9th position among the EU member states. In recent years a significant reduction in the pay gap has been achieved, and specifically since 2014 (Gender Pay Gap 14.2%) the percentage has decreased by 24%.

The successful implementation of the Project "Actions to Reduce the Remuneration Gap between Men and Women" with a total budget of around 2 million, which was co-financed by the European Social Fund during the period 2010-2015, contributed, among other things, to the significant reduction of the gender pay gap. During the implementation period of the Project, the pay gap in Cyprus decreased from 16.8% to 13.2%.

Moreover, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance engages in activities contributing to raising public awareness on the detrimental consequences of discrimination in pay, on women's economic and social life. Such activities include the marking of the Equal Pay Day on an annual basis during which various events take place, including conferences, forums, radio and / or television campaigns with the dissemination of messages and videos calling for the elimination of discrimination in pay. The Equal Pay Day events and activities are usually joined by the social partners or co-organised with other organizations. For example, in 2020, a week-long radio campaign was co-organised with the Delegation of the European Commission in Cyprus, while an information campaign took place by the inspectorate during the same week.

Among the state policies taken to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality is also the successful operation of the National Certification Body which was established in 2014 and is responsible for granting certifications to enterprises and organizations that apply policies and practices promoting gender equality in the workplace. A call for certification is published annually by the Ministry open to every enterprise and organization, and following a thorough and comprehensive evaluation procedure, the organisations that meet the criteria of the certification model are granted a certification award. Since 2014, 57 companies have been awarded in total, 20 of which have already renewed their certification.

The Equal Pay between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work to which Equal Value is Attributed Law has been in place since 2002, and has been amended from time to time to ensure better and more effective implementation. The Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, as the competent authority for the implementation of the Equal Pay between Men and Women Legislation investigates complaints within the framework of the Legislation and also

conducts ex-officio inspections. The inspections are carried out on the basis of an annual target set at 200-300 inspections per year and are both preventive and repressive in nature. The inspectorate's role focuses on providing information to both employers and employees on the provisions of the legislation, but also practical compliance guidance to employers, aiming mainly at detecting direct discrimination in pay. During the period 2010-2020, 2,015 inspections have been carried out in this respect.

❖ **Encouraging employers to value the experience of, and to retain and hire, older workers**

During the period 2016-2019 the Government has announced and implemented a scheme providing incentives for the employment of unemployed people over 50 years old, in order to facilitate their access in the labour market. Specifically, the Scheme has enabled, through the announcement of the 3 calls, the employment of 1155 unemployed people over 50 years old. Throughout the new programming period of 2021-2027 and the ESF+ a new scheme for the employment of unemployed people over 50 years old is expected to be announced.

(See Annex 5: Employment Schemes)

❖ **Providing incentives for longer working life opportunities and more flexible retirement choices**

The retirement age is considered whether it will rise or fall every 5 years, according to the law. Based on an amendment to the Law on Social Insurance which is in the relevant law from 2012, retirement age means the age of 65 and it is adjusted by in 2018 in a manner determined by regulations every 5 years. The law simply states that changes based on the change in life expectancy at retirement age compared to 5 years ago, but not how much to increase. The current life expectancy for Cyprus in 2021 is 81.21 years, a 0.57% increase from 2018 or a six-month increase translated into days. Thus, it is expected to have an increase and not a decrease in the retirement age because life expectancy has risen. The thought when the law was made was to increase the limit by six months, so to 65.5 years. It is also worth mentioning that the insured is entitled to request a postponement of the start of the payment of the pension up to the 68th year of his age. In such a case the amount of the pension increases by 0.5% for each calendar month of deferral.

❖ **Planning and Implementing pension reforms**

The Social Insurance (Amendment) law 126(I)2019⁴ Introduced widower's pension with the same conditions and rate of benefit as widow's pension provided that the death of the spouse occurred after 1/01/2018.

⁴<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sid/sidv2.nsf/All/92073E8B3A8BE4EAC225858500259E2A?OpenDocument>

In addition, in December of 2020⁵ a special benefit was introduced by the Social Insurance Fund paid to persons with Thalassaemia (upon application) , provided that they reached the age of 50 years, but has not reached the pensionable age. Finally in September 2021 the Government engaged in social dialogue in respect of reforms of the pension system in Cyprus to ensure fair pensions for all.

❖ **Facilitating the reconciliation of employment and care work**

The Parental Leave and Leave on grounds of Force Majeure legislation, which has been in place since 2012, provides that both men and women are allowed to 18 weeks of parental leave for taking care of each child. This right is individual and only a small part of it can be transferred by one parent to the other under specific circumstances.

On August 1, 2017 the Social Insurance Law (Amendment) Law 115(I) 2017⁶ was amended to include provision for securing the right to paid paternity leave for two weeks with the same conditions and at the same level as maternity leave, thus contributing to the father's participation in the family during the first weeks of the baby's life.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance is preparing a bill for the transposition into national law of the Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers. The Directive, among other things, provides for parental leave 4 months for each parent of which 2 months will be paid. Parental leave must be obtained before the child reaches the age of 8 years and there is an obligation to allow the leave to be taken in flexible ways. The period of parental leave and Carer's leave will be treated as an insurance period (social insurance credits). In addition the bill will also provide for flexible working arrangements for workers with children up to the age of 8. Within this framework, the right to leave from work for workers, in order to provide personal care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household as the worker, and who is in need of significant care or support for a serious medical reason, will be introduced for the first time in legislation. Harmonisation efforts also focus on finding the right balance of the duration of parental leave and the level of payment that will provide adequate wage replacement, in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents, while the improvement of several provisions is also under consideration.

⁵<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sid/sidv2.nsf/All/C7784E8C93C5CBA5C225866800330D78?OpenDocument>

⁶<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sid/sidv2.nsf/All/C7784E8C93C5CBA5C225866800330D78?OpenDocument>

❖ **Which special measures did your country set to close the gender pay and pension gap as well to take into account the special situation of older women?**

Through the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance will amend the Law on Social Security to ensure the social security protection of all workers, including those working in new forms of employment, who in many cases are women.

Furthermore, according to the Social Insurance (Amendment) Law 115(I) 2017) Maternity allowance of 18 weeks is provided for women who have a child through a surrogate mother if the surrogacy was arranged on the basis of the provisions of Medically Assisted Reproduction Law of 2015. Extension for multiple births and hospitalization of newborn for at least 21 days also applies in these cases. The surrogate mother can also receive 14 weeks of maternity allowance if she fulfills the contribution conditions of the Social Insurance legislation. In the case of the surrogate mother no extension of the maternity allowance is provided in the case of multiple births. Finally the Government is working on a draft bill for the extension of paid maternity leave to the 2nd or more children.

Most Important Achievement during the last 20 years

One of the most important achievements during the last 20 years was the packet of measures introduced to address the effects of demographic ageing and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Social Insurance Scheme. According to the latest actuarial study with reference year 2017 the Social Insurance Scheme will be sustainable until 2080. The main measures introduced:

- An actuarial reduction of pension entitlements from the General Social Insurance for retirements earlier (at 63) than the statutory retirement age (65), stricter insurance conditions for entitlement to a statutory pension.
- Gradual increase of contributions every 5 years until 2039.
- Introduction of an automatic adjustment of the statutory retirement age every 5 years in line with changes in life expectancy at the statutory retirement age.

Additionally, in view of the intense demographic pressures (low birth rate, the increase of the ageing population), the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the National Agency for Demographic and Family Policy. Its main purpose is to monitor and record the current situation in Cyprus, and to define a coherent and comprehensive strategy for demographic development and family policies, which will be adjusted based on the findings of the research conducted and diagnosed needs.

One of the Agency's responsibilities is the preparation of Demographic and Family Policy Action Plans. Two Action Plans have been implemented; the first, Demographic and Family Policy Plan for the year 2014 and the second, for the years 2016-2017. The implementation of the third Action Plan for 2019-2020 which has been extended for 2021, is in the process of implementation, taking into account the limitations due to the pandemic. The ongoing Action Plan includes, in particular, actions aimed at addressing the low birth rate and promoting the reconciliation of family and professional life, focusing on the areas of education, social welfare and health.

3. Ensuring ageing with dignity

RIS commitment 7: To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being.

(See Annex 6: Empowering the Elderly)

❖ **Protecting older persons' enjoyment of all human rights and dignity, promoting their autonomy, self-determination and participation in society**

Various excursion activities at home and abroad, meetings, conferences, etc. are organized for the elderly by multiple organizations, while visiting communities on a global basis and listening, coordinating and promoting to the state multiple requests and problems encountered.

Social card

The social card is granted to persons aged 63+ years and who receive any kind of pension. Beneficiaries of the social card are entitled a 50% discount on fares for transportation by bus and reduced fees for access to museums, archaeological sites and theatres.

Sport for All Program

The Program "Exercise in Third Age" provides exercise and physical activity as part of the "Sport for All" Program (AGO) of the Cyprus Sports Organization. A respectful number of older people participate for free in the program, through organized groups such as nursing homes and day care centers. The program aims to provide opportunities for physical activity and specialized exercises, to promote health for the elderly.

Legislation

In addition, the Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Social

Welfare, are responsible for the preparation and enforcement of the legislative framework for guaranteeing the minimum quality standards to social care services provided by the private sector (profit and non-profit).

In order to improve the minimum criteria for service provision, Cyprus is in the process of revising the existing legislative framework for residential care and day care. In addition, in 2016 terms and conditions for the operation of home carers have been determined by SWS, pending the drafting of a new law which will regulate the provision of home care. In this context, approved (self-employed) Home Carers are included in a provisional Registry which is published and available on line.

Pancyprian Organization for Rehabilitation of Disable People (POAA)

POAA is the largest organization for people with disabilities in Cyprus including people with age 65+. Its main goal is to promote requests of people with disabilities so their rights can be guaranteed. POAA provides services such as participation to social activities (concerts, outings, theatres, sports teams etc.) in order to be socialized involved and incorporated to these activities. Also, POAA is responsible for the promotion and activation of the people with disabilities for their independent living and support, for the participation of adult people with disabilities in cultural events in order for the organization to be displayed and allow the people with disabilities and older people to be socially incorporated.

Additionally POAA provides social and psychological support through counselling to people with disabilities and their families, in order to be able to confront their problems. Furthermore it organize informative day conferences, campaigns and seminars about all matters in which the people with disabilities are involved and they provide informative updating for any new regulations, social provision, benefits and projects/proclamations.

Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights

Through the last years the Office under its broad competences, has investigated a number of issues related to the protection of older persons' enjoyment of human rights, dignity and autonomy, including issues of discrimination, quality standards or long term care and the prohibition of ill treatment. In particular, based on the EU Legislation (Directive 2000/78/EC) which has been transposed in the national legislation, discrimination on the basis of various grounds, including age, is prohibited only in the fields of employment and vocational training. Nonetheless, the general prohibition of discrimination is recognized by other domestic and international legal documents, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus. In light of the above and based on the competences of the office as an Anti-Discrimination Body, the office examined cases related to age discrimination in variety of fields and submitted reports with relevant views and recommendation.

For instance the Office intervened in cases of age discrimination in the labor market, in regards with the maximum age at which a person can enter employment or can be selected for a profession or field of work, both at the public and in private sector. Furthermore, the practice of age discrimination by private insurance companies, and specifically discrimination against people who are over 70 years old in the field of motor vehicles insurance, was criticized and it was underlined that there is an obligation on providers of goods and services to objectively justify any differential treatment on the basis of the person's age. In addition under the offices competence, in 2018 they carried out several visits to homes for the Elderly. In accordance, corresponding recommendations were submitted to the competent ministry.

❖ **Supporting the necessary infrastructure and assistance to prevent all types of abuse and violence against older persons**

In cases where an older person considered as a victim of violence, Social Welfare Services (SWS) implement «The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victim) Laws 2000-2019». Additionally, the Government of Cyprus in 2016, in order to harmonize with the European Directive 2012/29/EE adopted the Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law 51 (I)/2016. Social Welfare Services in accordance to article 10 of the L.51 (I)/2016 are directly responsible for providing free and confidential support services to victims according their needs. According to article 11 of the L.51 (I)/2016 the SWS ensure that victims receive:

(a) Information, advice and support relevant to the exercise of his/her rights, including (i) actionable right to compensation against the offender, for criminal offences committed against him/her and (ii) his/her role in the criminal proceedings including preparation for participation attendance at the trial as a witness in cooperation with the Mental Health Services and the prosecution authorities,

(b) Information about any existing relevant specialist support services in place or from referral thereof,

(c) Emotional support and, where needed, psychological support, referral to the Mental Health Services,

(d) Networking with other services, such as psychological support services, housing, financial support and medical services.

Additionally, the National Action Plan for Equality between Men and Women 2019-2023, which was prepared by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order in collaboration with all the jointly responsible Ministries/Services, equality bodies, academic and research centres and NGOs that promotes gender equality, and which was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2019, covers all women without exception, with no restrictions according to age. In particular, the basic pillar, entitled "Empowering Vulnerable Groups of Women", includes a series of

actions that aim to protect, support and empower women, including elderly women.

Furthermore, the Law (L.14(III)/2017) to preventing and combatting all forms of violence against women, and domestic violence, which are included in the Convention of the Council of Europe for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) covers all women without exception based on any characteristic, including that of age.

❖ **Fostering the development of innovative methods and services as well as user- and age-friendly technology and products**

Vidatrack is a personal tracking system and telephone device for emergency situations, designed to improve the quality of life of those belonging to vulnerable social groups. The system helps the users live and move around independently while, at the same time, reinforcing their sense of safety and security in their daily routine. In case of emergency, if the holder feels threatened, has an accident or even gets lost, can push the panic button and alert his/her relatives, his/her carer or the police. In addition the function allows you to create geo-fence zones (user' s secure movement area), in which the user usually moves. If the user exits the geo-fence zone, an SMS alert notification will be sent, containing a link to the user's last location.⁷

❖ **Raising quality standards for integrated social and long-term care and health services and continuously adapting the status, training and working conditions of professional care workers**

Long term social care

The Government continued the implementation of the “Scheme for the Subsidisation of Care Services”, which covers the long term social care needs of GMI recipients and members of their family unit. The Scheme mainly covers cash benefits and in justified cases it may provide for in-kind services. Subsidisation of care services under the GMI legislation, covers home care, day care, respite care and residential care, and child care in approved and registered care services (natural and/or legal persons) according to the relevant legislative framework.

Long term social care programmes are also implemented at local level, by NGOs and local authorities, which they receive State Aid according to the relevant Schemes of the MLWSI. An amount of about €21.5mln was provided to NGOs and Local Authorities, during the period 2018-2021, for the funding of

⁷https://www.cyta.com.cy/mp/informational/cyta_htmlPages/doc/vidatrack-manual_en.pdf

around 100 social care programmes at local level (Homes for the Elderly/ Day Care Services / Day Care Services or Care Services on a 24-hour basis to people with disabilities).

The Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, are responsible for the preparation and enforcement of the legislative framework for guaranteeing the minimum quality standards to social care services provided by the private sector (profit and non-profit). In order to improve the minimum criteria for service provision, Cyprus is in the process of revising the existing legislative framework for residential care and day care. In addition, in 2016 terms and conditions for the operation of home carers have been determined by SWS, pending the drafting of a new law which will regulate the provision of home care. In this context, approved (self-employed) Home Carers are included in a provisional Registry which is published and available on line.

In addition, Cyprus through the Resilience and Recovery Plan 2021-2026 will address gaps in long term care services with the establishment of role model community care centers for people in need of long term care (such as the elderly) by NGOs and Local Authorities by the end of June 2026.

In relation to the training of professional care workers there are minimum criteria of completion of 100 hours of educational seminars in order for the care workers to be approved and be eligible to work as carers. In addition, the Nursing Services and the Ministry of Health organize various workshops for the training of the Nursing Staff, as well as students of the Nursing faculties of the Universities, in matters concerning the 3rd age and the active aging.

(See Annex 7: Staff Training)

❖ **Supporting research on individual and population ageing processes to better address emerging needs in ageing societies**

A numerous organizations in Cyprus are responsible to identify and promote the problems and challenges facing by the elderly. (See section above “protecting older persons’ enjoyment of all human rights and dignity, promoting their autonomy, self-determination and participation in society”)

However, the number of quantitative and qualitative data regarding older persons needs can be improved in order to design and implement more targeted policies and better address emerging needs in ageing societies.

❖ **Promoting the participation of both persons with dementia and/or mental and behavioural disorders and their informal carers in social and community life**

The Community Mental Health Care Act of 2017 was prepared and at the moment is in the house of Parliaments for approval with the aim of offering Community Nursing to people with a mental disorder. At the presence the persons with mental and behavioral disorders are including in the homes of the

elderly and they have the opportunity to participate in a numerous of creative activities such as music lessons, crafts and sports activities. Additionally, there is a specific program for people 65+ who have cognitive disorders. It is applied on an individual and group level, in Day Care Centers for the Elderly and in Outpatient Clinics. Meetings are held once or twice a week, depending on the general condition of the patient. Evaluation tools such as MMSE and GDS are used, as well as collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists and neurologists.

(See Annex 8: Mental Empowerment Program)

Most Important Achievement during the last 20 years

The introduction of the GMI legislation in 2014, which includes the “Scheme for the Subsidisation of Care Services” covering the long term social care needs of GMI recipients and members of their family unit. Furthermore, the implementation of the State Aid Schemes providing financial support and guidance to NGOs and Local Authorities for the operation of numerous social care programmes at local level, covering the care needs of vulnerable/dependent persons, including the elderly.

Part III: Healthy and Active Ageing in a Sustainable World

1. Contribution of ageing-related policies to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals

1.1 Has your country already submitted voluntary national report(s) to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the implementation of the SDGs? Please briefly report on whether and how the population ageing and older persons’ issues were addressed in your country’s VNR(s).

Cyprus submitted its first Voluntary National Review to the United Nations in 2017. The first Report reflected Cyprus’ high level of commitment towards the Agenda 2030. The efforts were directed towards ensuring that the SDGs become a real policy and action agenda that will enhance the well-being of all its citizens. The second Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) gives a cross-country outline of the actions taken, examples of overcoming adversity and showcases good practices supporting the 2030 Agenda in Cyprus.

The process of drafting the Second Voluntary National Review for the UN High Level Political Forum in 2021, under the coordination of the Directorate General for Growth (DGG) of the Ministry of Finance and with the collaboration of all main players, showcases key initiatives and actions that positively impacted SDG implementation, while, at the same time, recognises existing challenges

that require further action and commitment. During the preparation of the second VNR, a survey was conducted by DGG that showcased the need for Cyprus to accelerate its efforts in a number of areas, one of them being the protection of vulnerable groups including the elderly. It was clearly stated in the VNR2021 that Cyprus continues to make progress in reducing poverty in all its forms by decreasing unemployment and income inequality, increasing employment and incomes, and implementing targeted welfare schemes.

1.2. Within the national political planning are there any established links between ageing issues and the 2030 Agenda (a mapping of the connections between MIPAA/ RIS and the SDGs that shows areas for policy integration is available on the UNECE website)?

The most important horizontal form of annual planning with respect to SDGs is reflected in the National Reform Programme (NRP) prepared in the context of the European Semester process of economic policy formulation in the EU. In the context of initiating the annual planning cycle, the Government's Strategy Statement is issued each April setting the principal Governmental framework guiding the revolving 3-year strategic plans for the Government Services. As of 2019 the SDG priorities have been included in the Strategy Statement, with the aim to further incorporate them within all sectoral and horizontal strategies of the Government. This initiative came in anticipation of the EU to monitor progress in each member state with respect to the SDGs in the annual evaluation of the country's National Reform Programme as analysed in the Country Report issued by the European Commission.

Commitments towards the implementation of the SDGs for 2030 will also be addressed within the Long-Term Economic Strategy currently being under preparation. This strategy will bring together all the elements required to secure the continuous enhancement of citizens' welfare. The funds provided to Cyprus through the Multi-Annual Financial Mechanism of the EU offer significant support in implementing the Sustainability Agenda up until 2030. In the first place, Cyprus National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) brings to the economy additional new funds through the New Generation EU instrument approved in response to Covid-19. Equally important are the traditional funds of the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy, which bring to the economy significant funds for investment in the priority areas of sustainable development. They are a significant key tool to repair, restart, and reconfigure Cyprus' economic and social composition to positively impact the citizens' well-being, the quality of human capital and the labour force, the efficiency of its institutions and the Country's effective green and digital transition, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

1.3 Given the information reported about MIPAA/RIS implementation what are the most relevant SDGs which could be nourished by current policy measures (specify which measures)? Were they or will they be included in your country's VNR(s)? Describe 1-3 good practice examples.

SDG 1 | No poverty in advanced age and social protection for all, it was

indicated that there was significant reduction in the at-risk-of poverty rate of for people aged 65 and over. It was also mentioned that by 2030, the Government wants to ensure that the poor and the vulnerable have access to basic services, ownership and control over land and property, inheritance, natural resources, new technology and financial services. The goal is to provide the elderly with suitable, comfortable, accessible, family-type homes in the community to live with safety, dignity, and quality of life.

SDG 3 | Healthy ageing and access to care services. In regards to healthy living, Cyprus ranks quite well amongst EU countries. In particular, life expectancy in Cyprus is 82.9 years, relative to 81 years in the EU as a whole.

As of June 1st 2020, Cyprus introduced in its entirety, its national healthcare system called General Health System (GHS). GHS gives every Cypriot citizen equal and unhindered access to high quality healthcare services.

SDG 4 | Lifelong learning.

A variety of programmes that fall within the formal and the non-formal sector, aiming at increasing the number of adults participating in lifelong learning run by Departments within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. For example, the Adult Education Centres, another programme that falls within the non-formal adult education sector. As almost all state-run programmes, participation in the provided courses is free of charge (especially for adults coming from vulnerable social groups such as prisoners, migrants, senior citizens, people with disabilities, illiterate people and early school leavers) in an effort to encourage participation, while in a number of other programmes the fee is extremely low.

In order to meet the wide range of training and development needs of the country's human resources, the HRDA implements a variety of activities for the training and development of the human resources of Cyprus, providing the employed, the unemployed and the economically inactive with the opportunity of acquiring new or upgrading existing knowledge and skills. Emphasis is placed on providing specialised knowledge and skills related to the profession, as well as important horizontal skills.

SDG 5 | Gender equality in old age

Cyprus shows an improvement towards reducing gender inequality and efforts will continue to be made through additional measures promoted through the new National Action Plan for Equality between Men and Women. Through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, measures are promoted for gender equality of treatment and opportunities, in all areas, including participation in the labour market, employment terms and conditions, and career progression.

SDG 8 | Longer working lives and ability to work

Following the financial crisis in 2013, economic recovery resumed by 2015, with a solid growth path over the period 2015-2019. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020, the macroeconomic projections of both the national authorities and the European Commission, pointed towards another year of significant growth. However, the effects of the pandemic proved detrimental to the Cypriot economy, plunging it into a deep recession. The

Government has taken measures to mitigate this effect, by offering a set of financial and incentive schemes targeting the creation of new jobs, the employment of young people and persons with disabilities, and overall people affected by the pandemic. A new ambitious Long-Term Economic Strategy (LTES) is currently being prepared, aiming for a new growth model, to transform Cyprus into a productive, green, and digitalised economy, resilient to external shocks and at the same time encompassing a fair and inclusive society.

SDG 10 | Reduced inequalities in later life

Income inequality in Cyprus decreased during the period of 2014-2018, reaching the 2008 level again. The pandemic is anticipated to exacerbate income inequality in Cyprus; the Government has already taken drastic measures to mitigate this by taking relevant actions including wage and social protection policies and the enforcement of the Equality Law. Cyprus receives a lot of asylum seekers of third country nationals that come from areas devastated by war or famine. In fact, it receives the highest number of asylum application among EU countries (14 394 cases in Cyprus compared to the EU average of 1411 in 2019). Great efforts are exerted to offer all third country (non-EU) nationals' education and a decent level of living which is reflected in the respective statistics. The employment of third country nationals is 68,9% compared to 60% EU average and the respective figure of young people neither in education nor in training of non -EU citizens being 22,1% in Cyprus compared to 24,2% of the EU average.

SDG 11 | Age friendly cities and communities Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Cyprus, via the absorption of relevant EU funds, the development of targeted measures and policies, and the implementation of various projects, is focusing on making urban and rural communities more inclusive and sustainable. Strategies like the "Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Plans" and the "Strategy for the sustainable development of rural communities and municipalities" drive key initiatives like urban mobility projects and the revitalisation of main historic centres suffering from broad degradation and socioeconomic challenges. New housing policies aim to provide more affordable housing options both in urban and in rural areas. Finally, the proposed local Government reform aims to help local communities tackle inefficiencies, become more sustainable, and provide a higher quality of life for its citizens.

SDG 16 | Voice for older persons, no ageism and no elder abuse. A very ambitious reform is promoted to enhance the Judicial system, the public sector, and the local authorities, and to also tackle corruption, in an effort to build effective institutions which will serve towards more just and well-functioning public services, while supporting the sustainable growth of the economy of Cyprus. An Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Policy has been drawn up aiming to promote the rights of women everywhere.

SDG 17 | Ageing related statistics. The Cyprus Statistical agency has published for the first time a full report with all statistical indicators relating to the SDGs, including age related data where relevant.

2. Lessons learnt from managing the consequences and impacts for older people in emergency situations: the COVID-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 Pandemic

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 highlighted the importance of occupational health and safety. In addition, it stressed the importance of taking the preventive measures when it comes to unexpected and challenging situations such as the one with Covid-19 outbreaks. From the beginning of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Cypriot government issued policies to help people and vulnerable groups, including the elderly and people with chronic diseases and health problems and the businesses to cope with the new challenges posed by it.

Effects on elderly people

On August 11th, 2020, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights, under her capacity issued a Statement regarding the implementation of measures at Social Care Homes, to prevent the spread of the virus during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. It was noted that the restrictive measures implemented at social care homes and homes for the elderly and specifically, the restriction of visitations, unavoidably resulted in the further isolation of persons residing in such premises.

Even though the days of being quarantined are difficult on all, not everyone is facing the same level of difficulty. The compulsory confinement can become more tolerable if the vulnerable people are with their family or loved ones. But not everyone is that fortunate. There are citizens who face enormous practical problems in their daily lives: people with mobility issues, the elderly, those belonging to vulnerable groups, without a family or friendly circle, those without support.

The Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdown periods significantly contributed to increased loneliness and social isolation. People who were mostly affected were those who were already in a state of confinement living in these settings. For these individuals, contact with the outside world and their loved ones had become even more difficult, or even impossible, throughout the implementation of these restrictive measures with serious effects on their psychology.

The loss of interaction with other people and especially with the family, for more than two months, has been detrimental to the very well-being of these individuals. The situation was even more difficult for people with dementia who were unable to comprehend the reason they no longer received visits from family and friends.

The care of persons living in social care homes should not only be related to their physical health but the State, through the competent authorities' cooperation with the owners of the Social Care Homes, take into account the resident's personal needs, their prosperity and dignity and make all possible efforts to prevent the danger of them being socially excluded.

Another deterrent during the pandemic was the lack of knowledge of technology. Despite the efforts for digitalization some elderly people have no knowledge of the use of technology, thus experiencing more intensively the effects of the pandemic and isolation. They remained excluded; unable to make contact even with their children and grandchildren, even by video-calling, something that could have been achieved if they had knowledge of the technology.

Furthermore, social distancing limited the participation of elderly people in activities or voluntary programs which further worsened their psychology.

Measures implemented

The Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights suggested that measures should be implemented in order for the residents of social care homes be engaged in creative ways (such as painting, knitting, puzzles etc.), based on individualized plans that take into account their physical and mental condition.

Furthermore, it was suggested that residents receive further psychological support by specially trained staff, especially post pandemic and also receive further training/support in the use of technology (i.e. video-calling) for the purpose of socializing and avoidance of any further isolation.

The Volunteer Centre introduced new services during the Covid-19 period through its dedicated volunteers, by delivering food and other necessities to vulnerable groups that could not leave their homes, thus strengthening “social inclusion and solidarity during physical distancing” and integrating “a focus on older persons into the humanitarian response to Covid-19”.

The Commissioner for Volunteerism and NGOs have created a dual support program together with a telecommunication company in Cyprus. By equipping volunteers organized in all cities, a telecommunication company facilitated their important mission of delivering the necessary supplies to the homes of secluded people in need. In addition, it was directly supporting vulnerable households by financing necessities, so that no one is deprived of the essentials for a decent daily living. Finally, it had also opened an account in supermarkets in all cities so that the volunteers can acquire the necessary supplies that will be transferred to those in need.

In addition, the Cypriot Government as part of the measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus and protect the vulnerable group enabled the elderly people to have their own separate timeframe within day in which they could shop in the supermarkets. Additionally, elderly people were prioritized in regards to the vaccination so as to secure their safety and minimize the danger of being affected by the virus.

Home care programs were working even more those days in order to provide help to all those elderly people needed it. Elderly people when asked said that

despite all the difficulties caused during the pandemic, the fact that some programmes continued the provision of its services, gave them great relief.

Ministry of Health played a vital role in the covid -19 containment as well. A team from the Ministry is performing rapid tests in the homes of the elderly people on a weekly basis thus, enabling them to prevent a further spread of the virus and protecting them from the disease.

Social Welfare Services in collaboration with Ministry of Health prepared and issued protocols regarding the proper running of the Homes and Day Care Centers for the Elderly with the aim of preventing the spread. Online training seminars for the preventing measures and vaccination related information, were given to the carers in order to enable them to understand how they should handle the pandemic situation.

Furthermore, a respectful number of unemployed persons were employed by the Government to ensure that the above-mentioned protocols were followed by the care takers and the members in the centres in general.

Good Practice

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council has been operating a telephone support and interconnection line for vulnerable groups and people who have developed social vulnerability due to the pandemic. Experienced professionals staff the line and provide information, guidance, help and support to vulnerable groups including the elderly.

3. Activities in preparation and implementation of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030

- 3.1.** Is your country preparing (or already has) a National Action Plan (or similar) for the implementation of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030? If yes, please briefly describe main actions foreseen.

Yes, the Ministry of Health is preparing a National Strategy for Healthy Ageing, which will be based on the following pillars (a) prevention, (b) healthy ageing, (c) age-friendly environments, (d) research and training.

- 3.2.** Would your country agree to report on the implementation of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030 in the framework of the next national reviews and appraisals of MIPAA/RIS?

Yes.

Conclusions and priorities for the future

The ageing of population is an issue of concern for the Republic of Cyprus. Hence, ageing has been mainstreamed in policies such as economic, social protection, labour market and health in recent years.

The major strengths of Cyprus since 2017 in the field of ageing include the new National Health Scheme (Gesys) and the enhancement of the social protection system, including among others, the GMI that guarantees a minimum standard of living for all citizens, the establishment of a new Advisory Board on Ageing, the long-term financial sustainability of the Social Insurance Scheme.

Efforts in mainstreaming ageing in all policies are continuous; however there are areas that need further improvement. Challenges faced by Cyprus in the field of ageing, to which further attention must be given includes inter alia the investment in long term care services and the increase in the number of quantitative and qualitative data regarding older person's needs, in order to design and implement more suitable and targeted policies and better address emerging needs in ageing societies.

With regards to the lifelong learning opportunities to the elderly it could be noted that the initiatives and programmes presented in this report are strongly related to personal development, social cohesion and empowerment of the citizens of all ages, genders, origins, economical backgrounds of the Republic of Cyprus. They reinforce Cyprus' commitment to the realization of its lifelong learning goals and the promotion of equal participation of people in education and training opportunities through their lives.

At an international level, exchange of knowledge, information and good practices would give a further impetus for discussion, future policy directions and actions on ageing issues.

At a national level, the Government is fully committed to continue working towards the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy so as to ensure a society for all ages.

ANNEXES

1. Elder's Parliament

No.	1
TITLE/SUBJECT	Elders' Parliament (the institution)
SHORT DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Elders' Parliament is a dynamic and pioneering institution that brings together and unites representatives from different NGOs and organised groups of civil society, gives voice to the elderly and enhances the active participation of the elderly in the policy making process. • It is composed of 56 elderly "MP's" (representatives of civil society) as the number of MP's of the House of Representatives, that are over the age of 63. • It is coordinated/ supervised by a Coordinating Body of Elders' Parliament (EPCB). • It has two Committees that engage in the preparatory work of the policy issues in relation to the elderly that need to be addressed: the Social Welfare Committee and the Health Committee. • The Elders' Parliament meets once a year at the House of Representatives in Cyprus, at the presence of members of the House of Representatives and ministers. • The yearly assemblies follow the same parliamentary procedures as the ones followed by the House of Representatives and are chaired by the President of the House of Representatives. • Besides the yearly assemblies, the Elders' Parliament engages in a number of activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation in meetings of parliamentary committees of the House of Representatives: Members of the Elders' Parliament are invited to take part in meetings of parliamentary committees to discuss issues that concern the elderly. – Meetings with Ministers: Members of the Elders' Parliament have meetings with Ministers in order to discuss issues in relation to the elderly that need to be addressed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meetings of committees: The Health and Social Welfare committee and the Coordinating Body of the Elders’ Parliament have regular meetings to discuss administrative, policy and legal matters and prepare the reports for the annual assemblies. – Press releases: The Elder’s Parliament has its own voice in the media, expressing opinion on different issues in relation to the elderly. – Mapping the needs of the elderly: The Elders’ Parliament conducts mapping surveys to map the needs of the elderly in national and local structures (i.e. NGOs, municipalities, communities in Cyprus). <p>More information on the Elders’ Parliament can be found here: http://www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy/elders_parliament</p>
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring together and unite different groups of civil society with multiple views, interests and objectives for the common good in relation to the elderly • To enhance pluralism • To promote the active participation of the elderly in society • To acknowledge and utilize the elders’ contribution and accumulated experience • To collectively promote and address the issues that affect the elderly through the central institution of the Elders’ Parliament
RESULT EXPECTED OUTCOME	<p><u>Since 1999:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 assemblies have been conducted • 1,200 approx. elders/representatives have engaged as MPs at the Elders’ Parliament • 44 reports have been delivered • 35 approx. meetings with Ministers have been conducted • 50 approx. participations in meetings of Parliamentary Committees • 50 approx. organised groups are represented at the assembly yearly
BUDGET	<p>The PVCC covers the expenses of the Elder’s Parliament through its yearly budget. Most work is conducted by volunteers</p>
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	<p>1999-Today</p>

IMPLEMENTATION BODY	Pancyprian Volunteering Coordinative Council (PVCC)
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No.	2
TITLE/SUBJECT	Elders' Parliament (record of policy-making work)
SHORT DESCRIPTION	<p>The Elders' Parliament has actively contributed to the policy-making process for dignity and better quality of life for the elderly by raising several issues over its 22-year operation such as:</p> <p><u>Social Welfare Issues addressed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (i) Better living conditions, (ii) exercise, entertainment, communication spaces, facilities and benefits for active participation in society. • Awareness raising campaigns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To reduce age discrimination / promote a society for all ages, -To prevent abuse and violence against older persons, -To secure the rights of older persons • Better supervision of homecare and nursing-home care programmes and facilities • Safeguard that trained workers are working with the elderly • Enhancement of pensions so that no-one resides under the poverty line • Improving subsidies and accessibility to services for the disabled • Improvement of public transport • Bridging the digital gap for the elderly • Improvement of living conditions for the elderly refugees residing in refugee housing settlements since 1974 • Safeguard that policies and programmes promote a healthy, active and independent ageing, • Raising awareness on new structures and programmes to meet the multiple/varied needs for the elderly More welfare programmes for the elderly • Introducing lifelong education programmes • Labour market integration (to encourage employers to value the experience of older workers, e.g. no age ceiling in vacancy advertisements) • Enhancement of Intergenerational relations through different activities and joined Assemblies with other Forums representing the younger generation • Increase of NGO funding to safeguard more and better quality services and programmes for the elderly • Implementation of advisory centres for individuals who are close to retirement to aid a smooth transition from working life to retirement • Improvement of access to information by the elderly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) in relation to their rights (ii) in relation to the social programmes, services and benefits • Introduction of emergency call devices particularly for those who live alone • Need for regular assessment on the effectiveness of the services provided to the elderly

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the benefits, grants and entitlements of low-income pensioners <p><u>Health related issues</u></p> <p>Raising quality standards for health services, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of waiting lists for operations and other treatments • Sufficient staffing of health services • Creation of rehabilitation centers • Improvement and expansion of home care • Regulation of medication prices to low-income pensioners • Improvement of the National Health System with more services • Digitalisation of patients' medical files • Improvement of health services in remote areas • Support services for the disabled • Regulation for the evaluation of the health services • Introduction of Mental health services for the elderly • Improvement and expansion of community nursing, etc
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify and process welfare and health related issues that affect the elderly • To propose solutions • To engage in dialogue with national stakeholders to address the issues facing the elderly and resolve challenges through the policy making process.
RESULT	<p><u>1999-Today</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 Committee Reports • 150+ welfare/health related issues raised at policy making level
BUDGET	x
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	1999-Today
IMPLEMENTATION BODY	Elders' Parliament / the PVCC

No.	3
TITLE/SUBJECT	Social services for the elderly from the NGO sector
SHORT DESCRIPTION	<p>Older people have access to quality services implemented by NGOs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-care service: It aims to support vulnerable groups of people in order to enable them to live at home, to develop their personal skills and to support the family unit to accommodate the family's elderly/disabled members. It provides personal hygiene, house cleaning, washing of clothes, cooking, shopping, etc. • Day-care service: It offers the elderly and the disabled the opportunity to live at home for as long as possible. It offers cooked meals, laundry facilities and socialization. • Residential care service: Provides services to people whose needs cannot be met by their family or other supportive services. • Other actions: Socialization activities, leisure activities, lifelong training in different domains.
GOALS	To provide key quality services by the NGO sector
RESULT	Most programmes for the elderly are implemented by the NGO sector
BUDGET	Governmental funding and voluntary contributions
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	x
IMPLEMENTATION BODY	NGOs

2. Voluntarism

No.	1
TITLE/SUBJECT	Volunteer Centre
SHORT DESCRIPTION	<p>The Volunteer Centre is the official coordinative centre for the promotion of volunteerism in Cyprus. Established in 1991, the Volunteer Centre functions in all districts under the responsibility of the District Volunteerism Coordinative Councils and the general supervision/coordination of the PVCC.</p> <p>More information can be found here:</p> <p>http://www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy/volunteer_center</p>
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and enhancement of volunteerism (welfare, environment, culture, sports, social development, fighting discrimination, addressing humanitarian emergencies, preventing and dealing with social issues, etc.) • Promoting social welfare • Promoting active participation • Enhancing/Administering/Coordinating voluntary service (informing, mobilizing/recruiting, registering, training, placing, guiding and supporting volunteers, certifying voluntary service) • Meeting needs (vulnerable groups, social programmes, voluntary organisations/NGO's, communities, government services, emergency situations).
RESULT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups that received support: 39,000+ • Volunteers: 25,000+
BUDGET	<p>The PVCC covers the expenses of the Volunteer Centre through its yearly budget.</p> <p>A lot of work is conducted by volunteers and voluntary contributions</p>
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	1991-Today
IMPLEMENTATION BODY	District Volunteerism Coordinative Councils (through the operation of volunteer centres at local level), under the coordination of the PVCC.

3. Accessibility

No.	1
Title / Subject	Accessible Public Transport
Short Description	Based on the Concession Contracts for the provision of regular public transport services with the use of buses “the Concessionaire must provide a fleet with all accessible buses, whether these are low floor or coaches”
Goals of the Policy / Action / Practice / Programme	To accommodate passengers with reduced mobility
Result / Expected Outcome	Improved availability of public transport
Budget	
Implementation Period	2020-2030
Implementation Body	Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works

No.	2
Title / Subject	Social Policy of Fares per Passenger for the provision of regular public transport services for inland road passenger transport
Short Description	Based on the Social Policy of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works as defined in the Concession Contracts for the provision of regular public transport services with the use of buses “pensionnaires who are beneficiaries of the Low Income Retirement Benefit Plan holding a personalized smart card that can obtain from a ticket sales outlet by presenting to the issuer the card of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, travel for free”. In addition the Department of Road Transport issues free driving license for people 65+.
Goals of the Policy / Action / Practice / Programme	Provide affordable transportation to older persons
Result / Expected Outcome	Improved availability of public transport
Budget	
Implementation Period	2020-2030
Implementation Body	Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works

4. Digitalization

No.	1
Title/Subject	Digital skills training for employees, the unemployed and Senior citizens
Short Description	The programme started in September 2017 in an effort to enhance digital skills among the general public in Cyprus by offering free-of-charge training courses to adults on e-government systems and on basic digital skills, with emphasis on the use of the internet and its basic applications. In the years 2018 and 2019, customized training programmes were offered to senior citizens (60+) on Windows and Android/IOS. In addition, in 2018, consultancy services to municipalities, community councils and other bodies for the purpose of improving their e-business level were offered. For the same purpose, in 2018 public presentations on e-government services took place in municipalities and communities all over Cyprus. In the years 2019, 2020, 2021 new training programmes on digital skills were introduced. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic Covid 19 the majority of training courses in the years 2020 and 2021 were offered electronically through learning platforms (webinars).
Goals of the Policy/Action/ Practice/ Programme	The primary objective is to improve digital skills of the population at national level (Cyprus). Secondary objectives are to improve productivity in private and public sectors, to facilitate the entrance in the labour market of the unemployed and to assist senior citizens to make the most of the digital world in their daily routines.
Result/ Expected Outcome	280 Training programmes were organized in total in the period 2017-2020 with 6,000 participants. For the period 2018–2019 50 Training programmes were organized exclusively for senior citizens (60+) on Windows, Android/IOS with 620 participants
Budget	National Budget €400,000 (2017-2021)
Implementation Period	13/9/2017- Today
Implementation Body	Cyprus Productivity Centre, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance Department of Electronic Communications, Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy

No.	2
Title/Subject	"Project for the Training of People aged 55 and over"
Short Description	In the framework of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), which is financed by the European Union, the Cyprus Productivity Center will implement, during the period 2022-2025, the "Project for the Training of People aged 55 and over" which aims to address digital exclusion of this group of people by improving their digital skills and boosting their confidence in the use of technology. In order to ensure that the actual needs of this group of people are addressed a survey aiming towards the identification of their training needs will precede the implementation of the Project in 2021.
Goals of the Policy/ Action/ Practice/ Programme	Aims to address digital exclusion of the people aged 55 and over by improving their digital skills and boosting their confidence in the use of technology.
Result/ Expected Outcome	Training of 2800 persons aged 55 and over
Budget	€1 mil
Implementation Period	2022-2025
Implementation Body	The Cyprus Productivity Center which is a Department of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

5. Employment Schemes

No.	1
Title / Subject	Scheme Providing Incentives for the Employment of Unemployed People over 50 years old
Short Description	This scheme provided incentives to private sector employers to employ unemployed people over 50 years old for 12 consecutive months. The grant covered 70% of the employee's salary cost and up to a maximum of €8.400 per agreement.
Goals of the Policy/ Action / Practice / Programme	Enable access of the unemployed and economically inactive population groups in the labour market. Encouraging the employers to value the experience of older workers and hire them through the incentive schemes.
Result / Expected Outcome	For the three calls the target was the employment of 1.000 people and 1.155 applications were received.
Budget	€8.400.000
Implementation Period	The time frame for this scheme was between 2016 and 2019.
Implementation Body	Department of Labour

No.	2
Title / Subject	Scheme Providing Incentives for the Employment of Unemployed People over 50 years old
Short Description	This scheme will provide incentives to private sector employers to employ unemployed people over 50 years old for 12 consecutive months. It will be based on a unit cost of €48/day per employment of an unemployed of the target group up to a maximum of €8.600 per employee, per year.
Goals of the Policy/ Action / Practice / Programme	Enable access of the unemployed and economically inactive population groups in the labour market. Encouraging the employers to value the experience of older workers and hire them through the incentive schemes.

Result / Expected Outcome	The target is the employment of 470 unemployed people over 50 years old.
Budget	€4.000.000
Implementation Period	The time frame for this scheme is between 2022 and 2025.
Implementation Body	Department of Labour

No.	3
Title / Subject	Employment of 30 new Employment Counselors in the Public Employment Service (PES).
Short Description	In the period 2018-2021, the Department of Labour hired 30 new temporary Employment Counselors, for the provision of individualized services to the unemployed, mainly people belonging to vulnerable groups. They are placed in PES Offices throughout the Republic of Cyprus. Their contracts have initially been for 2 years but were later extended for until the end of 2023.
Goals of the Policy/ Action / Practice / Programme	Increase in job placements, especially for people belonging to vulnerable groups.
Result / Expected Outcome	Decrease in the unemployment rate Increase in the employment rate
Budget	€4,500,000
Implementation Period	2018 - 2023
Implementation Body	Department of Labour

6. Empowering the elderly

No.	1
Title/Subject	Lectures in the Community
Short Description	Organization, coordination and presentation of topics related to "Health in the 3rd age and active aging". Includes the use of educational material and posters.
Goals of the Policy/Action/ Practice/ Programme	The aim is to raise awareness and empower the public and the elderly
Result/Expected Outcome	Lectures should be held occasionally or on occasion e.g. of the "Diabetes Day" or "Mental Health Day" in Urban and Rural Multipurpose Centers of five Municipalities / Communities
Budget	~1000 yearly
Implementation Period	Since 2012
Implementation Body	Directorate of Nursing Services, Ministry of Health, Since 2019 there is a collaboration with Community Mental Health General Nursing, State Health Services Organization - since March 2020 there was no lectures - hope soon we will start

No.	2
Title/Subject	General Nursing and Mental Health Home Care Service
Short Description	The program is for people over the age of 65 with health problems that result from a sudden illness, recurrence of a chronic illness or long-term disability and disability and includes home visits. Home visits and time of visits are determined according to the general condition and needs of each patient. In particular, it provides specialized nursing interventions to the sick or disabled elderly person outside the hospital to improve their level of health and manages acute and chronic conditions while promoting self-care

	among the elderly and their families. Through the Nursing process, an evaluation of the individual, his family and his environment is carried out. Precautionary measures are taken to avoid problems or complications arising from a condition or disease. Collaborates with health workers and other services (social and community) and the family to coordinate the treatment program.
Goals of the Policy/ Action/Practice /Programme	The aim is to help older people increase their level of independence by minimizing the adverse effects of illness or disability so that they can remain in their home environment. At the same time, it aims at preventing the disease and limiting its progression and preventing the effects of the disease.
Result/Expected Outcome	Pancyprian service to the health needs of the elderly in the community has expanded and provided services through the areas of responsibility (urban and rural) of the provinces of Nicosia, Larnaca, Famagusta, Limassol and Paphos
Budget	There is no separate budget for the action
Implementation Period	Since 2004
Implementation Body	Home Nursing Service, Directorate of Nursing Services, Ministry of Health, Since 2019 the services are under State Health Services Organization

7. Staff Training

No.	1
Title/Subject	General Nursing and Mental Health Nursing Staff Training
Short Description	Organization of workshops for the training of the Nursing Staff, as well as students of the Nursing faculties of the Universities, in matters concerning the 3rd age and the active aging.
Goals of the Policy/Action/ Practice/ Programme	The aim is to raise awareness and strengthen the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the Nursing Staff as well as students of the Nursing faculties of the Universities on issues related to the 3rd age and active aging.
Result/Expected Outcome	training of 5% of the Nursing Staff

Budget	~1000 yearly
Implementation Period	Since 2012. The lectures are held occasionally in Urban and Rural Multipurpose Centers of five Municipalities / Communities of the District of Nicosia with good results.
Implementation Body	Directorate of Nursing Services, Ministry of Health

8. Mental Empowerment Program

No.	1
Title/Subject	Mental Empowerment Program
Short Description	The program is for people over 65 who have cognitive disorders (dementia and related disorders). It is applied on an individual and group level, in Day Care Centers for the Elderly and in Outpatient Clinics. Meetings are held once or twice a week, depending on the general condition of the patient for 20-30 minutes. Evaluation tools such as MMSE and GDS are used, as well as collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists and neurologists.
Goals of the Policy/Action/ Practice/ Programme	The aim is to stabilize or even delay the reduction of cognitive functions (memory, attention, concentration, judgment, orientation, etc.), to improve the functionality and quality of life of the patient and his family, to reduce the burden, to promote independence of the individual to the greatest extent possible.
Result/Expected Outcome	The program has so far taken place in three communities of Nicosia and the wider region with excellent results.
Budget	There is no separate budget for the action
Implementation Period	Since the end of 2010. Individual programs are carried out as needed.
Implementation Body	Community Mental Health Nursing, State Health Services Organization/Health Directorate of Nursing Services, Ministry of Health