



**National Report for the fourth review and appraisal cycle of the
implementation of the Madrid International Plan on Action on
Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS)
2017 – 2022**

SLOVENIA

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Part I

Executive summary

Demographic changes, along with the digitalisation and climate change, are one of the key challenges for the world in the future. Also in Slovenia, the society is ageing – life expectancy has been increasing and the share of over 65-year-olds has been growing rapidly, while the young generations are few in numbers. Undoubtedly, one of Slovenia's key challenges for the future will be its ageing population and an appropriate response to this challenge.

The preparation of this report was led by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSA), with the active involvement of other relevant ministries, municipalities, other organizations, and non-governmental organizations, especially those who represent older persons (such as the Slovenian Federation of Pensioner's Associations ZDUS), as well as the Advocate of the Principle of Equality. In preparing this report MLFSA also used the relevant data from the Statistical Office of Slovenia, the Slovenian Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, the Institute of Social Protection of Slovenia, as well as data from the European Commission, the OECD, and the UNECE. The basis for the report was the guidance for national reports for the assessment of the fourth cycle of MIPAA/RIS implementation of September 2020.

In the years leading up to the pandemic, Slovenia has gradually strengthened a more inclusive social development. Social inclusion, quality of life and certain aspects of health of older persons have improved, poverty rates have been reduced, inequality in many areas has remained low or has decreased, and people's mutual trust and satisfaction with life has improved. Nevertheless, there were and still are challenges ahead. According to the UNECE report 2018 Active Ageing Index of June 2019, Slovenia progressed at a slower pace than the EU average between 2008 and 2016. Slower progress is particularly pronounced in the areas of social participation and independent, healthy, and safe living. Slovenia has also been one of the countries, which were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in institutions. With the measures adopted, the protection of the older population played an essential role.

To comprehensively address the demographic challenges, Slovenia has adopted the Active Ageing Strategy in 2017, which represents the substantive framework for the implementation of the necessary change. The Strategy offers solutions to existing trends, while taking into account new trends that will shape the future of our society.

One of the biggest achievements in Slovenia in the last 20 years has been the adoption of the Long-Term Care Act in 2021. With its adoption, Slovenia confirmed its strategic orientation towards greater integration of health and social services, the development of various forms of long-term care and greater support for independent living at home.

In recent years, the Slovenian government has implemented several measures in the field of pension and disability insurance. These were primarily intended to improve the

adequacy of pensions, but also to upgrade the possibility of combining pensions with work and, consequently, to prolong work activity and prevent early retirement. The pension and disability insurance system thus offers stimulating ways of prolonging employment even after fulfilling the conditions for old-age retirement. In Slovenia, the number of older persons in employment has thus significantly increased in the last decade.

There are still many challenges ahead. In Slovenia, we need to improve possibilities and opportunities for quality living of all generations, and for dignified ageing. To achieve that, adjustments in many areas will be required, such as the labour market, education and training, systems of social protection, the living and working environment, and civil and political participation.

In the area of employment and labour market, additional measures are planned to ensure longer stays in the workplace, such as managing different age groups of employees, adapting jobs and lifelong learning to acquire relevant modern skills.

Slovenia is committed to addressing human rights at different stages of life, so its priority is also to adequately address the rights of older persons in the future. We are committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against older persons, as well as combating ageism.

To ensure that the main actions and progress in implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals are also met in the future, it is essential that all stakeholders (from ministries, science, economy, civil society and non-governmental organizations that represent older persons) work closely together.

General information

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Republic of Slovenia

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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).

| | Date of Adoption | Link to documents |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Active Ageing Strategy | July 2017 | Link to SI Active Ageing Strategy |
| Long-Term Care Act | September 2021 | Link do SI LTC Act |
| Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 | December 2017 | Link to SI 2030 Strategy |
| Dementia Management Strategy in Slovenia until 2020 | April 2016 | Link to SI Dementia Strategy (only in Slovenian) |
| Resolution on the National Social Protection Program for the period 2013-2020 | April 2013 | Link to SI Social Protection Program 2013-2020 |
| Resolution on the National Social Protection Program for the period 2022-2030 | March 2022 | Link to SI Social Protection Program 2022-2030 |

1. National ageing situation

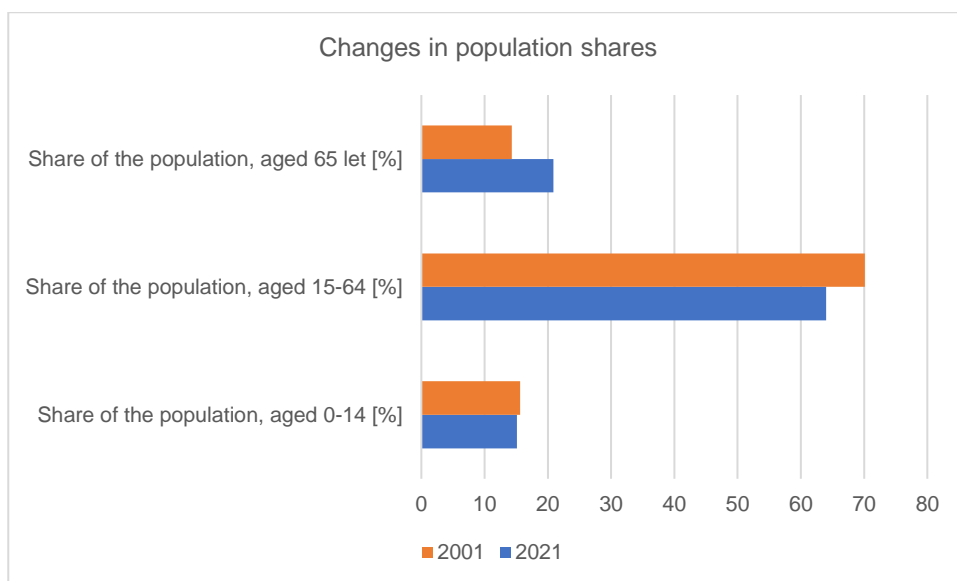
1.1. Presentation of current demographic indicators and their projections

In January 2022, the Slovenian population amounted to almost 2,100,000 citizens. The population has been increasing since the year 2000 mainly due to the immigration of foreign nationals. At the same time, there was also a net emigration of Slovenian citizens abroad, which was more pronounced in the period 2012 to 2017, as a result of the economic and financial crisis.

The number of live-born children after 1979, when the figure was at 30,604, has been declining continuously. The change in the trend between 2003 and 2010 was only short-lived. The number of live-born children after the year 2010 has been declining again. This figure has been below 20,000 for several years now, reaching 18,767 in 2020. However, the impact of the higher number of Slovenian nationals emigrating abroad has a significant effect on slower growth in the Slovenian population than the mere declining birth rate. After 1983, there was a significant change to the parenthood pattern in the sense of postponing the parenthood of both men and women to a later time. The large baby-boom generations born after the Second World War, which were in the most active period of their lives in the eighties, comprised an older generation that was extremely large in numbers in 2019.

Over the last twenty years, the proportion of the total population accounted for by children younger than 15 years decreased slightly (from 15.6% in mid-2001 to 15.1% in mid-2021). The proportion of older people (over 65 years of age) rose from 14.3% to 20.9% over the same period. The proportion of women among older people is slightly higher than the proportion of men, as women on average live longer. However, there are more men than women of working age among the immigrants.

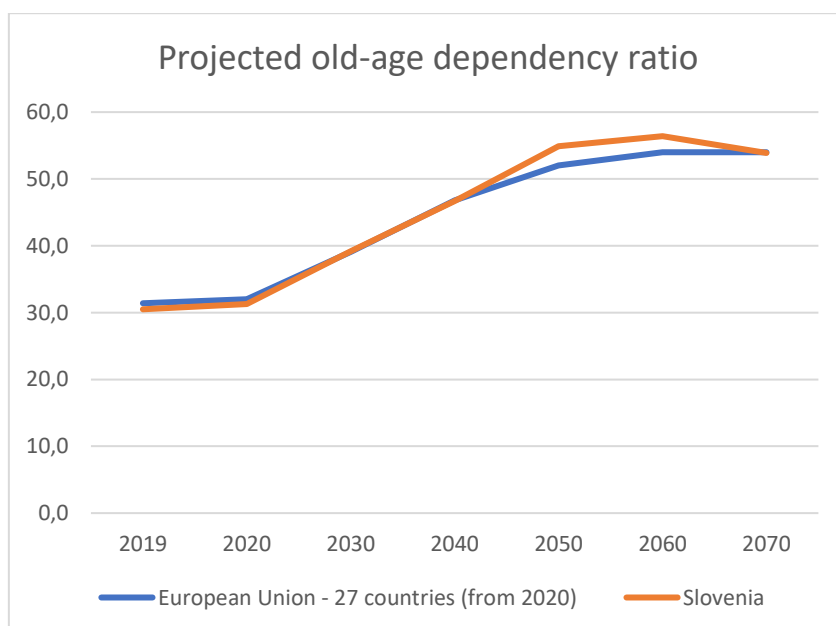
Graph 1: Changes in population shares



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia

The ageing of Slovenia’s population will continue moving forward. The age dependency ratio that reflects the ratio of the number of people over 65 relative to the number of people of working age who are capable of work (people between 15 and 65 years of age) will increase significantly as a result of the ageing population. The number of people over 65 per 100 people who are fully capable of work is expected to increase from 31.3 in 2020 to 54.9 in 2050 (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Projected old-age dependency ratio



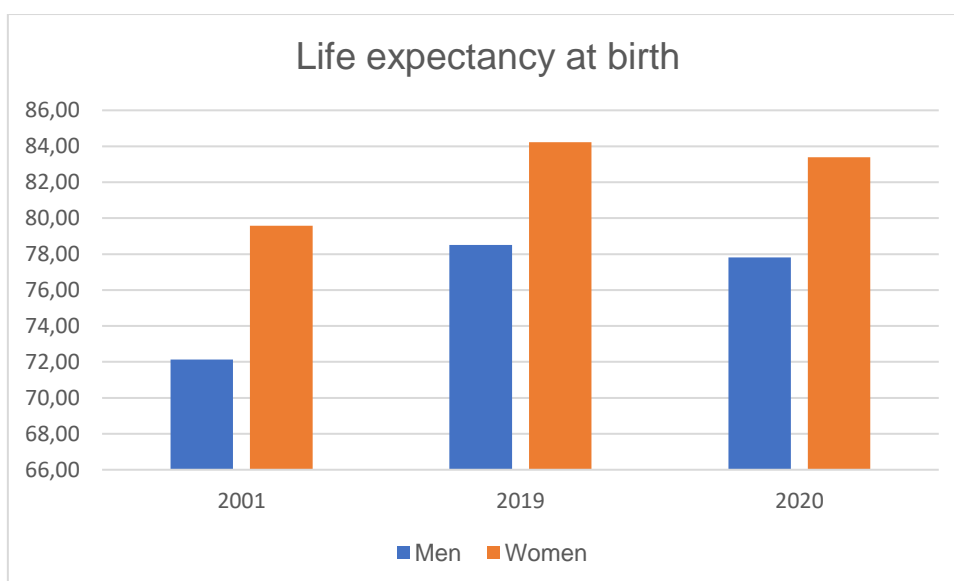
Source: Eurostat 2019

One of the key challenges Slovenia is facing in the future will undoubtedly be the ageing of its population and the proper response to this challenge.

1.2. Presentation of key quantitative social and economic indicators

Life expectancy at birth in 2019 was 78.50 years for men, and 84.22 years for women. The graph (Graph 3) shows that average life expectancy has increased steadily in recent years, with the exception of 2020 when it decreased due to the impact of the pandemic. At the same time, the chart also shows a narrowing of the difference in life expectancy between men and women.

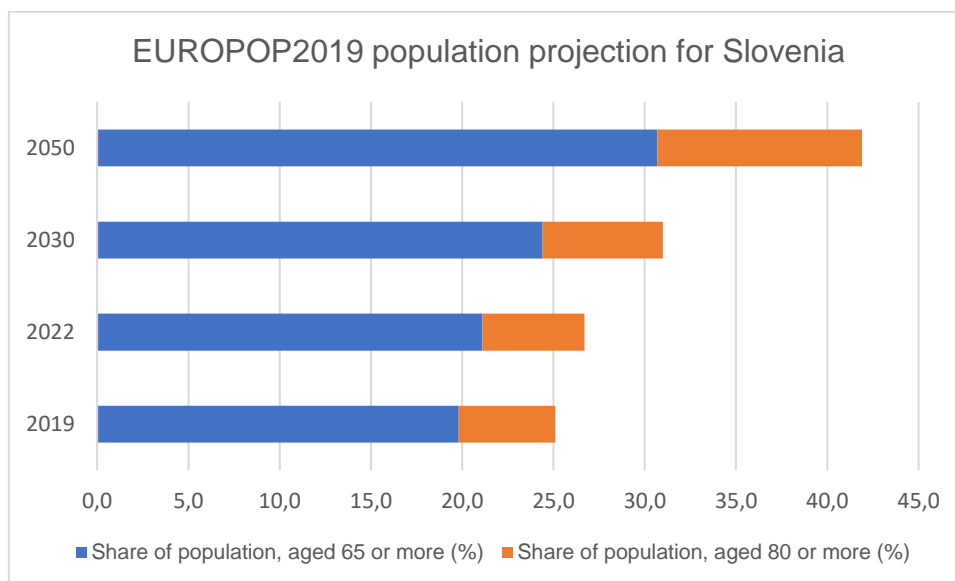
Graph 3: Life expectancy at birth



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia

In 2021, the proportion of the population older than 65 years was 20.9%, while the EUROPOP2019 projections predict this percentage will rise to 30.7% by 2050, of which people over the age of 80 are expected to account for no less than 11.2% of that figure.

Graph 4: EUROPOP2019 population projections for Slovenia



Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia

The average age of the Slovenian population is 43.8 years.

The employed workforce in Slovenia is increasing gradually. Despite the significant decline in 2013 and 2014, due to the financial and economic crisis, the employed workforce increased by 8.2% in the period 2011 to 2021, and according to most recent data stands at 900,262 employees in 2021.

The average number of children per woman in Slovenia decreased from almost 2.0 in the 1980s to 1.2 in the early 2000s and bounced back to around 1.6 after 2010.

Despite important improvements in recent years, the employment rates among older workers are still very low in Slovenia. Among those aged 60-64, only one-quarter was employed in 2020, half the OECD average. International evidence shows that higher education levels and better health from one generation to the next provide a wide margin to continue improving employment levels of older persons, while pension policies can also have a significant impact. However, the trend in Slovenia has nevertheless improved over the past two decades: the employment rate of people aged 55-59 increased from 30% to 74% between 2000 and 2020. The employment rate of those aged 60-64 is now equal to 30%, i.e., the level among those aged 55-59 twenty years ago.

Another challenge for the future is the income position of people aged 55 and over, particularly of pensioners. According to OECD (2020) data, one-third of all retired men and more than half of retired women in Slovenia receive a pension that is below the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is primarily the result of insufficient insurance period of pensionable service and low pension base. Regarding the position of older persons in Slovenia, it should therefore be noted that their income is reduced significantly upon retirement, and that people over the age of 65 rarely continue to work. This means that, with the ageing of the population and increase in the number of pensioners and

their percentage of the population, more people will receive lower income, which will limit the number of people living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

1.3. Brief description of the social, economic and political situation

In recent years, Slovenia has recorded economic growth and favourable trends on the labour market. The Institute of Macroeconomic Development (IMAD) states in its 2021 Development Report ([link to the report](#)) that, after a period of stagnations following the economic and financial crisis, the EU catch-up process was restored in Slovenia in 2016, primarily on account of a rapid rise in the employment rate. Despite this, in 2019 Slovenia still yet had to achieve the relative level of economic development from 2008, from the time prior to the crisis. The per capita GDP (at purchasing power parity) as a criterion of economic activity, stood at 89% of the EU average in 2019, and was two percentage points lower than in 2008.

Economic activity declined significantly in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic was not as profound as the financial and economic crisis ten years ago. The reason lies in the corporate sector being better prepared for the crisis, and also the proper responses of policies to the crisis. The fiscal packages should be noted specifically. By focusing on the stabilisation of the labour market and on providing aid to companies with liquidity problems, these packages prevented a significant decline in economic activity. Nevertheless, the pandemic halted the continuation of favourable multi-year trends on the labour market.

In its report IMAD also states that in the years leading up to the pandemic a more inclusive social development has gradually strengthened. Social inclusion, the quality of life, and certain aspects of health improved. The level of poverty lowered, and inequality in a number of areas remained low or was reduced. This all strengthened mutual trust between people and their satisfaction with life. However, the risk of poverty, to which older women are especially exposed, still remained. Inequality in health, which, particularly in terms of gender, deepened in some respects, also remained visible.

In recent years a need has been identified to increase the guaranteed pensions to ensure adequate pensions and consequently increase social security. The amendments to the Pension and Disability Insurance Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2017, introduced a guaranteed pension as a new institution with the aim to address the issue of low pensions for 40 years of work. The guaranteed pension was then raised in 2021 through the amendment to EUR 620 (from EUR 500). As of 1 May 2021, this measure has been upgraded, so the guaranteed pension currently amounts to EUR 653.75 and is adjusted in the same way as pensions. The average pension in 2021 amounts to EUR 722.36 (Table 1).

Table 1: The average old-age pension and growth rate by year

| Average old-age pension and growth rate by year | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Year | Average net old-age pension | |
| | Amount in EUR | Growth rate in % |
| 2012 | 615,22 | -1,1 |
| 2013 | 615,64 | 0,1 |
| 2014 | 613,13 | -0,4 |
| 2015 | 609,50 | -0,6 |
| 2016 | 612,64 | 0,5 |
| 2017 | 620,25 | 1,2 |
| 2018 | 639,00 | 3,0 |
| 2019 | 657,99 | 3,0 |
| 2020 | 688,84 | 4,7 |
| 2021 | 722,36 | 4,9 |

Source: Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia

1.4. Brief description of important measures to revise/adjust social and economic policies due to the confinement and economic shut-down during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Slovenia was among those countries that were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the measures adopted, the state tried to protect the most vulnerable groups, especially the older population. In the initial stages of the pandemic, the early hours of opening in grocery stores were reserved for older people, various NGOs and neighbours volunteered to bring them supplies, and recipients of low pensions received a solidarity bonus twice. Due to measures to limit the spread of the virus, the waves of infections lasted for a shorter time and affected fewer people, but especially in the older population this often contributed to feelings of loneliness, social exclusion, and mental distress.

In nursing homes, where infections in the first and second waves spread more than among the rest of the older population, the residents were additionally affected by restrictions in movement in these facilities, and in visits. Virtual contact with family members and friends, especially for residents suffering from dementia, could not replace in-person human contact, socialising and walks. Many older people's health, well-being and physical abilities were undoubtedly affected by these measures. The policies in later waves are much more acceptable for older people, as they and their relatives are allowed much more freedom and opportunities for contact. This is undoubtedly due to the residents' high level of vaccination coverage and the experience and good practices gained during the pandemic.

In terms of responding to the pandemic with social policies, in 2020 Slovenia primarily focused on the payment of one-time social financial transfers and on the preservation of

jobs. Major changes to the social rights relating to well-being and solidarity were implemented in 2021. One-time transfers were also paid out in 2021, albeit significantly less so than in the previous year. In addition to policy measures, the system also enables the automated social transfer response to shocks and to changes in the business cycle ('automatic stabilisers'). This feature contributed significantly over the last two years to the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts on society.

The report of the MLFSA (from February 2021) on Slovenia's progress regarding the indicators of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the measures taken for their implementation indicates that the measures undertaken in the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 focused primarily on one-time transfers, while the spectrum of aid in 2021 was much broader. Some of the most significant measures, especially those associated with the European Pillar of Social Rights indicators, are presented below:

- The gross minimum wage has risen by 15.5% over the last two years.
- Free kindergarten was introduced for the second and third child.
- Parental supplement rose from EUR 258 to EUR 402.
- Employees working part-time were entitled to the payment of social security contributions up to the level of full-time working hours. A rise in the amount of partial payment for lost income from EUR 751 to EUR 1,024 gross (care and protection of one or more children affected by serious illness) was introduced.
- An extra assessment rate for pensions has been introduced for those who continue working or reactivate themselves, amounting to 1.5% per six months of up to 3 years.
- Improvement of personal assistance services and elimination of anomalies in this area.

Part of these measures is also the adoption of the Long-Term Care Act, which marks the end of almost 20 years of efforts put into ensuring more effective regulation of the long-term care. The Act includes free long-term care at home, free social care at retirement homes, free basic e-care for users of long-term care, a new service for maintaining independence, which is all included in the compulsory long-term care insurance (for more details see section Ensuring Ageing with Dignity).

A series of measures to preserve jobs was also introduced, such as "temporary waiting for work" scheme and reimbursement of wage compensation for part-time work, partial subsidising of part-time work and the opportunity for free inclusion in training or courses in the scope of active employment policy programmes at the Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia. More lenient conditions for obtaining financial social assistance and the automatic extension of all rights to public funds were introduced, without needing to verify the fulfilment of eligibility criteria.

The Gini coefficient also depicts care for older persons and vulnerable groups in Slovenia. This coefficient illustrates income inequality and is among the lowest in the world, also on account of income from pensions and social transfers.

2. Method

The MLFSA led the preparations for this report. All the ministries, other organisations, local level stakeholders (such as the municipalities) and representatives of non-governmental organisations, primarily those representing older people, were invited to contribute to this preparation.

We received reports from various ministries, the most active of which was the MLFSA, as well as reports from the Advocate of the Principle of Equality and positions from the largest non-governmental organisation representing older persons, the Slovenian Federation of Pensioner's Associations (ZDUS).

In the process of drafting the data, we worked closely with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, used material of the IMAD and several ministries, the Social Protection Institute, and also used the data from the European Commission and the OECD. UNECE's Active Ageing Index Analytical Report from June 2019 was also applied.

A series of analyses and surveys were used and served as the basis for individual stakeholders' reports.

The basis for the report were national reporting guidelines for the appraisal of the fourth cycle of implementation of the MIPAA/RIS from September 2020.

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

1.1. Measures to empower individuals to realize their potential for physical, mental and social well-being throughout their lives and to participate in and contribute to society according to their capacities, needs, and desires

Active Ageing

In 2017, the Slovenian Government adopted the Strategy for Active Ageing. The Strategy focuses on the need for activity and creativity during all periods of life, health consciousness and intergenerational cooperation and solidarity. By using this Strategy, Slovenia adapts itself to the new demographic reality. The Strategy offers solutions for existing trends, while simultaneously taking into account new trends that will shape the future of our society, as follows:

- Technological development and the digitalisation of society.
- A modified understanding of the work life cycle.
- The flexibilisation of the labour market with growing flexible forms of work.

In the Strategy older persons are not understood as only those who need help, care or protection, but as a category of persons with still much to offer society. At the same time,

the Strategy expects a proper response from society that will facilitate active and dignified ageing.

This strategy is comprised of four categories:

1. Labour market and education/training (labour market adjustments, including training and lifelong learning, promoting the immigration of foreign workforce, etc.).
2. An independent, healthy, and safe life for all generations (social welfare systems, accessibility to healthcare services and long-term care, health consciousness, reduction of inequality in health, etc.).
3. Inclusion in society (intergenerational cooperation, voluntary work, use of ICT for communication, prevention of discrimination and violence in society, political activity, etc.).
4. Development of an environment for lifelong activities (adjustments to the economy, adjustments to living conditions and traffic arrangements with ICT support).

After the Strategy was adopted, there was a more organised response to demographic challenges. The action plans of individual ministries were put in place with specific proposed solutions. The prepared material was discussed by the Council of the Slovenian Government for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Cooperation and submitted to Slovenia's Economic and Social Council (ESC). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the document's coordination partially stalled in 2020.

The UNECE's Active Ageing Index is a major indicator of successful response to demographic changes. This index, which examines older people's contribution to society and economy, covers several categories (employment, participation in society, an independent, healthy, and safe life, and capacities and the environment that facilitates active ageing). UNECE's 2018 Active Ageing Index report from June 2019 indicates that Slovenia progressed at a slower pace than the EU average in the period 2008–2016. Slower progress is especially notable in relation to social participation and with respect to ensuring a safe, healthy, and independent life. The reason for this lies primarily within the lack of organised and coordinated responses to demographic challenges from the period prior to the Strategy's adoption and in the first few years thereafter.

Inclusion of older persons

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia established a Council for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Cooperation in 2018 for the implementation of the Active Ageing Strategy. Related to this Strategy, an Action Plan with numerous measures was drafted.

In some Slovenian municipalities, Councils of Seniors are organized as advisory bodies to the municipal administration. Even where there are no such councils, organisations of older persons and various civil society organizations have the opportunity to actively contribute to local policymaking and implementation, through public debates on spatial and other development plans, programs and financial plans (participatory budgets).

Representatives of the pensioners' organization ZDUS are members of administrative councils and supervisory bodies of various institutions and organizations that work in the

field of ageing issues, for example the Health Insurance Institute, Pension and Disability Insurance Council, Real Estate Housing Supervisory Board, Social Chamber Assembly, etc.

There are several other organizations in Slovenia that contribute to the social inclusion of older persons like Srebrna nit, Slovenian Karitas, Red Cross Slovenia, Slovenian Philanthropy, Spominčica, AlzheimerSlovenia – Slovenian Association for Help with Dementia, the Slovenian Seniors Association, Gerontological Society of Slovenia, Simbioza, CNVOS - National NGO umbrella network, and Sloga. They amplify the voice of older persons in proposing measures for sustainable solutions in programming and legislative documents, eradicating poverty, health and well-being, long-term care, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work, reducing inequalities, and promoting sustainable cities and communities.

We would like to highlight the “Older for Older” program, within which ZDUS runs the Seniors with Volunteering project to improve their own lives and the lives of their peers. As part of the project volunteers, who are usually representatives of the older generation, visit older persons in their area. Volunteers and project coordinators have previously received training, so that visiting older persons, identifying their needs for possible assistance, and providing information to other institutions is carried out in accordance with the agreed procedure. The project’s purpose is to get to know the needs of older people, especially those who have no or minimal contact with others. In cases of loneliness, volunteers also cooperate with other non-governmental organisations. When the needs of an older person exceed volunteers’ competences, or if abuse or violence occurs, the volunteers inform a social work centre or the police. Cooperation with social work centres is increasing, as there is more and more information among the older population about various forms of abuse.

Promoting a positive image of older persons

Promoting a positive image of older persons, as well as other generations, is undoubtedly a process that must be a regular activity in Slovenia. This promotion of a positive image of older persons is primarily comprised of different activities that result in a more positive image of older persons and in greater intergenerational understanding, cooperation, and solidarity.

In 2021, in light of its Presidency of the Council of the EU, Slovenia organised an international conference entitled “Human Rights for All Ages: Promoting a Life-Course Perspective and Intergenerational Cooperation to Combat Ageism”. During this Conference, Slovenia presented two aspects of combating ageism that simultaneously contribute significantly to a better image of older persons, as follows:

- By including the life-course perspective, Slovenia aimed to emphasise that old age is only one of the periods in life, and that all life periods are connected among themselves, which is why different generations cannot be observed or treated separately. People of different ages are far more connected with each other than they realise, as ageing is not merely the domain of older people, but we all age from our birth onwards. Greater awareness of the

interconnectedness of life stages positively contributes to a more positive image of ageing and older persons.

- The Conference also pointed out intergenerational cooperation and links between generations as an effective way to overcome ageism. Only through concrete cooperation can we become familiar with other generations and better understand them, thereby ignoring the so-called boundaries between them.

Several conclusions were reached at the Conference, including the need to integrate a life-course perspective to ageing, based on human rights, in all policies dealing with ageing.

Slovenia also contributes significantly to a better image of older persons with concrete financial support provided for various intergenerational events, such as the Festival of the Third Age and Days of Intergenerational Coexistence, which are held by various non-governmental organisation of older persons. At the same time, local communities stage a series of events at the local level that contribute to a positive image of older persons also at the regional level.

Age-friendly environment

Slovenia is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of age friendly environment and suitable living conditions on the local level. The Slovene “Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities” programme has a major role in this regard. This is a programme that, in cooperation with the municipal administration and their citizens, resolves issues and needs associated with changed demographic relations, and maintains friendly intergenerational relations in their community. An age-friendly town or municipality is not only friendly to older people, since what is friendly to older people is also friendly to all generations. The Institute of Anton Trstenjak is the programme’s coordinator. Since 2010, the Age-friendly towns and municipalities received new member, and now this network had expanded to slightly over 15 towns and municipalities. During preparations for a new community to join the Slovenian network, the Institute assists local policy makers, the local administration, experts and civil society in informing them about this programme. Moreover, a group of 20 citizens deserving of recognition are selected in the town from older, middle, and younger generations that are prepared to be actively involved in the implementation and development of this programme as a local honorary committee. The five-year local development strategy of an age-friendly community contains specific plans for:

- Long-term care of the ill, feeble, and disabled citizens (applies to 5% of the population).
- Active and healthy ageing of the whole generation of older persons.
- Strengthening intergenerational solidarity and education of all for a better and nicer coexistence.

1.2. Slovenia's participation in the relevant global/UN-wide campaigns

1.2.1. Participation in the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism led by the World Health Organization (WHO)¹

Slovenia was not directly involved in the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism. However, in 2021 a representative from the World Health Organisation gave the opening address at a conference of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency entitled "Human Rights for All Ages: Promoting a Life-Course Perspective and Intergenerational Cooperation to Combat Ageism". This Conference was also listed among the events within the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

Slovenia also took part in the Fundamental Rights Forum 2021 under the organisation of the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), where the topic of ageism was emphasised specifically.

1.2.2. Participation in the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG-A) for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Slovenia has been a member of the Bureau of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG-A) since 2014. OEWG-A's work is among Slovenia's foreign policy priorities in terms of human rights, and we actively participate in the Working Group's sessions of the by delivering statements in support of strengthening the protection of the rights of older persons, including the adoption of the related legally binding instrument.

Existing international instruments do not take into account major changes in the structure of the world's population, and do not respond to the needs of an ageing population and society. Therefore, Slovenia takes the position that the existing mechanisms for protecting the rights of older persons do not provide sufficient and adequate guarantees for this group's full enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, to fill the gaps and strengthen the protection of older persons a new dedicated legally binding instrument is needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed some of society's most significant shortcomings, some of which affect older persons most. Slovenia is among the 146 countries that have expressed their support for the Secretary-General's Policy Brief providing recommendations to strengthen the protection of human rights of older persons. The Working Paper prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should also be the basis for our further discussions. Stronger protection and promotion of human rights and dignity of older persons, including through a stronger legal framework, must become part of the paradigm shift in our recovery efforts. We need to build back a more inclusive, equal, age-friendly, and resilient society to fulfil our promise of leaving no one behind.

In recent years, Slovenia has been involved in a number of activities related to ageing and the rights of older persons:

- Slovenia was among the main supporters of the appointment of an independent expert on the rights of older persons to the UN Human Rights

¹ <https://www.who.int/ageing/ageism/campaign/en/>

Council (UNHCR). In 2014, the independent expert made her first country visit in Slovenia.

- In 2016 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia held a conference titled “Ageing: Rights for Empowerment”, which addressed human rights in relation to ageing. It was the first intersessional meeting of this nature, followed by conferences in Santiago and Vienna in the years that followed.
- Slovenia is contributing regularly to the debate on the human rights of older persons in all relevant UN forms. Together with Argentina, Slovenia established a group of friends of the rights of older persons in Geneva. Slovenia is also a member of a similar group of friends, which operates in New York.
- In cooperation with the OECD, in 2018 Slovenia hosted a High-Level Conference on Policies for Equal Ageing: A Life-Course Approach. The OECD has been monitoring and addressing global demographic changes in various fields, especially in the context of the related changes that are needed in economic and social policy.
- In order to raise awareness of the challenges faced by older persons to their full enjoyment of human rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia prepared an exhibition entitled "AGEING. A society for all" in 2018. The exhibited images highlighted the importance of non-discrimination and the inclusion of the older persons in society, thus strengthening intergenerational coexistence. The exhibition has been presented in several countries in recent years.

1.3. The most important policy achievement during the last 20 years to contribute to empowering individuals to realize their potential for physical, mental and social well-being throughout their lives and to participate in and contribute to society.

In Slovenia, significant shifts were made in society regarding the understanding of older persons and their potential, which is also the result of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA RIS).

In the past, one of the most significant steps to a different understanding of older persons and ageing Slovenia undertook was the adoption of the comprehensive Strategy for Protection of Older People up to 2010 – solidarity, coexistence and quality ageing of the population from 2006, which planned to ensure the conditions for quality ageing and care for the rapidly growing proportion of the third generation, and increase solidarity and quality of interpersonal coexistence between the older, middle and young generation. Unlike the previous documents that focused primarily on social affairs, this Strategy comprised an interdepartmental document. A Council for Solidarity between Generations and for Quality Ageing of the Population was established on the basis of this Strategy. This Council was responsible for implementing this Strategy. The Council’s chair, in contrast to other councils, was not a government representative but a representative of the older generation, which was a major recognition for older persons.

The new Active Ageing Strategy from 2017 offers solutions for existing trends while simultaneously taking account of the new trends that will shape our society's future. In this Strategy older persons are not understood as those who need help, care and protection, but instead as a category of people with still much to offer society. At the same time, the Strategy expects the proper response from society, one that will facilitate active and dignified ageing.

Other notable achievements over the last 20 years in Slovenia were the integration of older persons in social life, in deciding on matters involving older persons and in drafting of laws relating to older persons, etc. Representatives of non-governmental organisations working with older persons often express very critical views of the proposed solutions, which undoubtedly contributes to higher-quality solutions.

2. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work

2.1. Measures for recognizing the potential embedded in the employment of older workers and developing labour market strategies to promote maximum participation opportunities for workers of all ages

In the labour market, older persons are categorised within the vulnerable group of people with a high risk of long-term unemployment, as they can also experience other problems that pose an obstacle to seeking employment (low level of education, health problems, a lack of skills for today's labour market, etc.). Therefore, older persons are defined as a priority category for most active employment policy measures.

The proportion of older unemployed people (aged 50 and more) included in active employment policy measure programmes has been growing significantly in recent years, standing at 26–29% in 2021. During the period 2018–2021, more than 27,600 persons aged 50 or more were included in the active employment policy measures, which accounts for 27.3% of the total people included. The active employment policy programmes not only provide older persons with incentives for employment, but also training possibilities and lifelong learning, which is an important element to increase their employability. Older persons mostly join programmes that provide their employer an employment subsidy (Zaposli.me programme) and public works, while inclusion in various informal training and education programmes, which enable reskilling and upskilling, is also increasing.

Many workers depart the labour market before reaching their retirement age, which is why measures to maintain the activity of older persons are required. To this end, Slovenia carried out a special programme “Active until retirement” in the period 2018–2020. The programme's target group were older persons aged 58 or more, aiming to provide permanent employment or employment until retirement. A total of 992 unemployed older persons were included in this programme and gained employment with a subsidy for the employer.

The “ASI project – Companies' comprehensive support for the active ageing of the workforce” is also an important active employment activity in Slovenia. The ASI project contributes to implementing good and effective management of older employees and

improving older people's position in the labour market. The project focuses on employers gaining competencies in 'managing' older workforce, the elimination of stereotypes and strengthening older employees' competencies. A total of 20,000 older employees over 45 years of age are expected to join various training and motivational programmes over the entire period of project implementation. The project's target groups include employers, older employees, as well as representatives from the media, professional public, chambers, and associations. A number of activities are being carried out within the ASI project: the development of standards, tools and practices, and the preparation of a catalogue of measures for the effective 'management' of older employees, the holding of workshops and support for employers in drafting and implementing strategies, pilot projects for the development and introduction of innovative solutions to preserve commitment, productivity and performance of older employees, and also a media campaign for the greater employability of older workers.

In Slovenia, lifelong learning is also established (through the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, the Slovenian Third Age University, people's universities, schools, and adult education centers), in which participants from all age groups can use their potential and increase their competences for various purposes. In the past, learning for work, foreign languages and courses for personal growth have been in demand, while in recent years training in digital skills and in the use of ICT is gaining on popularity, especially for the older population.

In 2022, the Act on Promoting Digital Inclusion was also adopted, which will prioritize the training in basic digital skills for young people, such as pupils and students, as well as older persons. The Act also introduces digital vouchers for the purchase of computer equipment.

One way of contributing to extending a person's working life could also be the result of the pension legislation. The amendment to the Pension and Disability Insurance Act (ZPIZ-2) encourages the extension of employment, particularly through so-called "bonuses". This is an incentive-based method of extending a person's employment status, even after them meeting their requirements for old-age retirement, and of preventing premature retirement. Employees who meet the requirements for old-age retirement and nevertheless continue to work can thus take advantage of the benefits provided for this purpose by the legislation:

1. Payment of 40% in the first three years or 20% of the old-age pension after three years is earmarked as an incentive to stay employed for those who, after meeting the requirements for old-age pension, continue to work full time, which allows them to increase their pension. There is also the possibility to claim a higher assessment rate for workers who reach the retirement age requirement of 60 years and also 40 years of pensionable service without buy-back and continue to work full time, but no more than up to three consecutive years of insurance. Each additional year of completed pensionable service is assessed to ensure that six months of pensionable service is assessed as 1.5%.
2. By incentivising the extension of partial activity, employees can be paid a 'partial pension' when they meet the requirements for old-age pension. They must

remain employed for a minimum of 2 hours per day or 10 hours a week and receive a partial pension for the remainder. If they remain employed for at least 4 hours a day or 20 hours a week, the partial pension increases additionally by a proportionate part of the 40% old-age pension.

After recognising the urgency for changes to pension and disability insurance, Slovenia also incorporated the need for amendments to this area in the Recovery and Resilience National Plan, in the scope of which the Slovenian government made a commitment to examine the possibility of implementing the OECD recommendations it received in dialogue with its social partners. In accordance with the commitments undertaken in the scope of the national plan, Slovenia will thus carry out a process of raising public awareness about the significance of pension insurance and the urgency of the adjustments thereto. In the beginning of 2023, a proposal for amendments to pension legislation is expected to be drafted in order to ensure fiscal sustainability and suitable pensions.

In terms of work activity, the Advocate of the Principle of Equality² reported on a number of instances when they had to intervene in the drafting of laws and also during their implementation, such as:

Advocate's assessment of the discriminatory character of regulation in 2021: Dismissal of workers who meet the conditions for old-age retirement without giving reasons constitutes discrimination³. Based on complaints received from several trade unions, the Advocate assessed the discriminatory character of Articles 21 and 22 of the Act Determining Intervention Measures to Assist in Mitigating the Consequences of the Second Wave of the COVID-19 Epidemic, which allowed employers to dismiss, without giving reasons, only workers who had reached 60 years of age and had 40 years of pensionable service, or 65 years of age and had 15 years of pensionable service. In the proceedings, the Advocate found that such a regulation was discriminatory and violated several articles of the Constitution, as it interfered with the right to protection against direct discrimination on the grounds of age, in dismissal and on the security of tenure of employment. He submitted a request to the Constitutional Court, which has the final decision on whether a regulation is unconstitutional or not, to assess the constitutionality of these two articles. During the parliamentary procedure for adopting this intervention law, the Advocate had already recommended that MPs and the Government reconsider and carry out a proportionality test of the then still proposed regulation. The Constitutional Court, in its Decision No U-I-16/21-17 and U-I-27/21-12 of 18 November 2021, ruled that the measure was inconsistent with Article 8 of the Constitution.

²For more on the Equality Advocate see page 17 (section 3.1)

³All Advocate's assessments of the discriminatory character of regulations in Slovene language are available at: <https://www.zagovornik.si/ocene-diskriminatornosti/>.

2.2. Special measures to close the gender pay and pension gap as well to take into account the special situation of older women

For the implementation of gender equality in practice, including the provision of equal pay for men and women, various measures and activities are being implemented by the Government of Republic of Slovenia, relevant ministries, and other important stakeholders. For example, the implementation of equal pay is encouraged by the annual observation of European Equal Pay Day, when the attention of experts and broader public to the gender pay gap in Slovenia and the EU is drawn by the MLFSA. A handbook on the implementation of the right to equal pay, written by the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia in cooperation with the Women's Lobby of Slovenia, was also issued. The handbook provides examples of the gender pay gap in Slovenia, including possible solutions and instructions to employees on how to take action in this regard.

Since one of the reasons for the existing pay gap is the unbalanced distribution of care and household chores between partners, the MLFSA dedicates great attention to this matter. For example, the project "Active Dad", co-funded by the European Union, is being implemented. Its main purpose is to help raise awareness among (prospective) parents, employers, the professional staff, and general public about the importance of active fatherhood, and more equal distribution of parental care between partners. The overall goal of the project is the reduction of the deep-rooted inequalities that still persist between men and women in relation to paid or unpaid work, the uptake of family-related leave, and to enabling people with care-taking responsibilities to better balance their work with family commitments. In 2019 the development of a Corporate Social Responsibility Certificate was co-financed by the MLFSA and the European Social Fund which will, among other areas, help to promote and implement measures and best practices regarding non-discrimination in the working environment and reconciliation of professional and private life.

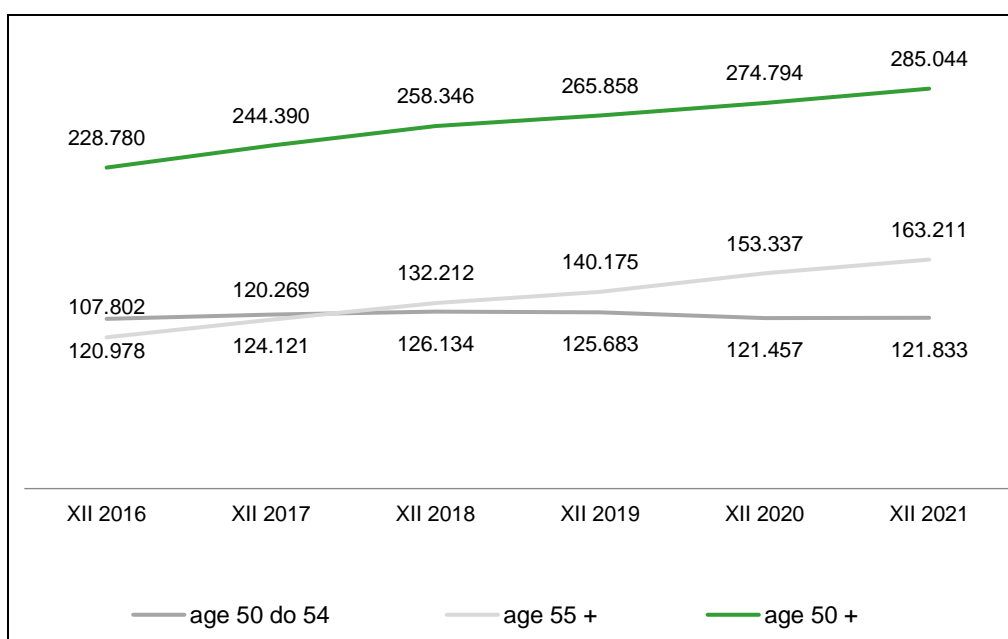
Furthermore, in 2019, 2020 and 2021 the project "My Work.My Pension" was implemented by the MLFSA and co-funded by the European Union from the Program for Rights, Equality and Citizenship. It aims to raise awareness about the national pension system and the pension gap between men and women. As the pension gap is the result of the pay gap and other inequalities accumulated during a person's professional activity over their lifespan, the project also addresses and draws attention to the pay gap between men and women.

The amendment to the Pension and Disability Insurance Act (ZPIZ-2G), which entered into force on 1 January 2020, introduced the right to an additional percentage in the assessment of pensions for childcare. An insured person who has fulfilled the conditions for acquiring the right to an early, old-age or invalidity pension shall, due to the care of every child born or adopted who is a citizen of the European Union and cared for in the first year of their life, receive an additional pension assessment of at least 1.36%, but not more than 4.08%. As a rule, a woman is entitled to an additional assessment percentage, unless the right to parental benefit has been enjoyed by her male partner for at least 120 days, which is mutually agreed upon for each individual child. In the absence of an amicable decision, the parent who has largely exercised the right to parental leave is entitled to an additional assessment percentage.

2.3. The most important achievement during the last 20 years in recognizing the potential embedded in the employment of older workers and developing labour market strategies to promote maximum participation opportunities for workers of all ages

In Slovenia, the number of the older persons active in the labour market has increased significantly over the last decade (Graph 5), which is attributed to the pension reform with stricter retirement requirements, active employment policy measures and the fact that the generations with a lower employment rate are gradually leaving the labour market. Ensuring balance between the legal protection of those already employed, the adjustment of work conditions to suit older persons and promoting the reintegration of unemployed older persons in the labour market is of key importance for older persons.

Graph 5: Employment of people, age 50+



Source: The Employment Service of Slovenia

“The comprehensive support of companies for the active ageing of the workforce” programme, which improves the position of older employees in the labour market by proper management, will be carried out until 2022.

In accordance with the amending act to the Pension and Disability Insurance Act, older persons are stimulated to maintain full-time employment even after reaching 65 years of age or fulfilling the requirements for old-age or premature retirement. In this way, older persons remain in the workforce and also receive 40%-20% of their pension, as described before.

The employment of older persons in the period 2016–2019 was also incentivised by the Labour Market Intervention Measures Act, which afforded employers an exemption from the payment of social security contributions upon the employment of older unemployed persons.

The Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia upgraded the provision of services for the activation of older unemployed persons as soon as the need arises. It carried out a number of training courses for consultants for effective work with older unemployed persons (identification of obstacles and needs, motivation, raising awareness about older people's involvement in the labour market, the identification of competences, knowledge, skills, and the gaining of skills to empower older long-term unemployed persons).

Mandatory registration in the register of jobseekers and in active employment policy measures already during the period of notice was introduced. More intense involvement of employer liaison offices with companies in the event of layoffs of a small number of employees is also especially important for quicker integration.

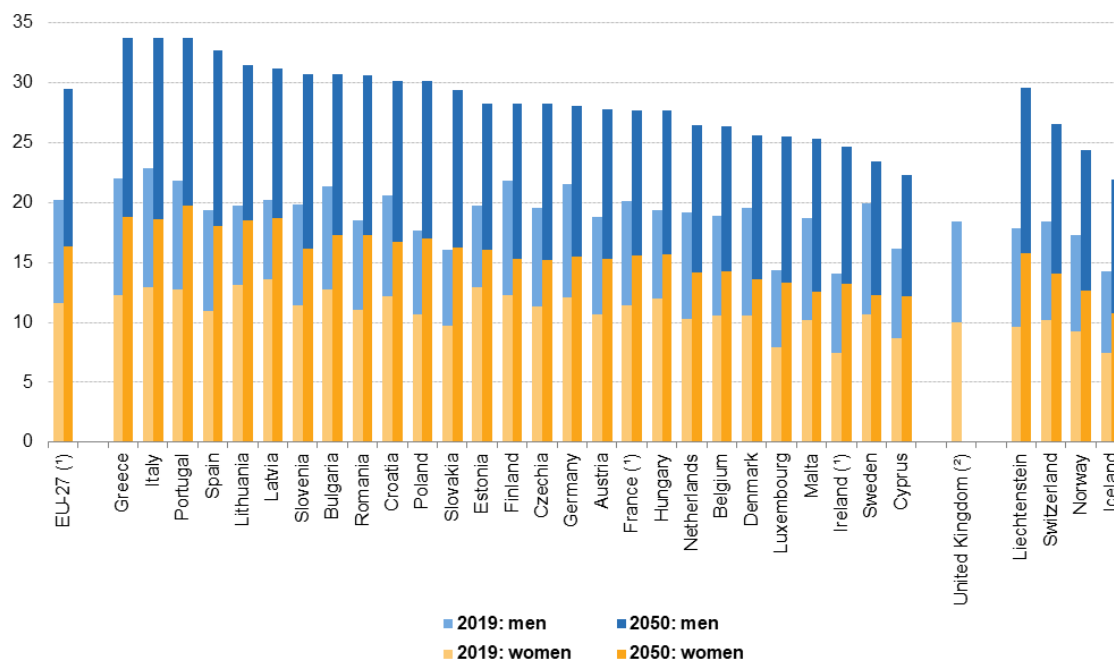
Additional measures to ensure that older persons remain fully employed for a longer period of time are also being planned, such as the management of various employee age groups, the adjustment of jobs and lifelong learning to gain the appropriate modern skills.

According to demographic projections, Slovenia is one of the EU countries facing the greatest challenges with regard to an ageing population (Graph 6).

Graph 6: People aged 65 years or more, by sex, 2019 and 2050

People aged ≥65 years, by sex, 2019 and 2050

(% share of total population)



(*) 2019: estimates and/or provisional.

(*) 2050: not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: demo_pjangroup and proj_19np)



Source: Eurostat.

Despite significant progress in recent years, the employment rate of older workers in Slovenia is still low compared to the EU average (2015: 36.6% (EU: 53.3%), 2018: 47.0% (EU: 58, 7%)). Nevertheless, employment in the 50-59 age group has improved significantly over the last two decades. Between 2000 and 2019, the employment of men

in the 50-54 age group increased by 9 percentage points to 87%, well above the OECD average. Over the same period and in the same age group, the female employment rate increased even more, by 35 percentage points, to 86% compared to the OECD average of 75%.

The average age of men leaving the labour market (retiring) has been steadily rising from around 57 in the late 1990s to 61.5 in 2020. During the same period, the average age of women leaving the labour market has increased from about 54 to 60.5 years. The period for receiving pensions has also been extended.

From the point of view of improving the adequacy of pensions in recent years, we can point out the introduction of a higher accrual rate for 40 years of pension period for both sexes (63.5% of the pension base). Due to the increase in the accrual rate, all pensions increased in 2022. Several measures were also taken to improve social security for recipients of low pensions. Thus, the new amount of the minimum (old-age, early or disability) pension and of the guaranteed pension has been determined, as well as the newly introduced category of the lowest disability pension. All these three safeguard amounts are adjusted in the same way as pensions. An additional accrual rate in the amount of 1,36% was also introduced for one of the parents or a person who takes care of a child and is a recipient of a parental benefit.

3. Ensuring ageing with dignity

3.1. Measures to protect older persons' enjoyment of all human rights and dignity, promoting their autonomy, self-determination and participation in society, and making sure that no law, policy or programme leaves room for discrimination of any kind

In 2016, Slovenia adopted the Protection against Discrimination Act (PADA), which determines personal conditions (including age) for which protection against discrimination is ensured and established the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, an independent and autonomous state body mandated to deal with discrimination. In accordance with Article 21 of the Protection Against Discrimination Act, the Advocate's tasks are the following:

- conducting independent research on the position of people with certain personal circumstances, particularly gender, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, and other issues regarding discrimination of people with certain personal circumstances,
- publishing independent reports and making recommendations to state authorities, local communities, holders of public authorisations, employers, business entities and other bodies regarding the established situation of people with certain personal circumstances, i. e. relating to preventing or eliminating discrimination and adopting special and other measures to eliminate discrimination,
- conducting tasks of supervisory inspection on the basis of complaints regarding the observance of the provisions of this or other acts determining the Advocate's competence,

- providing independent assistance to persons subject to discrimination when enforcing their rights regarding protection against discrimination in the form of counselling and legal assistance for clients in other administrative and judicial proceedings related to discrimination,
- raising the general public's awareness on discrimination and measures to prevent it,
- monitoring the general situation in Slovenia as regards protection against discrimination and the situation of people with certain personal circumstances,
- proposing the adoption of special measures to improve the situation of people who are in a less favourable position due to certain personal circumstances,
- participating in judicial proceedings involving discrimination,
- ensuring the exchange of available information on discrimination with bodies of the EU,
- conducting other tasks determined by the PADA.

The competences of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality extend to both the public and private sector. In 2020, the Advocate of the Principle of Equality conducted a public survey titled "Perceptions and Experiences of Discrimination in Slovenia in 2020",⁴ with the aim of monitoring trends regarding discrimination among the general public. One of the survey's purposes was to gain insight into people's attitudes and experiences regarding discrimination. The survey was an upgrade of the survey "Perception of Discrimination in Slovenia - Public Opinion Survey" conducted by the Advocate in 2017⁵. By repeating part of the survey, it wanted to obtain comparative data, thus making it possible to monitor any changes in public opinion over a three-year period.

What follows is an extract of the data from the more recent survey focused on the personal characteristic of age.⁶ 9% of the respondents perceived age as the most common grounds for discrimination in Slovenia, which is one percentage point less than in 2017. Respondents who believed they were subject to discrimination most often consider that the reason was their age (22%), which is three percentage points more than in 2017, when age was also the most common reason.

A total of 87% of the respondents believed that older persons could make a significant contribution to the development of society (only 5% disagreed); 53% thought that older generations are just as capable as younger ones. At the same time, 11% of the respondents in the 2020 survey believed that the older persons are the most frequent targets of discrimination, 7% more than in 2017.

Long-Term Care

Until 2021, when the Long-Term Care Act (LTCA) was adopted, the field of long-term care, was not regulated in a uniform manner in Slovenia. Various services and benefits

⁴Executive summary in English is part of Advocate's Annual Report 2020, pages 143 – 146. Available at: <https://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Redno-letno-porocilo-za-letno-2020-ANNUAL-REPORT-2019-SYSTEMIC-OVERVIEW.pdf>.

⁵Available in Slovene language at: <https://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Raziskovalno-poro%C4%8Dilo--Javnomnenjska-raziskava-Percepcija-diskriminacije-v-RS-2017.pdf>.

⁶Available in English language, pages 72 and 73: <https://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ANNUAL-REPORT-2019-%E2%80%93-CASES-AND-ISSUES.pdf>.

that in accordance with international definitions are categorised as long-term care were provided in the past in the scope of social- and health-care pillars and on the basis of a number of different laws. During this time, certain user needs already outgrew the solutions that the existing legal framework facilitated. We are faced with the fragmentation and inequality in access to the services that are provided at home or through institutions. Cash benefits and services can be very different for people with the same needs due to different terms of access. Institutional care is prevalent, while home care is less frequent.

With the new LTCA, Slovenia confirmed its strategic orientation towards the increased integration of healthcare and social services in the development of different forms of long-term care and greater support for independent living at home. The Act's adoption provided the basis for initiating the integrated provision of long-term care services, where people with comparable needs also enjoy comparable rights. The new LTCA will also provide greater support to non-formal caregivers (training, counselling), new services (services for strengthening and maintaining independence and financing basic e-care), and public control. Long-term care services will be financed from public funds, both at home and at institutions.

It is key that systemic solutions meet the needs of citizens and are accessible and available, and that those citizens who can no longer take care of themselves have the possibility of making the right choice between various forms of services and rights. This Act will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the more dignified ageing of older persons who require assistance from others.

Dementia

Society's attitude to people suffering from dementia, most of whom are older, contributes significantly to the concept of dignified ageing. Slovenia adopted its first Strategy for dealing with dementia in 2016, and a new strategy, which has been drafted and is awaiting adoption, emphasises the importance of strengthening factors to reduce the risk of developing dementia, ensuring early and timely diagnosis and treatment, improving access to appropriate and coordinated post-diagnostic, multidisciplinary treatment, including services adapted for people with dementia, support for families and informal carers, access to palliative care, etc.

Considering that most people with dementia live at home, the aim of development is to expand social services in communities and adapt them to people with dementia. People suffering from dementia need services that are tailored to their needs and above all more opportunities for day care and temporary accommodation. The new strategy in institutional care aims to increase the number of beds adapted for dementia patients and to supplement the approaches of working with people suffering from dementia to include periods when infectious diseases are prevalent (COVID-19 pandemic). The new strategy prioritises additional services such as post-diagnostic support, psychological support, visits by mobile teams and strengthening additional activities (e. g. exercises to strengthen the memory, preserve thought capabilities and movement, etc.). The aim is also to increase the amount of information, education, advice, and the number of volunteers and self-help groups for people with dementia and their families. The strategy

will also concretely address the challenge of providing appropriate care for people with dementia during an epidemic. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in mental problems and loneliness, especially in people with dementia, resulting from restrictions on movement and the prohibition of visits and socialising in institutional care.

Human rights of older persons

Slovenia is committed to addressing human rights at different stages of life, so one of its priorities is to address the rights of older persons adequately. Population ageing and the consequent demographic changes are becoming phenomena of both the developed and developing worlds. While changes always bring new challenges, shifts in demographics also bring new opportunities. Slovenia is committed to eradicating all forms of discrimination against older persons and pays special attention to eradicating discrimination against older women. In doing so, Slovenia has always defended the position that the welfare of older persons and the implementation of existing regulations are the basic duty of the state.

An important contribution to dignified ageing also includes an upgrade to spatial planning and construction legislation, namely to facilitate the simpler renovation of single-apartment and multi-apartment buildings (renovations, obtaining consent), which will especially make it easier for older persons to continue living in their home environments for longer.

The Advocate of the Principle of Equality lists a number of examples when it intervened in the drafting or implementation of legislation. Among other things it gave recommendations regarding the implementation of detailed standards for institutional care for older persons. In 2019 the Advocate recommended that the MLFSA immediately adopts detailed provisions regarding different types of care and criteria for determining the types of care according to the care needs of all residents in care homes for older persons (i.e., their assistance in maintaining personal hygiene and performing daily activities like getting up, getting dressed, moving, walking, communicating). In 2022, the proposal for standards is in the procedure of adoption.

In 2021 regarding the Draft of the LTCA the Advocate recommended that the wording of the legislation should better respect the right to equal treatment and also prohibit discrimination in the use of long-term care services. He recommended that the draft Act should be amended to define the right to long-term care as such, to break down its fundamental elements, and thus to allow for its protection, as is the case for other human rights. It also recommended the introduction of appropriate remedies for cases where services are not deemed to be of an adequate standard by the persons concerned. The Advocate also pointed out that the draft Act lacks a more detailed explanation of the differences between the right to long-term care and the right to personal assistance. The recommendation was partially taken into account.

3.2. The most important achievement during the last 20 years to protect older persons' enjoyment of all human rights and to raise quality standards for integrated social and long-term care and health services as well as adapting the status, training and working conditions of professional care workers.

In the past 20 years in Slovenia, a change has become evident in understanding older persons' role as well as a change in the way they are perceived. Older persons are less frequently perceived as needing help, care and protection, and society is increasingly becoming aware that old age is not just a period of decline, illness and the need for long-term care.

Moreover, we need to look at older persons in terms of their past contribution to the development of society, as well as their current role in society, especially as carriers of traditions, values and knowledge and important stakeholders in intergenerational cooperation. That is why Slovenian society increasingly sees older persons as a group that can still offer much to society, so everything must be done to enable them to enjoy an active and dignified ageing and to protect their human rights. We dedicate special attention regarding human rights and dignified ageing in Slovenia to those who need the help of other people.

In 2021, Slovenia adopted the LTCA, which combines the fields of healthcare and general care. By consolidating the previous partial solutions, the Act significantly facilitates access to care and reduces the financial burden on users. In the procedure of adoption are higher Standards for the staff of institutional care providers, while Rules for monitoring and developing quality indicators are also being prepared. In 2022, all the relevant regulations and rules will be drafted, and the system infrastructure of long-term care will also be adjusted (adaptation of IT support, setting up of entry points to the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia, staff training, etc.). The system infrastructure for providing long-term care is therefore expected to be operational from 2023 onwards.

Older persons are also beginning to see themselves and their age in a different way. It is no coincidence that the older persons at the Third Age Festival (the most important annual event in Slovenia on the subject of ageing and intergenerational cooperation) decided they do not want to be called elderly but older or older persons.

Another contribution by Slovenia to developing a different view of older people was the international conference in 2021 entitled Human Rights for All Ages – Promoting a Life-Course Perspective and Intergenerational Cooperation to Combat Ageism.

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. Submission of the voluntary national report(s) (VNR) to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the implementation of the SDGs

The Slovenian government implemented the first voluntary national review of the realisation of Agenda 2030 in the second year of the Agenda's validity and presented it

in New York in July 2017. In 2018, the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy issued an updated version of a short review of the realisation of Agenda 2030 at the national level, with an emphasis on connecting the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, adopted in December 2017, and the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. The review also includes updated international indexes for the fulfilment of targets and a selection of examples of good practice, which exemplify the concrete steps Slovenia is already taking towards gradually realising the Sustainable Development Goals in different areas and in different sectors.

In 2020, Slovenia presented national efforts to realise the 17 sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030 for the second time. Since the last report, Slovenia has recorded progress in approaching almost all goals. We should emphasise progress regarding goal 1 – eradicating all forms of poverty. In three years the at-risk-of-poverty rate and the level of social exclusion have fallen from 19.2% to 16.2%. In three years, the proportion of agricultural land being used for organic production has grown. The quantity of municipal waste being recycled has also increased and progress has also been recorded in other areas. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the report has, in line with the UN initiative, been expanded with an additional chapter on Slovenia's coordinated response to COVID-19 and its connection with Agenda 2030.

1.2. Established links between ageing issues and the 2030 Agenda within the national political planning

Slovenia ascribes great importance to the social aspects and concerns regarding the ageing population. A dignified life for all and an improvement in the quality of life are one of the priorities of the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. This matter is addressed through different areas. Special attention is dedicated in Slovenia to accessible and high-quality public services for all, which has been evident in the rapid and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The adopted measures have helped all social groups get through the crisis: workers, the self-employed, farmers, pensioners, students, and many others who were most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Slovenia also provides special support to older persons, especially those with the lowest pensions. One of Slovenia's contributions to sustainable development was its introduction of free public transport for all older persons in 2020 and onwards.

In the second VNR, under Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth, we presented Active employment policy as an example of good practice, and it is already presented in more detail in this report. For more information concerning the Voluntary National Review see: <https://slovenia2030.si/>.

1.3. The most relevant SDGs which could be nourished by current policy measures

In 2022 Slovenia is establishing closer cooperation between the areas of MIPAA/RIS and SDGs.

From the point of view of public health, the Slovenian Strategy for Active Ageing includes certain targets (Sustainable Development Goals) to support the implementation of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing. Preventing the poverty of older persons (SDG1); ensuring a healthy diet and physical activity (SDG2); preventing specific health problems of older persons such as dementia, falls, incontinence and weakness, and providing a good system of healthcare and long-term care (SDG3); providing pre-retirement seminars with healthcare themes, broad and attractive possibilities for lifelong learning and the transfer of knowledge to younger generations via mentorship schemes (SDG4); implementing equal opportunities for both sexes (SDG5); with special emphasis on ensuring goal-oriented measures for socio-economic groups of older persons who are in greater need of them (SDG10); empowering communities to develop into a friendly environment for older persons, especially in remote areas (SDG11); reducing the amount of age-related discrimination and increasing the political activity of older persons (SDG16).

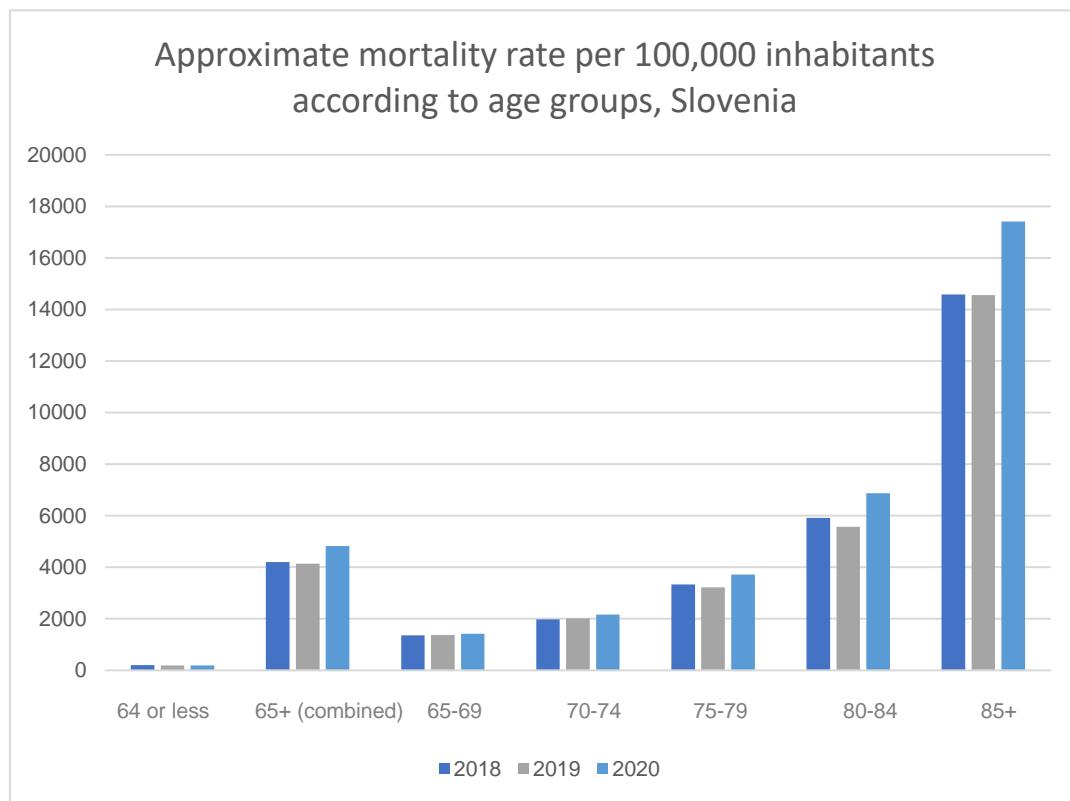
2. Lessons learnt from managing the consequences and impacts for older people in emergency situations: the COVID-19 pandemic

2.1. The impact of COVID-19 on older people

Older persons in Slovenia have by all means been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, mortality increased especially in the over 65 age group (Graph 7), while in the younger age groups it remained the same as in previous years. Excess mortality in 2020 is therefore primarily linked to the older generation and the main reason for the high level of excess mortality is COVID-19, directly and indirectly. The highest excess mortality was recorded in the over 85 age group, as in 2020 the number of people in this age group that died was 25% greater than in the previous year.

Graph 7: Approximate mortality rate per 100,000 inhabitants according to age groups, Slovenia.

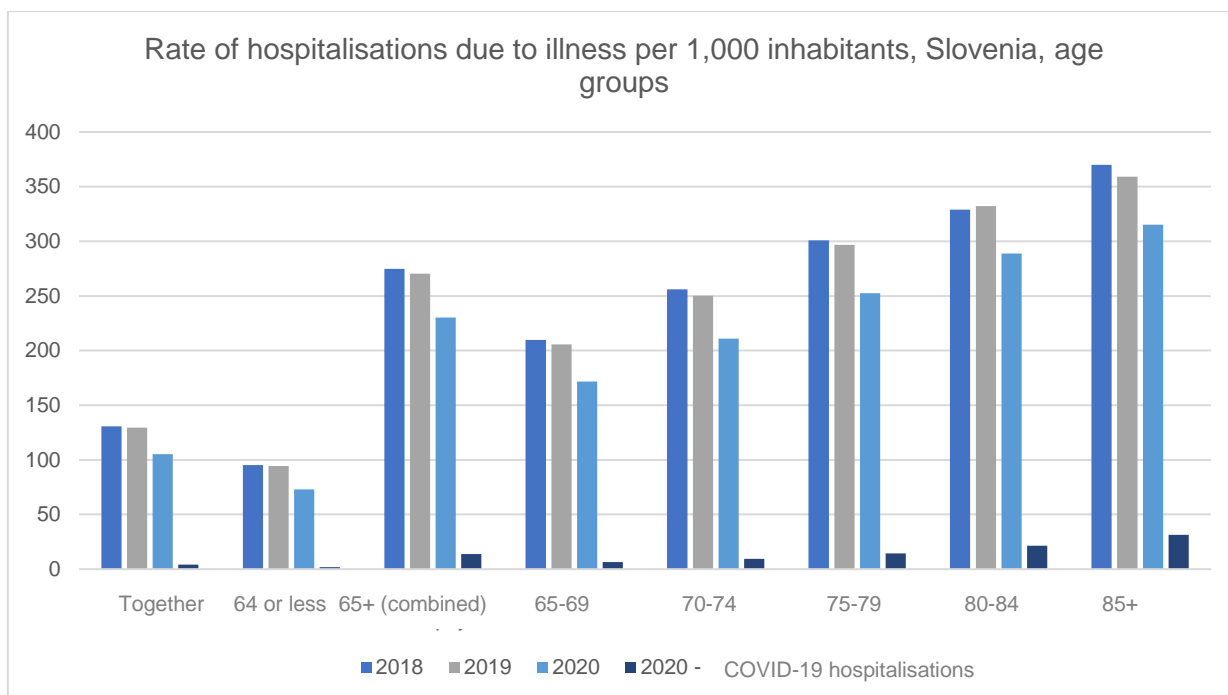


Source: National Institute of Public Health.

There was also a difference in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic between those older persons living at home and those in institutional care, as infection with COVID-19 was greatest in institutional care, primarily due to a lack of knowledge on how to prevent the virus entering the institution and the infection spreading amongst residents, as well as problems connected with a lack of space and staff, which already existed prior to the pandemic. Later, especially in 2021, the situation improved considerably thanks to the experience acquired, the measures implemented and the priority introduction of vaccination in institutional care.

In 2020, in Slovenia, the number of people hospitalised due to illness fell by 18% compared to previous years (2018-2019), despite the new hospitalisations connected with COVID-19. In 2020, the number of hospitalisations due to other illnesses fell because of the cancellation of some other services and treatments in hospitals, which was a consequence of the pandemic (Graph 8). We can therefore say that as a result of poorer access to the healthcare system, we can expect an increase in chronic illnesses, as well as a deterioration thereof in the older population in the period following the pandemic.

Graph 8: Rate of hospitalisations due to illness per 1,000 inhabitants, Slovenia, age groups



Source: National Institute of Public Health.

2.2. Commitment to dignity and the right to health when making health-care decisions affecting older people?

Older persons in Slovenia have the right to a dignified and full life. During the COVID-19 pandemic older persons were one of the most vulnerable groups, frequently due to already existing health problems and also due to measures adopted to fight the pandemic. The measures adopted to mitigate the spread of infections (e. g. social distancing, temporary closure of nursing homes, limited access to certain services etc.) had a sharp impact on older persons. In addition to curtailing contact with friends and family, the COVID-19 pandemic also caused a fall in the quality of life for older persons (especially in terms of physical activity)⁷. In addition, many institutions active in the field of social security and healthcare also suffered restrictions due to a lack of or reallocation of staff. Meanwhile, older persons who live alone faced challenges in carrying out their daily tasks, difficulties maintaining their social circle due to various restrictions, etc. Digital healthcare and outpatient clinic care were available only to a limited extent and for a limited group of people.

Slovenia has tackled the COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of ways. It facilitated the daily monitoring of infections, healthcare services issued instructions and recommendations, the “Stay Healthy” app was introduced, the accessibility of e-services was improved (e. g. e-Health), the government’s COVID-19 call centre was established, governmental and

⁷ Research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lifestyles (SI-PANDA): <https://www.nijz.si/sl/raziskava-o-vplivu-pandemije-na-zivljenje-si-panda-20202021>

nongovernmental organisations that offered support to older persons in various ways were connected, etc.

Older persons often did not have access to digital solutions (ICT) and therefore encountered additional restrictions in social interaction with other groups of people.

Ever since the beginning of the pandemic, all people who fall ill with COVID-19 were to receive healthcare treatment, regardless of their age. As the largest number of infections occurred in nursing homes, the most important tasks during the pandemic were preventing the entry and transmission of the virus among residents and employees. During the pandemic it became evident that many nursing homes are not adapted to modern concepts of work and are unsuitable for providing safe care in the event of infections, so social security providers received all recommendations and instructions from the competent ministries, which were constantly in touch with nursing home management teams by means of videoconferences throughout the duration of the pandemic. During the first wave, the measures aimed to provide sufficient quantities of personal protection equipment, and to train people for operating in pandemic conditions, while in the other waves, the measures aimed at employing additional staff in the care sector, introducing wage supplements for staff working in difficult conditions and the possibility of organising different zones for better infection management, as well as promoting vaccination.

The Advocate of the Principle of Equality conducted research in order to obtain information on the perception of older persons regarding the actual situation in care homes, since there was a high proportion of deaths among their residents as compared to the general population after the spread of COVID-19 in homes for older people during the first wave of pandemic (between 6 March and 30 April 2020). The aim of the survey was primarily to secure a co-operative process for and with the residents of the care homes by inviting them to actively participate in research activities.

The online survey and interviews showed that the measures to protect residents from the spread of COVID-19 had serious impact on their health and well-being and affected their rights and benefits. In some cases, residents were forced to stay in their rooms for extended periods, which negatively affected their physical and mental well-being. They suffered from social distancing and reportedly felt like they were being held in prison. Some died without saying goodbye to their families. Communication via telephone and other technical means was not an option for some, as they were unable to use the devices or did not have access to them.

Directors and professionals of care homes for older persons and representatives of civil service organizations stated that specialist medical examinations, physiotherapy, and occupational therapies were less accessible to residents in this period. They also expressed the view that the measures imposed to combat the spread of COVID-19 severely contested human and constitutional rights of the residents, such as the right to free movement, family life, equal medical treatment, health, inviolability of the home and the right to effective legal protection.

Many consequences of the problems faced by residents of homes were the result of thirty years of inadequate approaches to institutional and non-institutional care.

As such, the care homes for older persons did not have enough capacity to adequately accommodate the residents to prevent the spread of the virus. Another problem was the shortage of staff. The homes thus had to reduce or completely stop the implementation of therapies and other services, which significantly affected residents' health and well-being.

Based on the study's findings, the Advocate emphasized that in the event of new measures intended to prevent the spread of COVID-19, they should be introduced for the shortest possible periods of time, and in a manner that would affect the rights and the position of home residents as little as possible.

The Advocate also drew attention to the danger of discriminatory practices in drafting legislation in connection with mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. His proposal that the Government should use all available resources and measures to ensure consistent and early vaccination of the most vulnerable groups, especially older persons and those with chronic diseases, was taken into account. In doing so, it should also ensure that the right to equal treatment of the population, regardless of their place of residence, is respected.

2.3. Strengthening social inclusion and solidarity during physical distancing

The onset of the COVID-19 disease triggered the adoption of various measures aimed at limiting the infection rate. These measures had a far-reaching impact on people's lives, including older persons and especially those who were already socially isolated, in poor health or with low income. Older persons were affected by a reduction in public services and the loss of social infrastructure (social clubs, day centres, libraries etc.). Some older persons who could use ICT solutions and previously had a broad social circle found it easier to face the pandemic and the related measures, while for others it was more difficult.

Through various activities, Slovenia actively worked to strengthen the meaning of social inclusion and solidarity during the period of social distancing. In addition to various recommendations and advice for older persons in different media during the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health experts were available for psychological support, and psychosocial support was offered to residents via various newly established telephone numbers. The ČvekiFON was established specially for older persons – a free chatroom to help people connect and socialise⁸. An important role in solving the problems faced by older persons was also played by various NGOs, ZDUS (Older people for older people), the Civil Protection Service, the Slovene Red Cross, Karitas of Slovenia, local communities and volunteers.

An example of good practice in Slovenia is that of the Soča Valley Development Centre, which responded rapidly to the COVID-19 situation in its care for older persons. The centre adapted its existing programme of "Exercises to improve the psychophysical condition of older persons" to promote digital literacy for older persons (teaching them

⁸ <https://www.cepimose.si/nasveti-za-ohranjanje-in-krepitev-zdravja-starostnikov-v-casu-epidemije/>

how to use online tools) so as to remotely continue the programme and improve older users' psychophysical condition, social inclusion and connectedness. The programme is also important for geographically remote areas as all the participants came from small villages where services are difficult to access.

Members of various local initiatives and voluntary organisations all joined in to help especially those who live alone. For example, when the public transport system stopped operating, bus and taxi drivers delivered food to older persons (both humanitarian help and warm meals) and drove them for check-ups at the hospital or to the bank or the pharmacy free of charge.

An evaluation of the measures to limit the spread of infections with COVID-19 in institutions also showed the many negative consequences of these measures, despite the fact that those responsible tried to develop good practices of indirect contact with the external environment and families (contact via telephone and computer) and frequently the setting up of internal television in nursing homes. It became particularly clear that people are social beings who need in-person contact with other people.

Measures restricting physical contact particularly affected people suffering from dementia. During the period of mass infections, there was a marked reduction in activities intended for people with dementia. The content of the new Strategy for dealing with dementia, which is under preparation, will particularly emphasise such situations and the experience we have gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another example of good practice is the cooperation between the Institute for Economic Development and the National Institute of Public health, which cooperated in launching a podcast on inequalities in healthcare, which was recorded for the WHO. The topic focused on why reducing inequalities in healthcare is a priority, particularly in the time of COVID-19⁹.

2.4. Integrating the focus on older persons into the socioeconomic and humanitarian response to COVID-19

In the introduction to the report, we wrote that in Slovenia pensions, and also social transfers, are very important to reduce poverty. In the time of COVID-19, a better quality of life for older persons was additionally supported by "holiday vouchers", for example. The voucher issued in 2020 was intended to mitigate the epidemic's impact on tourism and to improve the economic situation by encouraging spending in tourism. The voucher issued in 2021 was intended to mitigate the epidemic's impact on food services, tourism, sport and culture, and to improve the economic situation by encouraging consumption on food services, tourism, sport and culture. Both vouchers were very beneficial for the older population, as they could use them for visiting spa-s and other hotel services, as well as for culture, bookshops and restaurants.

Measures that raise pensions and pensioners' welfare in 2021:

⁹ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/podcasts/health-in-europe>.

- The guaranteed pension for a fully completed insurance period of pensionable service has been raised from EUR 567 to EUR 620.
- On 1 May 2021, the lowest pension for those who had paid insurance contributions for 15 years and who are entitled to early retirement, or an old-age or disability pension was raised to 29.5% of the lowest pension base, i. e. to EUR 279.56. This pension will in future be harmonised in the same way as other ordinary pensions.
- A new guaranteed disability pension has been determined (i. e. the lowest disability pension) for all recipients of disability pensions amounting to EUR 388.54 EUR. This pension will be harmonised in the future in the same way as other ordinary pensions.
- An extra accrual rate has been introduced for those who, after fulfilling retirement conditions (without buy-back), continue working or reactivate themselves, amounting to 1.5% per six months of up to 3 years supplementary inclusion in compulsory pension insurance scheme.
- The possibility has also been introduced of implementing an additional accrual percentage for caring for children, amounting to 1.36%, and no more than 4.08%. The insured person may apply for a reduced age limit to acquire rights to an old-age pension or an additional accrual percentage.
- Instead of in 2025, the higher percentage for men amounting to 63.5% will apply in its entirety already in 2023.

In 2020 and 2021 all pensioners received a one-time solidarity bonus averaging around EUR 220, depending on the pension. Vulnerable groups, including many older persons, received an additional solidarity bonus amounting to EUR 150.

In 2020/2021 the National Institute of Public Health carried out an online survey on the impact of the pandemic on lifestyles SI-PANDA. Within the framework of the ASTAHG project it carried out an international meeting entitled “Supporting older people in remote areas in the time of Covid-19” and prepared an article for EuroHealthNet magazine entitled “Supporting older people in remote areas in a post COVID-19 time”. In September 2021, the first Scientific Conference on Public Health and COVID-19 was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. This stems from the project entitled “Measures to manage COVID-19 with an emphasis on older persons”.

2.5. What has been done to expand participation by older persons, share good practices and harness knowledge and data?

Slovenia faces many challenges in terms of active and healthy ageing. Through suitable policies and in cooperation with the national and local environment, NGOs and other stakeholders, appropriate responses for the protection of older persons in the time of crises, such as COVID-19 can be prepared. Undoubtedly, Slovenia has also confirmed the importance of active and healthy ageing during the Slovenian presidency of the EU with the signing of the Trio Presidency Declaration on Ageing, in which Slovenia undertakes that “the Slovenian presidency will promote the life-course approach to

ageing by giving it a prominent role in the organised discussions". Consequently, an international conference entitled "Human Rights for All Ages: Promoting a Life-Course Perspective and Intergenerational Cooperation to Combat Ageism" was organised together with the AGE Platform Europe and the Slovene Federation of Pensioners' Associations (ZDUS), so the direct representatives of the older population also had the opportunity to give their opinion and make proposals in the broader international environment, as over 600 representatives of different ministries and non-governmental organisations from around the world participated in the conference.

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

3.1. National Action Plan for the implementation of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030

Slovenia does not consider implementing a specific action plan to implement the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030. Nevertheless, there are a series of activities and programmes that provide support for the WHO's idea of a decade of healthy ageing, which we will list below.

Support of the National Institute of Public Health

The National Institute of Public Health has led and coordinated the project of Active and Healthy Ageing in Slovenia (AHA.SI) with the purpose of preparing the basis for the Strategy of Active Ageing¹⁰. Although the Strategy has already been implemented, the activities of the AHA.SI group are continuing to this day, currently preparing the seventh consecutive report.

The development strategy for the period to 2030

The Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 points out, among other things, that the main segments of society will focus on health consciousness. Reducing inequalities in health is one of the key contemporary challenges for creating the conditions for a high quality of life. The aim is to improve the population's state of health in all regions, particularly among older persons, the socially deprived and the less educated¹¹.

In recent years, activities have expanded to also include the field of inequalities. In 2021 a publication entitled "Inequalities in Health: Future Challenges for Intersectoral Cooperation" was issued. It was prepared by representatives of the Institute for Economic Development, the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, the Institute of Oncology, the IMAD and the National Institute of Public Health, which coordinated the work. The key for a successful implementation of all activities is intersectoral cooperation, which is also key to identifying and reducing inequality in health, which is a phenomenon that is the result of complex problems at both global and

¹⁰ <http://staranje.si/>

¹¹ https://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/neen_strokovna_monografija_eng_e-verzija_5_7_21_obl_1.pdf

national levels. The publication has a number of chapters that outline the challenges of the older population's inequality.¹²

Website staranje.si

A special group at the National Institute of Public Health looks after the website staranje.si, where it publishes current information regarding active and healthy ageing in Slovenia.

Advisory Committee for the Third Age

In 2021 the Advisory Committee for the Third Age was appointed, which operates within the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. The committee's aim is to discuss data and indicators connected with the older population.

The subject areas that belong to its field of activity include:

- cooperation in forming the content of statistical research dealing with older persons,
- informing of the development of methodologies connected with this area and monitoring changes in legislation that affect the provision of data about this part of the population,
- addressing questions concerning the content of published data concerning older persons.

Also acting as support for the idea of a decade of ageing are the measures from the Strategy for active ageing (described in more detail in section I 1.1., on page 7), the Strategy for dealing with dementia and the Long-Term Care Act (both described in more detail in section II 3.1., on page 18).

3.2. Reporting 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

Slovenia agrees with the proposed cooperation in further reporting on the topic of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030.

The National Institute of Public Health, which supports the domains of the decade of healthy ageing will cooperate in preparing reports on the implementation of activities connected with the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030:

- change how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing,
- ensure that communities foster the abilities of older persons,
- deliver person-centred integrated care and primary health services responsive to older persons,
- provide access to long-term care for older persons who need it.

¹²https://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/neen_strokovna_monografija_eng_e-verzija_5_7_21_obl_1.pdf

Conclusions and priorities for the future

Most of the world is facing the consequences of the change in demographic trends. Ageing of the population requires adjustments in many areas, such as health and social protection systems, labour market and employment services, lifelong learning and active involvement of older persons in the society. On the other hand, ageing also offers many opportunities to individuals and to society at large. Like the rest of the European countries, one of the key challenges Slovenia will face in the future is the ageing of its population.

Major achievements over the 20 years of MIPAA/RIS

To comprehensively address the demographic challenges, the major achievements over the last 20 years in Slovenia have been the adoption of the Active Ageing Strategy, Long-Term Care Act and adjusting the labour market in the field of employment, pension, and disability insurance.

Slovenia has adopted the Active Ageing Strategy in 2017, which offers solutions to existing trends, while taking into account new trends that will shape the future of our society. In line with the Strategy and its implementation, Slovenia has established a Council for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Cooperation in 2018, and an Action Plan with numerous measures was prepared.

One of the biggest achievements in Slovenia, has been the adoption of the Long-Term Care Act in 2021, which provides the basis for the start of an integrated provision of long-term care services, where a person with comparable needs would also have comparable rights. It will also provide greater support for informal carers (training, counselling), new services (services for strengthening and maintaining autonomy and financing e-care) and public oversight.

In recent years, the Slovenian government has implemented several measures in the field of pension and disability insurance system, which now offers stimulating ways of prolonging employment even after fulfilling the conditions for old-age retirement. The number of older people in employment has thus significantly increased in the last decade.

Progress towards the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals

In Slovenia, progress towards the first goal of Recognizing the potential of older persons has been made by adopting the Active Ageing Strategy in 2017. According to the UNECE report 2018 Active Ageing Index of June 2019, Slovenia progressed at a slower pace than the EU average between 2008 and 2016. Slower progress is particularly pronounced in the areas of social participation and independent, healthy, and safe living. In the years leading up to the epidemic, Slovenia has therefore gradually strengthened a more inclusive social development. During its Presidency to the Council of the EU in 2021, Slovenia, along with its Trio partners, prepared a Trio Declaration on Ageing in which Slovenia commits itself to promote the life-course approach to ageing. In line with the Declaration, Slovenia also organized an International Conference Human Rights for All Ages: Promoting a Life-course Perspective and Intergenerational Cooperation to Combat Ageism, which gave the representatives of ministries and civil society

organizations the opportunity to submit their opinions and proposals in a wider international context and offered commitments for the further work ahead.

Progress towards the second goal Encouraging longer working life and ability to work has been mainly achieved by several measures in pension and disability insurance that offer stimulating ways of prolonging employment of older persons. This has also been achieved through several projects such as Active until Employment, ASI – comprehensive support for companies for active ageing of the workforce, as well as more long-term ones, such as ActiveDad, which contributes to awareness-raising on equal distribution of parental care among partners and My Work.My Pension, which raises awareness about the national pension system and the pension gap between women and men.

Regarding the third goal Ensuring ageing with dignity, Slovenia has made progress by adopting a Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA) in 2016 which determines personal conditions (including age) for which the protection against discrimination is ensured, and established the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, an independent and autonomous state body mandated to deal with discrimination. Another major achievement in ensuring ageing with dignity has been the adoption of the first comprehensive Long-Term Care Act in 2021, integrating health and social care and covering a range of areas, such as home care, care in residential facilities, e-care, services to maintain independence and compulsory long-term care insurance. Another achievement is the adoption of the first Strategy for dealing with Dementia in 2016, which will be revised shortly to put emphasis on strengthening factors to reduce risk factors for developing dementia, ensuring early and timely diagnosis and treatment, improving access to adequate and coordinated post-diagnostic multidisciplinary treatment of people with dementia, including personalised services and care for people with dementia, support for families and informal carers, as well as access to palliative care.

Priorities for further policy research on ageing

Demographic transition is one of the key challenges for the world in the future. Considering the rapid ageing of the population in Slovenia, it is essential that we address this challenge in a timely manner. Since an important indicator of the effectiveness of the responses to demographic change is UNECE's Active Ageing Index, it is crucial for Slovenia that it works closely together with the relevant stakeholders in improving these indicators and provides a timely response to the indicated shortcomings.

Slovenia is also committed to addressing human rights at different stages of life, so its priority is also to adequately address the rights of older persons. We are committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against older persons, as well as combating ageism.

To ensure that the main actions and progress in implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals are also met in the future, it is essential that all stakeholders work closely together.