



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
MINISTRY OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

**SECOND PERIODIC REPORT OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MADRID PLAN OF ACTION ON
AGEING**

**REFERENCE PERIOD:
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PART I

1. Abbreviations and Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
RS	Republika Srpska
BD BiH	Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina
MHRR BiH	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina
PIPR	Protectors of Insured Persons' Rights
FMTs	Family Medicine Teams
PHI	Public Health Institution
GAP	Gender Action Plan
SHS	Survey of Household Spending

2. General Information

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 - Ermin Terko – Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - Radoslav Ćorović – Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - Branislava Crnčević – Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - Suvada Đurđević – Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
 - Vildana Doder – Federal Ministry of Health;
 - Semir Sarić – Federal Institute for Pension and Disability Insurance;
 - Muamera Idrizović – Federal Institute of Statistics;
 - Mira Vasić – Ministry of Labour, War Veterans and Disabled Persons' Protection of the Republika Srpska;
 - Zorica Garača – Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republika Srpska;
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 - Dean Arežina – Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska;
 - Marina Pančić – Department of Health and Other Services of Brčko District, Division for Social Protection; and
 - Hamdija Kujundžić – Association for Psychosocial Help and Development of Voluntary Work "Osmijeh" Gračanica – Informal network of NGOs for the protection of the rights of the elderly "For Dignified Ageing".

¹ The aforementioned institutions have exclusive competence in matters related to the field of social and health protection. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a coordinating role in the collection of information from the competent authorities of the Entities/Cantons and Brčko District, since the competence in terms of labour and social rights, health, etc. in Bosnia and Herzegovina is held by the Entities, as stated above;

3. Third Age Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina²

According to the 2013 census, the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is about 3,531,159, thereof 1,732,270 or 49.06% men, and 1,798,889 or 50.94% women population.

According to the 2013 Census, the total average age of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 39.51 years, 38.24 years for men and 40.73 years for women.

Out of the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the 2013 Census, 14.2% of the population is over 65 years of age.

Looking at the sex structure, the population aged over 65 accounted for 5.9% men and 8.3% women compared to the total population.³

According to the 2013 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the total population in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is 2,219,220, of which the total number of men is 1,087,993 or 49.03%, and 1,131,227 or 50.97% is female population.

According to the 2013 Census, the total average age of the population in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is 38.47 years, 37.23 years for men and 39.65 years for women.

Out of the total population of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the 2013 Census, 12.9% of the population is over 65 years of age.

Looking at the sex structure, the population aged over 65 accounted for 5.4% men and 7.5% women compared to the total population.

In 2020, the life expectancy for the total population of the Federation of BiH aged 65 and over is 15.53 years, while for men it is 13.98 years and for women it is 16.88 years.

In the Republika Srpska, according to data from the 2013 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings, the total number of population living on the territory of the Republika Srpska is 1,170,342, of which 48.9 % men, and 51.1% women. According to the Census data, the total average age of the population is 41.72 years, while observing the sex structure the average age is 40.32 years for men, and 43.05 years for women. Out of the total population, according to the Census, 17.1% of the population is over 65 years of age, while, observing the sex structure, the population over 65 years of age consisted of 7.1% of men and 10.0% of women.

Looking at the sex structure, in 2020 in the Republika Srpska the total life expectancy for the population over 65 years of age is 13.85 years, while observing the sex structure the life expectancy is 14.39 years for men, and 17.44 years for women.

During the reference period 2017-2020, which is the subject of the Second Periodic Report of BiH on the Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Institute of Statistics and the Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska, produced the Population Projections of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2020-2070 and the Population Situation Analysis, with the support of the Government of Sweden. An expert team from Charles University in Prague, led by Professor Tomáš Kučera, was hired to make the projections.

Since population projections are one of the very important statistical indicators that can show a vision for the future and the possibility of planning from an economic, social and every other aspect, therefore the data on the participation of the total, as well as the population over the age of 65, are very important.

² Note: Due to the specific administrative division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two Entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, and Brčko District, the demographic situation as well as the social, economic and political impact are described separately for both Entities and for the District;

³ Source: https://www.popis.gov.ba/popis2013/doc/Knjiga1/K1_B_E.pdf;

On the territory of the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the beginning of the project period, the average age in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 41.9 years, in the middle of the period it is 47.32 years, while at the end of the projected period it is 51.69 years.

At the beginning of the projected period, out of the total projected population over the age of 65, men accounted for 7.3 % and women 9.8 %, while at the end of the projected period this share was 17.0% men and 19.3% women.⁴

In the Federation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the beginning of the project period, the average age in the Federation 41 years, in the middle of the period it is 46.9 years, while at the end of the projected period it is 51.7 years.

At the beginning of the projected period, out of the total projected population over the age of 65, men accounted for 6.5 % and women 8.8 %, while at the end of the projected period this share was 17.2 % men and 19.2 % women.

Observing the overall population at the beginning of the projected period, the average age in the Republika Srpska is 43.8 years, in the middle of the period it is 48.88 years, while at the end of the projected period it is 51.34 years.

At the beginning of the projected period, out of the total projected population over the age of 65, men accounted for 8.8 % and women 11.9 %, while at the end of the projected period this share was 16.5 % men and 19.1 % women.⁵

According to the 2013 census, the total population of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina was 83,516. About 14.5% of the population belongs to the 65+ age group, while the number of women in the 65+ group is about 38.7% higher than that of men.

The average age of the population in the Brčko District in 2018 was 39.81 years (38.5 men and 41.1 years women). According to the 2013 census, the average age of the population in BiH was 39.51, while for the Brčko District it was 39.67 years.

Based on data from the 2013 Census, the age index in the Brčko District of BiH, which represents the relationship between the old (60 years and above) and the young (0-19 years) population, is 94% and is slightly higher than the age index of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in 2013 was 92% (for comparison, the age index in the Federation of BiH is 80% while in the Republika Srpska it is 118%).

Changes in the age structure of the population in 2018 compared to 2013 are reflected in the increase in the participation of the old (65+ years) population in the total population of the Brčko District. The number of older population group increased by 5.03%, while the population of the 15-64 age group decreased by 1.49% of the population.

The enforcement of administrative cases, the payment of fees established as the rights from social protection system, was not affected by the pandemic declaration. The activities of the Division for Social Protection took place continuously, in particular in the context of the application of Article 11 of the Law on the implementation of the Budget of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2020 (Priorities in Execution).

Data on the age structure by sex show that the participation of women in the structure of the population is higher due to the greater participation of women in the structure of the elderly population (65 and older) which was 58.40% in 2018, while in the other two age groups (under 15 years of age and 15-64) there is a greater number of men.

As for the average age of employees, in public health the same increased by six years, and today it is 49.5 years, and 38% of doctors are over 50 years old.⁶

⁴ Source: <https://bhas.gov.ba/News/Read/42>;

⁵ Source: Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska;

⁶ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina has over 500,000 beneficiaries of pension rights, and the share of pensioners in the total population is about the same in both Entities, accounting for one-eighth or 12.5% of the total population. The average number of pensioners in Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuously increasing. The demographic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterised by several negative demographic processes. The multi-decennial decline in birth and fertility rates has resulted in a negative natural increase, the amount of which has been increasing in recent years, which together with emigration, primarily of the younger population, leads to depopulation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The consequences of these processes, together with the prolongation of the lifespan of the population, are reflected in the increase in the average age of the population and the increase in the share of the old population. According to the 2013 census, the population over the age of 65 accounted for 14.2% of the total population, 16.5% in 2019, and this share is expected to rise to 25.8% by 2030, to 37.9% by 2050, and to 43.5% by 2070. All this indicates that the sustainability of the public health and pension system will face a number of challenges, which will especially have an impact on the living conditions of the old population.⁷

In general, the elderly fall into the category that is among the most vulnerable to social exclusion. According to 2015 data, the relative poverty line for Bosnia and Herzegovina was 389.26 KM per adult equivalent per month. The relative poverty rate based on this threshold for Bosnia and Herzegovina was 16.9%, i.e., 17.1% for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16.4% for Republika Srpska and 17.6% for the Brčko District of BiH⁸.

If you look at the type of settlements, poverty in BiH is more prevalent among households in rural areas, the same applies to both Entities and the Brčko District (in BiH 20.5% of households in rural areas and 11.3% in urban areas, in the FBiH 20.3% of households in rural areas and 11.0% in urban areas, for the RS 20.9% of households in rural areas and 11.9% in urban, and for the Brčko District area 21.2% and 10.3 respectively).

The poverty level is also linked to the age of the household head, and poverty is above average in households whose heads are 65 years of age and older (20.4% for BiH, 18.7% for the FBiH, 23.2% for the RS and 16.6% for the Brčko District). It is even more pronounced among one-person households in the age category 65 years and over (21.9% for BiH, 16.9 for the FBiH, 28.2 for the RS and 16.8 for the Brčko District).⁹

Legislative Framework

In the reporting period **in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the text of *the Strategy for Improving the Position of the Elderly* was prepared, with financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Embassy of Switzerland in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Strategy refers to the period 2018-2027, and it was done through a multisectoral engagement in which the Public Health Institute of the Federation of BiH participated, and the coordinator and holder of the activities was the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In relation to the objectives and activities of the above Strategy, indicators have been defined, which, among other things, monitor the improvement of the health of the elderly, namely: morbidity, satisfaction of the elderly with health services in the community, the percentage of elderly people who regularly carry out physical exercise. The Strategy was not considered or adopted on the grounds that the Law on Development Planning and Management

⁷ Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

⁸ Based on the median of average monthly consumption for BiH with breakdown of territorial units;

⁹ Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

in the FBiH¹⁰ stipulated that strategic documents were not to be produced for the existing planning cycle until the end of 2020.

In the reporting period, an analysis of legislation and the practice of providing palliative care with recommendations was carried out, and an initiative was launched to develop a manual for healthcare professionals on the provision of services to the elderly. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and limited capacities, the Federal Ministry of Health was not been able to implement the aforementioned initiatives and activities.

On 10 October 2019, the National Assembly of the **Republika Srpska** adopted a Decision on the adoption of the *Strategy for Improving the Position of the Elderly* in the Republika Srpska 2019-2028, and the main reason for the adoption of the Strategy lies in the need to create more favourable conditions in the Republika Srpska to help the elderly to overcome the social difficulties, to help the elderly to meet the basic living needs in need for social welfare, to provide healthy and active ageing and preserve the mental health of the elderly. As a general objective, the Strategy aims at improving the quality of life of elderly, with specific objectives, namely: reducing poverty in the elderly; improving social protection for the elderly; improving access to public services to meet the basic living needs of the elderly, with particular reference to rural areas; improving volunteering activities for the elderly in local communities; increasing the awareness of the population about the needs of the elderly; improving the health of the elderly; improving access to lifelong learning programmes, sports and recreational and cultural content for the elderly; prevention of abuse against the elderly, and protection and rescue of the elderly in emergency situations.

Also, on 30 December 2020, the Government of the Republika Srpska adopted the Strategy for Adult Education in the Republika Srpska for 2021-2031. Adult education is, among other things, a manifestation of lifelong learning and an integral part of a complete and uniform system of education in the Republika Srpska. The mission of adult education is to provide adult citizens with the right to lifelong education and learning and thus contribute to their personal and professional development, better employment and social participation of citizens in the Republika Srpska. The basic way to support personal development and the ability of an individual is to remain healthy and active. 46 training programmes and three specialization programmes have been declared publicly valid.¹¹

Strategy for Third Age Persons of the **Brčko District** is the result of joint work of the District, public institutions, Red Cross, and other organizations that support and protect the interests of the elderly, which is certainly a principle of good practice.¹²

Some of the applicable regulations related to the rights of third age persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina are:

a) In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- *Law on Pension or Disability Insurance* adopted in 2018 on the basis of the Strategy for Reform of the Pension System in the Federation of BiH, which is the result of years of work of domestic experts dealing with the pension system, representatives of social partners and pensioners' associations, and expert assistance in the preparation of the said document was provided by the World Bank. With the adoption of the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance, the process of reform of the pension system in the Federation of BiH was completed, and it envisages a mechanism for the protection of the most vulnerable categories through the so-called lowest pension;
- *Decision providing for the subsidies for electricity costs for the beneficiaries of the lowest and guaranteed pension, Decree on the one-off monetary amount of the pension in support of*

¹⁰ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" no. 32/17;

¹¹ Source: Ministry of Education and Culture of the RS;

¹² Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

pensioners in the FBiH, whereby pensioners resident in BiH were paid a monetary amount of 120 KM with their pension for July - beneficiaries who exercise the right up to the amount of the guaranteed pension and the guaranteed pension, and the amount of 100 KM – beneficiaries who exercise the right over the amount of the guaranteed pension, and *Decree on the monetary amount of the pension in support of pensioners of the FBiH*, whereby pensioners who are residents in BiH, regardless of the amount of the pension for December, were paid a monetary amount of 50 KM. The amount added to the pension was paid for the purpose of improving the material position of the pension beneficiaries, as well as for additional health care costs incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;

- *Law on the Basic Social Protection, Protection of Civilian War Victims and Families with Children*¹³ regulating the percentage of physical impairment and monthly allowances for the same in persons with disabilities, which includes third age persons in this category.¹⁴ Rights of the elderly from the social protection system under this Law include: cash allowances (social assistance, compensation for assistance and care by another person, compensation for home care and home assistance, compensation for housing costs and costs of fuel, electricity, food, etc.), social services (accommodation services – institutional and non-institutional care (family accommodation), daily care in day centres and/or clubs for the elderly, social and other professional work services, and home assistance services). These rights are exercised through local social work centres and social protection institutions for the institutional care of the elderly in the public, non-governmental and private sectors.¹⁵
 - *The Law on Mediation in Employment and Social Security of the Unemployed*¹⁶ was applied in the reference period 2017-2020, in the field of employment of all categories of population, according to which no person may be disadvantaged by virtue of this law because of their race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, financial status, birth or any other circumstances, membership or non-membership in a political party, or membership or non-membership in a trade union, or physical and mental disabilities. The same Law stipulates misdemeanour fines for both legal entities and responsible persons in legal entities contravening the Law, and any person believing to be discriminated against may seek compensation before a competent court.¹⁷
- b) In the Republika Srpska:
- *Law on Health Care*¹⁸ which stipulates that citizens' health care shall be carried out on the principles of equality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, continuity and coordination, and that it shall be exercised without discrimination on any grounds. Also, health care at the level of the

¹³ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers: 36/99, 54/04, 39/06, 14/09, 45/16 and 40/18);

¹⁴ Persons with disabilities who, based on the Findings, Assessment and Opinion of the Institute for Medical Expertise of the Health Condition, have been found to have the percentage of physical impairment in the amount of 90% and 100% may exercise the right to personal disability allowance of groups I and II, the right to allowance for care and assistance by another person of groups I and II, and the right to orthopaedic allowance. The basis for calculating monthly cash benefits is defined in Article 18c of the Law, amounts to BAM 274.40 and is fixed;

¹⁵ According to the data of the Federal Institute of Statistics, the number of old persons without family care in the Federation of BiH in 2020 was 7281 elderly persons (of which 3840 men and 3441 women), while in 2017 there were 9739 registered persons of this category. In the period from 2018 to 2021, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy organized training sessions for foster caregivers for adults/elderly persons which were held in 8 groups, from which 106 foster caregivers successfully completed the training. Accommodation in social welfare institutions for adults and the elderly in 2020 included 3816 beneficiaries, while in 2017 it included 3450 beneficiaries. According to the statistics of the Federal Institute of Statistics in the Federation of BiH, 62 social welfare institutions for the elderly operated in 2020, while 47 social welfare institutions for the accommodation of adults and the elderly operated in 2017. Considering that the non-governmental sector is an alternative, partner and competitor to the state sector, the number of private institutions that provide accommodation and care for the elderly, i.e., social welfare services, has been increasing recently in the Federation of BiH;

¹⁶ "Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH" numbers 55/00, 41/01, 22/05 and 9/08;

¹⁷ Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

¹⁸ "Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska", numbers 106/09 and 44/15;

Republika is provided under equal conditions, to population and nosological groups of special social and medical importance, which include, among others, persons aged 65 and over;

- *Law on Mental Health Protection* regulates the promotion of mental health, prevention and early detection of mental health disorders, rights and obligations in mental health protection, medical intervention in persons with mental health disabilities, confidentiality of data from medical records and records of persons with mental health disabilities, social inclusion and community living, prohibitions in mental health protection, supervision, as well as other matters of importance for mental health protection;
- *Law on Pension and Disability Insurance* , which has been in force since 1 January 2012, and which was amended in September 2013 and December 2015, prescribes the adjustment of pensions starting as of 2013, according to a percentage representing half of the sum of the percentage change in the average net salary and the percentage change in consumer prices on an annual basis in the Republika in the previous year.¹⁹ The Law stipulates that the percentage of pension adjustment for the current year is published by the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska on the basis of the data of the Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska published in the Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska. Based on the data of the Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska, the Management Board of the Institute determines by its decision how many percent the pensions earned until 31 December of the current year are adjusted from 1 January of the following year (regular adjustment). On this basis, the Government of the Republika Srpska also makes a decision on the adjustment of the general point and pensions, as well as a decision on determining the amount of the lowest pension. In addition, and in order to reduce poverty and provide social protection of pensioners, the Government shall, from time to time, also make extraordinary adjustments and increases in pensions;²⁰
- *Decision on the approval of the placement of funds for the improvement of the material position of veterans above 65 years* whose insurance periods together with special periods of double duration amount to 15 years or more, through monthly allowance.²¹ The Decision was made in 2020 with the basic goal of establishing minimum income for third age persons and improving the material position of veterans who did not exercise the right to a pension, which is ensured by the disbursement of a monthly cash allowance in the amount of BAM 195.74;
- *Law on Labour*²² stipulates that the employment relationship with the worker terminates by force of law once employee reaches 65 years of age with at least 15 years of insurance (general condition for termination of employment). However, those persons who have exercised the right to an old-age pension before reaching the age of 65 have the opportunity to re-establish employment on the basis of an employment contract and to work until they reach the age of 65. Beneficiaries of an old-age pension over the age of 65 have the possibility to be employed and to continue working on the basis of a temporary and occasional employment contract and an employment contract.²³

c) In the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

¹⁹ The most significant indicator of the pension system indicating its material possibilities is the ratio of the number of insured persons to the number of beneficiaries of rights, that is, the number of those who finance pension and disability insurance rights to the number of those who use those rights. In the Republika Srpska, the ratio of the number of insured persons to the number of beneficiaries of rights remains unfavourable, but new legal solutions in the last few years have stopped the negative trend of decreasing the number of insured persons/workers in relation to the number of beneficiaries of rights/pensioners, and in December 2020, 1.17 insured persons were registered per one beneficiary of rights;

²⁰ The basic indicator of the material position of pensioners is the amount of the pension, which is essentially a reflection of the material possibilities of the society. One of the objectives of the Strategy for Reform of the Pension System in the Republika Srpska, is to provide stable incomes and reduce the poverty of the elderly population;

²¹ "Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska" No. 8/20;

²² "Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska", numbers 1/16 and 66/18;

²³ Source: Government of the Republika Srpska;

- *Law on Social Protection* of the Brčko District fully governs the social and family protection system in the District, through the Public Institution Centre for Social Work which is in the process of being established. The Division for social protection of the Brčko District of BiH has a Section for General Social Protection, Protection of Marriage and Family, where, among other things, rights are determined on the basis of the law on social protection of third age persons, and a Section for Psychosocial Protection where, among other things, activities related to work with mentally ill persons and guardianship of adults are performed. Monitoring or following is carried out in accordance with the Law that allows for beneficiary revision, and thus, e.g., the revision of the allowance for care and assistance by another person can be carried out at any time if there is a change in the health status of the beneficiary;
- *Law on Health Care* of the Brčko District stipulates that the persons over 65 years of age belong to groups of special social and medical importance. The insured person and members of his/her family shall elect their family doctor-doctor of medicine and dentist in primary health care for a period of at least one year. All insured persons should be registered with their doctor. In the Brčko district, there is a Public Health Institution "Brčko Health Centre", which includes a hospital, a healthcare centre, an emergency service and provides other medical services for the population. Progress has been made in the field of deinstitutionalization, support for the work of mental health centres in the community, support for the work of associations of beneficiaries of services of institutions in the field of mental health, as well as the definition of standards for the protection of human rights of persons with mental illness. Through the provision of integrated home care services, permanent care is ensured for third age persons through a plan of activities that are reflected in the number of visits, schedule of work tasks - cleaning, cooking, maintaining individual hygiene, health care and protection, etc.;²⁴
- The Rulebook on the conditions and manner of solving housing problems of beneficiaries of permanent social assistance and persons in need for social protection²⁵ was adopted with the aim of ensuring adequate housing in humanitarian settlements (Cerik, Bukvik-Gajevi-Vujčići, Brka, Grbavica and Ivici) without the need for financial participation for the space.²⁶

4. Reporting Methodology

For the purpose of drafting this Report, an Interdepartmental Working Group was formed of experts from relevant institutions from all levels of government – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A representative of the Association "Osmijeh", i.e., the informal network of non-governmental organizations for the protection of the rights of the elderly "For dignified ageing", also participated in the Working Group. All members of the Working Group contributed in the form of information from the domain of competence of their institutions.

Statistical data in the field of the rights of third age persons are collected from line Cantonal Ministries and social work centres in charge of social protection and protection of families with children, and institutions that provide care for the elderly, which are also partners, as well as many other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

²⁴ The Division for Social Protection of the Department of Health and Other Services, according to the Law on Social Protection of the Brčko District of BiH, has ensured the exercise of certain rights for persons in need for social protection, if the conditions set out in the Law have been met. In December 2020, the total number of beneficiaries of care and assistance allowance from another person was 2685, of permanent basic cash assistance 885, of personal assistance 585, of one-time cash assistance due to special circumstances 125, and of one-time payment to pensioners 10495;

²⁵ "Official Gazette of the Brčko District of BiH", number 15/03;

²⁶ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

Also, data for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are obtained through the unique database in the field of social protection SOTAC, which was established in 2006. The aforementioned database administers the rights to cash benefits to categories of persons with non-war disabilities and civilian victims of war, including third age persons, in accordance with the Law on Basic Social Protection, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Families with Children²⁷. In 2014, the subject database was upgraded, and cash benefits for social and child protection rights established by cantonal regulations are administered through the same database.²⁸

In accordance with the Law on Record- Keeping in Health Care System²⁹, as well as in accordance with the Health Statistical Research Program, the Institute for Public Health of the Federation of BiH collects, among other things, data related to the health status of third age persons, through reporting forms that were revised in this reporting period. Furthermore, in relation to the objectives and activities of the Strategy for Improving the Position of the Elderly in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, indicators have been defined, which, among other things, monitor the improvement of the health of the elderly, namely: morbidity, satisfaction of the elderly with health services in the community, the percentage of elderly people who regularly carry out physical exercise.³⁰

Pursuant to the Law on Statistics in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina³¹, the Federal Institute of Statistics, performing its primary activity, i.e., conducting statistical surveys and activities of interest to the Federation of BiH, produces statistical data on the basis of which the movement of certain phenomena is monitored and analysed, as well as for issues related to third age persons, primarily estimates of the number of inhabitants in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Cantons and Municipalities by individual years of age and sex, which enables the calculation of indicators related to third age persons, as well as the Labour Force Surveys, Surveys on Dietary Habits of Adults in the FBiH, Adult Education Surveys, etc.

Statistical data are collected from reporting units (institutions, business entities, households, persons) defined in advance in the Annual Plan for Statistical Surveys of Interest to the Federation of BiH.³²

In the Republika Srpska, in connection with statistical data, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection maintains a database on the number of beneficiaries of basic rights from the Law on Social Protection, on the work of social protection institutions for the accommodation of beneficiaries, founded by the Government of the Republika Srpska, as well as on private institutions for the accommodation of third age beneficiaries, and collects data for the purpose of the most adequate realization of rights at request and for the needs of the Ministry.³³

PART II

1. 20 years of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and the Regional Implementation Strategy and progress towards achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Declaration

Implementation of the rights of third age persons and ensuring dignified ageing in both Entities and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina is endeavoured to be ensured primarily through the applicable legislation in terms of social and health protection.

²⁷ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers: 36/99, 54/04, 39/06, 14/09, 45/16 and 40/18);

²⁸ Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

²⁹ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" no. 37/12;

³⁰ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

³¹ "Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH" number 63/03 and 9/09;

³² Source: Federal Institute of Statistics;

³³ Source: Government of the Republika Srpska;

Social Protection

At the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the social protection system is decentralized. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, social protection is regulated by the *Law on Basic Social Protection, Protection of Civil Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children*³⁴, which is a framework law in the field of social protection, which determines social protection policy. Given the competence of the Federal and Cantonal authorities in the field of social protection, divided in compliance with the Constitution, in addition to the aforementioned Law, there are Cantonal regulations on social protection, adopted on the basis of the foregoing, which regulate more closely the conditions, manner, procedure and financing of social protection rights.

Social protection rights are financed from the budget of Cantons and municipalities except for certain rights of persons with disabilities and civilian victims of war that are financed from the level of the Federation of BiH. The Budget of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not provide for funds targeted exclusively for the protection of the elderly, but allocations are mainly related to persons with disabilities and civil victims of war. Social protection of the elderly at the Cantonal level is realized through the exercise of the right to permanent financial assistance, financial compensation for care and assistance by another person, one-off financial assistance, the right to accommodation in social protection institutions and participation in accommodation costs.

The Law on Basic Social Protection, Protection of Civil Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children established that elderly persons without family care³⁵ are one of the categories of social protection beneficiaries.

In accordance with the aforementioned Federal Law and regulations of the Cantons, social protection is provided to the elderly through: permanent financial assistance and other material help; financial compensation for care and assistance by another person; home care and home assistance; institutional housing of old and infirm persons; alternative possibilities of housing for elderly persons without family care and persons with disabilities in another family, as well as day care in day-care centres and clubs for the elderly; social and other professional work services; regulating the right to humanitarian aid; appropriate subsidies (electricity, heating, funeral costs, etc.).

As a result of this situation, the level of social rights exercised by the elderly in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is very uneven both formally and legally in practice.

During the development and adoption of regulations in the field of health care, the public consultation procedure must be conducted. Through this mechanism, the participation of all citizens and the interested public is enabled, which also implies the possibility of participation of third age persons. Please note that there is also a registered Pensioners' Party in BiH through which third age persons participate in political life.

Pursuant to *the Law on Health Care* in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁶, health care is provided at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of health care as well as in specialized health care institutions. At the primary level of health care provided by the health care centre, the majority of health services are provided, which includes health care insurance for people over 65 years of age. The health care centre provides primary health care through family medicine teams, laboratory, radiological diagnostic services, emergency medical services, community mental health centre, physical rehabilitation centre, polyvalent dental care service, community nurses service. Also, the Law allows

³⁴ "Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH", Nos. 36/99, 54/04, 39/06, 14/09 and 45/16;

³⁵ An older person without family care, in terms of the said Law, is a person over 65 years of age (male), or over 60 years of age (female), who has no family members or relatives who are obliged by law to take care of such person, or if he/she has them, they are not in a position to fulfil their obligation. Source: Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

³⁶ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers 46/10 and 73/15;

for the organization of facilities for home health care, facilities for palliative care, according to the needs of the local community.

The cited Law stipulates that social care for health at the level of Cantons includes measures for ensuring and implementing health care of interest to citizens in the area of Cantons and, among other things, includes providing palliative care for the terminally ill or dying persons in cooperation with social welfare institutions, charitable and other associations and individuals. The Law stipulates that the health services of palliative care and pain therapy can be performed in health care institutions of the primary level of health care and special departments of health institutions of hospital health care. It is also envisaged that an independent institution for palliative care can be established as a social health care institution that has a palliative interdisciplinary team, an outpatient clinic for pain and palliative care. Implementing regulations established the standard and norm for personnel, space and equipment for palliative services, both outpatient and inpatient. Training sessions for personnel in palliative care were conducted sporadically.

In addition, primary health care includes: monitoring of the health status of the population and implementation of measures for the preservation and improvement of health; prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases and injuries, detection and suppression of risk factors for mass non-communicable diseases, specific preventive health care of young people, especially in primary and secondary schools, and higher schools in their area; immunization against infectious diseases; home treatment and rehabilitation and palliative care.

The Law on Patients' Rights, Obligations and Responsibilities³⁷ regulates patients' rights, obligations and responsibilities when using healthcare, how these rights are used, how these rights are protected and improved, as well as other issues related to patients' rights, obligations and responsibilities. This Law guarantees to each patient, inter alia, the rights to availability of health care, information and participation in the treatment procedure, self-determination and consent, including the protection of the rights of the patient who is incapable of giving consent, the right to personal dignity, as well as the prevention and relief of suffering and pain.

Health insurance in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina covers all elderly persons who receive a pension or are beneficiaries of some form of social protection, which is regulated by the Law on Health Insurance. In accordance with the Law on Health Insurance³⁸, beneficiaries of pensions under the regulations on pension and disability insurance of the Federation, as well as beneficiaries of pensions and disability benefits residing in the territory of the Federation, who exercise this right exclusively from a foreign pension and disability insurance holder, unless otherwise stipulated by an international contract, shall have the right to compulsory health insurance. Also, in accordance with the aforementioned Law, Article 19 stipulates that the persons after the age of 65 who are resident in the territory of the Federation, and are not insured on another basis in BiH or another country, are to be considered as insured persons with the right to compulsory health insurance.

The health care provided by this Law includes: - health care of citizens over 65 years of age, provided that they do not have income per household member higher than the average salary in the territory of the Federation, earned in the previous month. For persons after the age of 65, who do not have insurance on another basis, the payment of direct participation in health care costs shall be made by the Cantonal administrative bodies relevant for social protection activities

Funds from the budget of the Canton or municipality shall be approved by the legislative body of the Canton or municipality on the basis of a request established by the administrative council of the Cantonal insurance institution, starting from the plan of the necessary funds for the implementation of compulsory health insurance. These funds provide for the coverage of health care costs for people over 65 beyond the level of compulsory health insurance due to certain extraordinary or other difficult conditions for providing of health care.

³⁷ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" no. 40/10;

³⁸ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers 30/97, 7/02, 70/08, 48/11 and 36/18;

The Decision on maximum amounts of direct participation of insured persons for specific health insurance forms in the basic health rights package³⁹ exempts from the payment of participation persons over 65 years of age, if they are not beneficiaries of a pension or other monthly income over the amount of the minimum pension according to the last published data.

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the Law on Health Care, priority health care measures are prescribed that enable accessibility to all levels of health care to vulnerable groups such as: persons with disabilities, persons over 65 years of age, materially uninsured persons, Roma, returnees, displaced and refugees, victims of violence, mental patients. The sources of financing are defined by the same Law. Furthermore, Article 94 of the Law on Health Care regulates the provision of health care to persons placed in social protection institutions, and the health care measures provided in social protection institutions are regulated by a contract between the health centre and the social protection institution, i.e., a private health professional and the health insurance institution of the Canton.

Furthermore, in line with reform commitments, one of the priorities is to further strengthen community services. Thus, the reform of primary health care has so far improved the network of family medicine outpatient clinics, mental health centres and physical rehabilitation centres, and activities are currently being carried out to strengthen the community/patronage nursing services. This commitment aims to achieve better accessibility to health teams and services in primary health care, to all the population of F BiH, and to third age persons, among others. Special emphasis is put on improving the safety and quality of the health service, and in accordance with the Law on the System of Quality Improvement, Safety and Accreditation in Healthcare⁴⁰, the certification and accreditation procedure of health care institutions is continuously carried out. The procedure is based on the adopted Safety and Quality Standards for health centres, hospitals, mental health centres, family medicine teams, pharmacies, polyclinics, as well as standards for emergency-related situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic for health centres and polyclinics. Inclusive standards for people with disabilities ISO OSI have also been developed.⁴¹

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the framework of the reform of social protection in 2017, the *Law on Foster Care* in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted and its application began in March 2018. The main goal of this Law is the systemic regulation of housing and support for children without parental care, adults without family care, and old, infirm and disabled people with disabilities by housing and protecting them in a family environment. The adoption of this Law created the preconditions for ensuring equal quality and equal access to foster care services throughout the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with regard to the same identification procedures as well as the unified method of selection and education of foster caregivers. A unique system has been created to monitor the work of the foster caregivers in all Cantons, which has not existed until now. The special obligations of the foster caregivers for adults have been regulated, e.g., the foster caregivers is obliged to ensure that the adult person meets his/her everyday and special needs, and to encourage him/her to acquire certain skills, given his/her remaining abilities, and for the purpose of his/her independent care; encourage labour-occupational activities in accordance with the level of functioning and interests of the adult person, encourage recreational activities, and cultural and entertainment activities; include the adult person in the life of the local community according to his/her needs and capabilities; provide contacts, meetings and socializing between the adult person and members of his/her family, and other relatives and friends. The aim is to provide an adult person placed in a social protection institution with accommodation in the foster care family as soon as possible, except when it is not in his/her best interests. The foster caregiver arranges all major issues related to the care of the adult person by mutual agreement with social work centres, other service providers, and members of

³⁹ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" no. 21/09;

⁴⁰ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers 59/05; 52/11 and 6/17;

⁴¹ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

the foster care recipient's own family. Also, the foster care is defined according to the needs of the care recipient as: traditional, specialized, urgent and occasional foster care, so that old persons are covered in all four of the above types of foster care as service beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the adoption of the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance ended the process of reforming the pension system in the Federation of BiH. It is a Law that is essential for the Federation of BiH, in terms of ensuring the financial stability of the pension system, and the adequacy of pensions in the Federation of BiH. In 2018, the reform Law on Pension and Disability Insurance entered into force. In a short period of time, the Law showed positive effects on the entire system of pension and disability insurance, stopping primarily the trend of achieving unrealistic amounts of pensions resulting from the previous law, while allowing the improvement of the material position of pensioners who, according to earlier regulations, achieved unrealistically low amounts of pensions, and introducing a legal obligation of regular obligations to regularly adjust pensions in line with social and economic developments. In this way, the Law put the pensioners population in a more favourable, fair and secure position than it was in an earlier period. The innovations brought by the new Law are reflected in the following:

- an increase in pensions of 10% and 5% for certain groups of pensioners – for pension beneficiaries who were retired until 31 July 1998, the legal amount of pension per decision was increased by 10%, and for those who were retired between 01 August 1998 and 31 December 2007, the legal amount was increased by 5%. This increase covered 54,785 pensioners who received a 10% increase and 53,454 who received a 5% increase;

- points system of pension calculation – a points system for calculating pensions has been introduced, by which the amount of pension depends on the number of points collected by the insured during their service years. Points are calculated by scoring each year of service in which the insured person was registered for at least one month, in such a way that his/her personal income is divided by the average personal income of SR BiH or FBiH for that year. The total sum of points achieved by the worker during the period of his/her service is multiplied by the value of the general point. The value of the general point, according to the Law, for 2018 was BAM 14. In accordance with Article 78 of the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance (PDI), the value of the general point is adjusted on 15 April every year, starting from 01 January 2019. In 2018, the value of the general point was BAM 14, in 2019 it was BAM 14.5, in 2020 BAM 15.15 and in 2021 it amounted to BAM 15.61;

- minimum limit for retirement – the conditions for old-age pension have been amended in such a way that the minimum number of years of pensionable service for the exercise of rights has been reduced. Under the former regulation, the right to an old-age pension was exercised after the fulfilment of conditions of a minimum of 65 years of age and 20 years of pension insurance. The new Law reduced the condition of service from 20 to 15 years of pensionable service, i.e., 20 years of pension insurance;

- reconciliation of pensions – the Law stipulates that pensions are adjusted on 15 April every year, in such a way that the adjustment is made in the amount of the sum of 50% of the percentage increase in consumer prices and 50% of the percentage increase in real gross national product in the FBiH in the previous year, and according to the data of the Federal Institute of Statistics, except for pensions realized in the year in which the adjustment is made, and at most up to the rate of growth of real gross national product in the previous year. It is also envisaged that the highest pensions will not be adjusted or increased until the lowest amount of the pension reaches 1/5 of the amount of the highest pension achieved under the Law on PDI. Also, the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance provides for the possibility of extraordinary pension adjustment; such adjustment may be carried out once in the current year if the growth rate of the real gross national product in the previous two calendar years is greater than 3% and if there is no accumulated deficit of the Federation budget, and at most up to the growth rate of the real gross national product in the previous year. Since the beginning of the application of the Law, the adjustments were as follows: in 2018, the pension adjustment amounted to 3.5% and the extraordinary increase in the lowest pensions 3.1%; in 2019, the pension adjustment was 3.5%, and the extraordinary increase in the lowest pensions was 3.2%; and in 2020, the pension adjustment amounted to 2.8%;

- funeral costs – the new Law on PDI stipulates that in the event of death of a pension beneficiary residing in the FBiH or the BD BiH, the heir-member of the immediate family who settles the funeral costs shall be entitled to the compensation of funeral costs in the amount of the average pension paid in the month before the death of the pension beneficiary. In the period from 1 March 2018 to the end of 2021, BAM 18,064,980 was paid for this purpose, for approximately 42,000 heirs behind the deceased pensioner. The Law on PDI provides that funds for the exercise of pension insurance rights can also be used to help rehabilitate the sick and the most vulnerable pensioners. Thus, BAM 470,000 KM is spent for this purpose on an annual basis. Prior to the entry into force of the new Law on PDI, the minimum pension of beneficiaries of the Federal Institute for PDI was BAM 326.17, while the average (in 12/2017) was BAM 371. With the entry into force of the new Law, there have been repeated increases in pensions, so the minimum pension in 2020 reached the amount of BAM 382.18, while the average pension (12/2021) reached the amount of BAM 430, while the average pension of beneficiaries whose payment is made in FBiH amounts to BAM 473.

The Strategy for Advancement of Rights and Status of Persons with Disabilities in the Federation of BiH 2016-2021 has been adopted and will improve the situation in all areas of importance for the status of persons with disabilities, which includes all departments of importance for the status of persons with disabilities, and whose purpose is to multisectorally define strategic priorities, goals and activities in the field of disability.⁴²

In the Republika Srpska, when it comes to the most significant results of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (2017-2020), we first distinguish the improvement of unemployment insurance for third age persons (persons who are not yet eligible for an old-age pension). In October 2019, the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted the *Law on Amendments to the Law on Mediation in Employment and Rights during Unemployment*⁴³. The amendments to this Law extended the period of exercising the right to cash allowance during unemployment and the amount of this allowance, which depends on the length of service. The right to cash allowance during unemployment is exercised depending on the length of service, as follows: a) up to 12 months – one month, b) from one to two years – 2 months, c) from two to five years – 3 months, g) from five to ten years – 6 months, d) from ten to 20 years – 9 months, f) from 20 to 30 years – 12 months, e) from 30 to 35 years – 18 months, f) over 35 years – 24 months. The amount of the cash allowance shall be paid as follows: - to an unemployed person who has up to 15 years of service in the amount of 45% of the average salary earned by that unemployed person in the last three months of work, - to an unemployed person who has 15 years of service and more in the amount of 50% of the average salary earned by that unemployed person in the last three months of work, noting that the amount of the cash allowance may not be lower than 80% of the lowest salary in the Republika, nor higher than the amount of one average salary after tax in the Republika for the previous year according to the data of the Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics. The amendments to the Law also prescribe the right of unemployed third age persons to pension and disability insurance for up to three years, counting from the date of submission of the application, if they will acquire the conditions for old-age pension with that insurance period and time spent in insurance. The amendments to the aforementioned Law significantly affect the improvement of the material position of unemployed third age persons and reduce poverty.

Second, in order to reduce the poverty rate of third age persons (retired persons), the Government of the Republika Srpska provided for regular and extraordinary adjustment of the general point and pensions (increase in pensions) in the reference period, and made decisions on determining the amount of the lowest pension, in accordance with the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance, which stipulates that, if there is a possibility, the Government of the Republika Srpska may decide to make an extraordinary adjustment of the general point and pensions.

⁴² Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

⁴³ "Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska" No. 91/19;

The table below shows the number of beneficiaries, the average pension in December 2020 and the percentage of the average pension in December from the average salary for 2020.

Type of pension	Number of beneficiaries	Average pension	% of the average salary for 2020
All types	270,781	347.09	36.31
Old-age	159,786	373.54	39.07
Old-age – 40 years of pension insurance - all	23,056	462.38	48.37
Old-age – 40 years of pension insurance – without proportional pensions	15,505	578.92	60.56
Old-age – 40 years of pensionable service - all	57,032	480.80	50.29
Old-age – 40 years of pensionable service – without proportional	40,782	552.01	57.74
Disability	37,232	327.36	34.24
Family	73,763	299.73	31.35
Independent pension – all	211,051	393.75	41.19
Proportional pension - all	59,730	182.18	19.06

Third, in order to improve the material position of pensioners, the Government of the Republika Srpska in 2018, by its individual decision, approved funds for the payment of one-off financial assistance to pension beneficiaries on the basis of which BAM 18,174,000.00 was paid from the Budget. The method of determining the amount of one-off financial assistance depended on the amount of pension for August 2018 in relation to the amount of the average pension chargeable to the Republika Srpska for July 2018, which amounted to BAM 366.76 and in relation to the amount of the average net salary in the Republika for July 2018, which amounted to BAM 848.00. Also, by the Decision of the Government of the Republika Srpska of April 2021, all pension beneficiaries (270,115 pensioners) were paid one-off material assistance in the total amount of BAM 18,972,920.00, as follows: BAM 80.00 was paid to 182,239 pension beneficiaries whose pension calculated for April amounted to BAM 415.82 (total paid BAM 14,579,120.00), and BAM 50.00 was paid to 87,876 pension beneficiaries whose pension calculated for April amounted to more than BAM 415.82 (total paid BAM 4,393,800.00).

Fourth, starting from 2019, in accordance with the request of the Association of Pensioners of the Republika Srpska, the Government of the Republika Srpska plans and pays funds in the budget for spa recreation of pensioners who receive the lowest pensions. BAM 600,000.00 was paid for the spa recreation of pensioners with the lowest income.⁴⁴

In the Republika Srpska, the contribution of third age persons in social, cultural, economic and political development and their participation in decision-making in the Republika Srpska is expressed through the work of the citizens' association, i.e., the association of pensioners of the Republika Srpska, which through its activities encourages and influences the Republika authorities to increase funds in the budget for improving the material and social position of third age persons. When drawing up the economic reform programme and the budget of the Republika, regular consultations are held with the non-governmental sector and in this way the association acts on regular and extraordinary increases in pensions. Based on these consultations, several programs and projects were implemented, such as spa recreation, regular socializing and competitions of pensioners, etc.

⁴⁴ Source: Government of the Republika Srpska;

Introduction of a new right in the field of social protection, namely the right to personal disability allowance, exercised by persons who are: dependent on the assistance and care by another person in meeting basic life needs and whose impairment or illness occurred in the development period, and have a determined degree of physical impairment of 70% to 100%; with hearing impairment, whose impairment or illness occurred in the development period, and have a determined degree of physical damage of at least 70%; with damaged urogenital system, who are in the terminal phase of kidney failure and who need chronic haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis, and have a determined degree of physical damage of 100%; suffering from a rare disease, whose impairment or illness occurred in the development period, and have a determined degree of physical impairment of at least 70%, and also that personal disability allowance cannot be paid to persons who receive income based on disability acquired in war, as well as persons who exercise the right to placement in a social welfare institution and the right to placement in a foster family, or who are placed in another institution at the expense of budgetary funds.

In the Brčko District, since the Initial Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, the general goal – improvement of the life quality of old persons has been met.

Many results have been achieved with regard to the third age persons, the most important of which are: reduced poverty rate of elderly people; improved health of elderly people; improved access to public institutions and transport for all elderly people; improved provision of social services; increased awareness of elderly people of social services and rights; increased awareness of relatives of the need to care for elderly family members; reduced abuse against elderly people; improved active participation of elderly people in social, cultural and sports content in local communities; and improved systemic inclusion of elderly people in lifelong learning programmes.⁴⁵

In the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the *Law on Social Welfare*, old persons without family care are persons over 65 years of age, i.e., who do not have family members or relatives who are legally obligated to support them and as such, these persons have the right to become beneficiaries of social protection. The rights that social protection beneficiaries can exercise are the services of social and other professionals, financial and other material assistance (permanent basic financial assistance, allowance for care and assistance by another person, personal assistance, one-off financial assistance), qualifications for life and work of adults with disabilities, accommodation in a social protection institution, home care and home assistance (organized nutrition). Persons entitled to material assistance are those who have been resident in the Brčko District of BiH for at least two years continuously, who do not have relatives who are legally obligated to support them or if they have them that they are unable to perform their obligation, that have monthly income less than 45% of the average salary. It is also important to point out that the beneficiary of the right to permanent basic financial assistance and persons placed in social welfare institutions for more than 30 days also have the right to health care if they cannot exercise this right on another basis.⁴⁶

In order to exercise the right to permanent basic financial assistance, the future beneficiary should have a residence in the Brčko District of BiH for more than two years, that he/she is not registered as an independent taxpayer, that he/she is not registered as the owner of a property/apartment in the Brčko District of BiH, i.e., he/she may have one residential unit and a maximum of 2 dunums of land, that he/she is not registered as unemployed person, or, if registered, that he/she is registered as such for the purpose of exercising other rights and not for the purpose of seeking employment, that he/she does not exercise the rights with the PDI Fund of the Republika Srpska, that he/she does not exercise the rights with the PDI Fund of the Federation of BiH, that he/she does not exercise the right under regulations in

⁴⁵ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

⁴⁶ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

the field of veteran and disability protection. All the foregoing shall be collected by official means. Also, the future beneficiary must not have relatives who are legally obligated to support him/her or if they have relatives, they are unable to perform their obligation, which is determined by a statement on the record. The future beneficiary should also be incapable of work and this is evidenced by the medical documentation assessed by the expert medical commission, which makes a decision on the length of the period of receiving the permanent basic financial assistance. If the beneficiary of the permanent basic financial assistance dies, his/her relative is entitled to reimbursement of funeral costs in the triple amount of social assistance. In order to exercise the right to allowance for care and assistance by another person, the beneficiary needs to demonstrate his/her disability by medical documentation so that the expert medical commission can make a finding and opinion on the degree of dependence, according to the Barthel index (small, moderate, severe or complete). If it is a complete or heavy category, the beneficiary of the allowance for care and assistance by another person is also entitled to an extended right or personal assistance. Also, the right provided to the poor, or beneficiaries of social assistance, is the right to an organised nutrition. The total number of beneficiaries of public kitchen for 2020 is 180.

One-off financial assistance is another benefit, which is paid due to special circumstances when an appropriate form of social protection is required, if the conditions under the Law on Social Welfare Article 32 have been met.

When a person is no longer able to take care of himself/herself, according to the Law on Social Welfare, he/she is allowed to move into a social protection institution or into another family, with the aim to provide social protection to a person in need for social protection, which can include housing, nutrition, clothing, health and other care, education and qualifications for work.

Health Protection

In 2012, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted *Policy and Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Mental Health in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina* for the period 2012-2020. These strategic documents were prepared within the Phase I of the Mental Health Project in BiH (PMZ BiH, 2010-2014). The Strategy sets out lines of action that will ensure the establishment of a system for the promotion of mental health, prevention of mental disorders, early detection and action, psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery, and the reduction of stigma and discrimination.⁴⁷ Thus, on the territory of the Federation of BiH, 42 community mental health centres were established, regulations on community mental health centres were adopted, standards and norms for the provision of services in the field of mental health were adopted, quality standards were developed and adopted, a number of community mental health centres were accredited, multidisciplinary teams were established (psychiatrist, two psychologists, social worker, occupational therapist and three nurses). The teams were educated for the work in the community, and in this sense, they were covered by numerous trainings. The collaboration between the centres and the community in which they operate has been achieved. Financing by the competent health insurance institutions has been provided. Very significant results have been achieved in developing beneficiaries' associations and

⁴⁷ Reform in the field of mental health protection has brought, above all, a change in the paradigm of community mental health services, as well as improvement in the field of protection of the rights of persons with mental disturbances and meeting their needs in the health care system. In the Federation, therefore, there are clear legal, regulatory and administrative provisions covering the field of mental health protection, which are partially harmonized with the list of EU regulations for the given field. Mental health services are organized and provided at all three levels of health care. A fundamental change in the context of mental health services involved the limited use of psychiatric hospital beds, the opening of a network of mental health centres, the development of other community services, a multidisciplinary approach and teamwork, and the establishment of intersectoral cooperation. The objectives of these processes were to build effective, efficient and high-quality mental health services that will be integrated into the primary health care system and follow the needs of beneficiaries, and be easily accessible to the majority of the population of the areas they cover;

improving their capacities. There are a number of beneficiaries' associations that implement their social inclusion projects, as well as programs to combat antistigma in the community. In the reporting period, information materials were prepared for patients on the role of mental health centres in preventing and responding to mental difficulties 2018-2019 and the role of mental health centres in the prevention of mental illness was intensified.

In the reporting period, the *Rulebook on Closer Conditions of Premises, Equipment and Personnel for Establishing and Performing Health Care Activities in Health Care Institutions*⁴⁸ was adopted, which, among other things, regulates the field of palliative care at the primary and secondary levels of health care. Also, the above-mentioned intersectoral Strategy dealing with persons of third age was adopted; and reporting forms were revised to collect health statistics on persons of third age.⁴⁹

After conducting public consultations during 2021, when through an online platform and media, the Law on Social Services in the Federation of BiH was presented to all interested entities (social work centres, social protection institutions, NGOs, Cantonal Ministries, etc.), a preliminary Draft Law on Social Services in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was prepared, which was submitted to the Cantonal Ministries responsible for the field of social and child protection for opinion. The Law on Social Services in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina uniquely regulates the types of social services, their provision and modality of financing, the standards under which they are provided, supervision, licensing of service providers, as well as other issues of importance for the exercise of the right to social services in the Federation of BiH.

As the body responsible for undertaking activities in order to improve the status and rights of persons with disabilities, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy continuously works on building a policy in the field of disability that will be established on human rights and social model, so that the participation of persons with disabilities in society will not be limited or disabled due to various obstacles of a physical nature, or laws and policies unfavourable to the status of persons with disabilities in the Federation of BiH 2016-2021, in order to improve the situation in all areas of importance for the status of persons with disabilities, in which all sectors of importance for the status of persons with disabilities are included, in order to multisectorally define strategic priorities, goals and activities in the field of disability. One of the specific goals of the above-mentioned strategic document is to improve the accessibility of the environment for people with disabilities through the removal of architectural and information and communication barriers, as a key aspect for their full integration into the social community. In this regard, it has been assessed, inter alia, as a priority to take appropriate measures for the so-called "reasonable adjustment" through legislation and by-laws. Achieving the stated goal will be beneficial not only for people with disabilities, but also for old and infirm persons who find it difficult to move due to changes caused by the physiological process of ageing.⁵⁰

Within the community in the Federation of BiH, institutions for the accommodation and protection of the elderly are being improved. In the territory of the Federation of BiH there are the following institutions that accommodate the elderly: 1 institution for old and infirm persons – founded by the Federation; 8 institutions for old and infirm persons – founded by of the Government of the Canton; 7 institutions for old and infirm persons – founded by the non-governmental sector; 29 institutions for old and infirm persons – private institutions.

In addition to accommodation facilities, there are also various counselling centres, home care and home assistance centres, diagnostic observation centres, day-care centres, reception centres, rehabilitation centres. Thus, there are six non-governmental safe houses/shelters in FBiH that provide psychosocial assistance and temporary accommodation to victims of domestic violence. For beneficiaries who are at withdrawal treatment from the use of psychoactive substances/drug/, there is 1 therapeutic community

⁴⁸ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" no. 5/20;

⁴⁹ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

⁵⁰ Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

founded by the government sector and 5 therapeutic communities founded by the non-government sector. Home care and home assistance is also organized to provide various services, such as: nutrition, performing housework and other necessary tasks and maintaining personal hygiene, to persons completely incapable of independent work and earning, to persons over 65 years of age (men) and 60 years of age (women), as well as to persons with permanent disabilities in physical and mental development, when these persons are not able to take care of themselves. This right is regulated in more detail by Cantonal regulations. An example of good practice is the EU SOCEM Project, which pilots the social service of home assistance. A three-day training session was organized for home assistance team members, in order to develop effective communication skills and approach to work with service beneficiaries.

Mental health protection in the Republika Srpska includes measures and activities in the promotion of mental health, prevention and early detection of mental health disorders and the implementation of medical intervention for mental health disorders, in accordance with modern achievements of medical science and practice.

In connection with the provision of care and services in homes for housing of beneficiaries for the elderly, in accordance with the *Rulebook on the Conditions for the Establishment of Social Protection Institutions and the Performing of Social Protection Activities*, the conditions that an institution must have in order to provide conditions for the smooth provision of basic services in terms of dormitories, spaces for work-occupational activities, rooms for the maintenance of personal hygiene, etc., as well as the provision of health services with appropriate equipment.

In order to improve the health care services for older persons, and for the purpose of building the capacity of health professionals, the *Rulebook on the Plan and Program of Specializations and Subspecializations*⁵¹ prescribes specialization in the field of geriatrics, in a duration of five years.

In the territory of the Republika Srpska, there are 51 social work centres and 11 social and child protection services, in order to ensure the most effective access to these institutions for all beneficiaries and possible beneficiaries of the social protection system. Also, the Ministry keeps records on the number of beneficiaries of the social protection system, as stated above, and therefore for beneficiaries of rights aged 65 and over;

- number of registered beneficiaries in the institution for the accommodation of elderly persons founded by the Government of the Republika Srpska, on 31 December 2020: PI Home for the Elderly Prijedor is 157, PI Home for the Elderly Istočno Sarajevo is 119, and PI Gerontological Centre Banja Luka is 297;
- the total accommodation capacity of these institutions: PI Home for the Elderly Prijedor is 221, PI Home for the Elderly Istočno Sarajevo is 143, and PI Gerontological Centre Banja Luka is 320;
- the number of employed professionals and workers who directly serve beneficiaries: PI Home for the Elderly Prijedor is 56, PI Home for the Elderly Istočno Sarajevo is 21, and PI Gerontological Centre Banja Luka is 89.

Projects

In the field of social welfare, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the implementation of the project (IPA 2016 - EU integration facility), *"Analysis of the needs of social work centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina"*. The aforementioned project was implemented in the period September 2020 – September 2021. The aim of this project was to develop an analysis of the needs of social work centres in order to improve the efficiency of institutions in the social welfare system at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main beneficiaries of the project are Ministries

⁵¹ "Official Gazette of the RS" numbers 2/14, 126/20, 10/21, 126/20 and 27/21;

with line competence in the field of social welfare at the Entity level and the line authority of the Brčko District of BiH. The project implemented the following activities:

- a) Assessment of the current state of social work centres infrastructure with regard to the following: condition of facilities, architectural obstacles, installations, ownership status, IT and technological infrastructure, competent authorities' plans for improving the situation and investment plans;
- b) Assessment of human resources, organizational structure and programming frameworks of social work centres;
- c) Assessment of the current practice in working with beneficiaries of services with regard to the following: accessibility of the premises of social work centres for individual work with beneficiaries, availability of rooms for group work;
- (d) Assessment of the situation in terms of standards and norms for the provision of services by social work centres;
- e) Assessment of the situation with regard to the existing IT networks of social work centres within the system and under the responsibility of competent authorities, and existing planning practices and future plans;
- f) Assessment of the situation with regard to equal opportunities and access to social work centres for: persons with disabilities, the elderly, persons in remote rural areas, and other groups that may be excluded due to the lack of adequate access to facilities in general or due to inadequate facilities;
- (d) Recommendations of interventions and measures necessary to improve the available infrastructure, installations and technical equipment;
- (h) Recommendations for the improvement of human resources and organization of social work centres;
- i) Recommendations for improving the IT infrastructure.

Through the project, a GAP analysis of the current situation in social work centres was made for three areas: spatial infrastructure, IT infrastructure and human resources, standards and programme activity, and a set of recommendations for improving the existing practice in social work centres was made, which will facilitate the use of IPA and other funds for improving the level and quality of social services and the development of projects within IPA 2020, i.e., planning and programming within the IPA III financial package. The project was implemented by the AESA Consortium selected by the EU in the tender procedure. The project was managed by the Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU Delegation, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska, and a representative of the Government of the Brčko District of BiH. The aforementioned projects are also partly aimed at improving the social position of the group of third age persons.⁵²

With the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and the World Health Organization, the Federal Ministry of Health, together with the Public Health Bureau of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has implemented the project, *"Strengthening and Advancing Sustainable Public Health Strategies, Capacities and Services to Improve Population Health in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CVRAM)"*. Within this framework, a detailed population health analysis, an analysis of risk factors, analysis of leading causes of mortality were carried out, and the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases 2019-2025, Guidelines for the Prevention of Leading Risk Factors for Family Medicine Teams, as well as primary health care manuals regarding the implementation of prevention for the most common and most important risk factors, were developed. The manual was developed in co-operation with the Association of Cardiologists of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Association of Family Physicians of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All Cantons, as well as all health centres in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, were involved in

⁵² Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

these activities. We emphasize that the application of the above-mentioned guidelines is also aimed at third age persons, who are the most numerous category of beneficiaries of family medicine services. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) also provided funding in partnership with the World Bank, and provided support to the Federal Ministry of Health in designing and implementing promotional and preventive programs to reduce risk factors for selected massive non-communicable chronic diseases among the population through the "Project for the Reduction of Risk Factors for Population Health in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The project activities focused on social mobilization, advocacy and media campaigns, interventions and monitoring and evaluation of implemented interventions aimed at the population in two selected local communities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zenica and Mostar). The general goal of the Project is to reduce the leading risk factors for the population health from non-communicable diseases through the promotion of improved control of tobacco and alcohol use, and through the promotion of healthy eating programs and physical activity of selected beneficiaries in selected local communities. The specific goal of the Project is to strengthen the capacity of key actors in the local community in terms of ensuring better coordination of the development and implementation of communication and advocacy strategies aimed at raising awareness of the risk factors that need to be changed. Although the target group of the Project aimed at the young population, in the long term such actions contribute to the preservation of health through the acquisition of healthy life habits at an earlier age, in order to preserve the health of the third age. We have been informed by the Swiss partner that a continuation of the Project is planned with the aim of disseminating this preventive model in the local community in the FBiH. With the support of the Swiss Agency for Development, the Strengthening Nursing Project is also being implemented, which focuses on the development of nursing in the community with additional training of patronage nurses or nurses in the community. A large part of the services of community nurses includes primary disease prevention, health education, social medical diagnostics, and, among other things, support and care for the elderly. According to the project dynamics, activities will continue in the coming year.

Also, the Federal Ministry of Health has been implementing the *Mental Health Project* for many years. Namely, activities aimed at the development of mental health services in the community were carried out in the territory of the Federation of BiH. 42 community mental health centres were established, regulations on community mental health centres were adopted, standards and norms for the provision of services in the field of mental health were adopted, quality standards were developed and adopted, a number of community mental health centres were accredited, multidisciplinary teams were established (psychiatrist, two psychologists, social worker, occupational therapist and three nurses). In the reporting period, information materials were prepared and disseminated for patients on the role of mental health centres in preventing and responding to mental difficulties 2018-2019. Promoting the role of mental health centres in the prevention of mental illness during the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly intensified. All the activities listed above are aimed, among other things, at third-age persons.

Furthermore, in accordance with the new format of reporting forms, data related to the health status of third age persons are collected and published in publications of the Institute for Public Health of the Federation of BiH, which are publicly available on the official website of the Institute. In the previous period, the Federal Ministry of Health worked on health promotion and disease prevention by promoting "Health in All Policies", which implies, among other things, that all policies, strategies, action plans and programmes are based on a multisectoral approach to health preservation. Based on the above, the Federal Ministry of Health coordinated the implementation of a number of promotional preventive programs, which related to the most common risk factors for the health of the population, mental health prevention, etc.

Continuous activities are also carried out to educate other sectors about their impact on health on the principle of "*Health in All Policies*". Joint action in the field of animal and human health ONE HEALTH can also be taken as an example. We emphasize that activities for the preservation and

improvement of health are also carried out at the level of local communities, in accordance with their specificities and needs.⁵³

PART III

1. Healthy and Active Ageing in a Sustainable World

Specifically, when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, every citizen is protected as much as they are able to express their needs. When we talk about third age persons and their rights, they are mostly advocated by pensioners' associations and NGOs. Through such organizations and associations, the needs of the elderly are best understood, and requests are forwarded to the competent levels of government.

The program "*Safe Old Age*" implies improving the quality of life of the elderly, but the current situation with the COVID 19 virus pandemic as well as various natural disasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina have pointed to problems that further complicate the status of the elderly in society. They have affected the quality of a decent life, economic security and the occurrence of various forms of violence (increasingly psychological and economic) that burden already vulnerable groups of persons of older age. A particularly risky group can be older women who live alone in remote rural areas or have disorderly family relationships, and depend on family members who neglect them. The characteristic of poverty is most often borne by households headed by older and uneducated persons, incapable of work, and in the largest percentage they are women (80%).⁵⁴

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the basic principles of the *Law on Health Care*⁵⁵, as well as other systemic laws in the field of health care, is the principle of the fairness in health care, which is achieved by prohibiting discrimination in the provision of health care on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, social origin, religion, political or other conviction, sexual orientation, wealth, culture, language, type of illness, mental or physical disability.⁵⁶

There are 1,181,267 registered patients in primary health care institutions in the Republika Srpska. Of the total number of registered patients, 262,051 or 22.18% are elderly (≥ 65). Not all residents of the Republika Srpska are covered by compulsory health insurance. Even if they are not covered by compulsory health insurance, people over the age of 65 are entitled to free health care, with the expectation of participating in the costs of certain medicines or medical supplies. Also, in the Republika Srpska, persons over the age of 65 are exempt from participation in payment of health care costs, except for the payment of medicines from the B list, provided that they are entitled to health insurance. Namely, the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska has established A and B lists of medicines, whereby the drugs on A list are exempt from participation, and for the drugs on B list, the insured pay 50% of the reference price of the medicine. Considering the income of the elderly, it is obvious that knowledge of the information about the drugs on the A and B lists could help them to meet their basic needs for medicines without unnecessary financial costs. Insured persons are entitled to reimbursement of health care costs provided for in the health insurance package. The Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska has regulated the right to information by its by-laws and is responsible for the implementation of these by-laws. The right to information implies that information is provided to each insured person on the rights arising from health insurance and the manner of exercising these

⁵³ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

⁵⁴ Survey of Household Spending 2015 ASBiH, Thematic Bulletin 15;

⁵⁵ "Official Gazette of the FBiH" numbers 46/10 and 75/13;

⁵⁶ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

rights. In accordance with the bylaws of the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska, information on health insurance rights is provided by the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska through guides to the health insurance rights, information leaflets, information phones, websites, educational meetings, media and Protector of Insured Persons' Rights (PIPR). In 2011, the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska appointed a PIPR, whose task is to provide all persons with the necessary information regarding the exercise of health insurance rights. The PIPR is employed by the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska and should be in direct contact with insured persons and staff in health institutions with which the Fund has signed a contract for the provision of services (outpatient clinics, health centres, hospitals, pharmacies, etc.). In rural parts of the Republika Srpska, health care is primarily provided by family medicine teams (FMTs), which often play a role as mediators in the provision of health care for the elderly population. Despite the fact that the Health Insurance Fund of the Republika Srpska has established mechanisms for informing citizens, the FMT is the most commonly used, unofficial mechanism that has established itself as such.

In the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project "*Ageing and Health*" is implemented by the Red Cross of the Brčko District with the support of the Swiss Red Cross in BiH and the Government of the Brčko District and intends to implement its activities with elderly and chronically ill women and men in the Brčko District of BiH, who would have access to home care and assistance services. Elderly persons have the opportunity to get involved and contribute to initiatives to improve the status of the elderly in communities in the Brčko District of BiH. This project is supported by the Swiss Red Cross in BiH, the Swiss Embassy, and by the Government of the Brčko District of BiH.⁵⁷

2. Contribution to UN Agenda 2030

In April 2019, Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared the BiH Voluntary Review of the Implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Members of the working group for the development of the Sustainable Development Goals Framework are representatives of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Directorate for Economic Planning and the Government of the Federation of BiH, the Government of the Republika Srpska and the Government of the Brčko District. In addition to the government sector, representatives from the civil society sector and academia are also active in this topic. Bosnia and Herzegovina has prepared the first Voluntary Review with the aim of encouraging the overall process of implementing Agenda 2030. At its 143rd session held on 14 September 2017, the Government of the Republika Srpska adopted a conclusion expressing its commitment to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations and the accompanying Agenda 2030. After that, the competent institutions in the Republika Srpska started implementing activities aimed at promoting all goals. The first step for implementation of Agenda 2030 in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to develop the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the period of validity and UN Agenda 2030, as a joint document of governments at all levels which defines broader development directions, through which the governments at all levels and the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina strive to contribute to accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the situation analysis with regard to sustainable development in BiH, that is, the key development trends, opportunities and obstacles, particularly within the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the European Union and extensive consultations held with representatives from institutions at all levels of government and socio-economic stakeholders in 2018 and 2019, three pathways of sustainable development were determined: 1) Good Governance and Public Sector Management; 2) Smart Growth; 3) Society of Equal Opportunities, and two horizontal themes: Human Capital for the Future and the "Leave no one

⁵⁷ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

behind" Principle. The institutions of the Republika Srpska actively participated in consultations organized by the United Nations in BiH and contributed to the work of focus groups on the development of parts of the Framework for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in BiH. The Framework has been fully developed by the Working Group composed of representatives of all levels of government in BiH, and is not a strategic document but offers broader development directions, points to obstacles to development in certain areas, and is a common form for reporting and monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2030 in BiH. At its 107th session held on 4 February 2021, the Government of Republika Srpska gave its consent to the text of the Framework for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in BiH. Some of the goals that can be related to this area are: Goal 1: End poverty everywhere and in all its forms, and Objective 3. Provide a healthy life and promote well-being for all people of all generations.

3. Experience with COVID-19 Pandemic

The declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bosnia and Herzegovina affected third age persons in terms of recommendations of the regional crisis headquarters, which, for certain periods of time, ordered a ban on movement of people over 65 years of age. Such bans were aimed at preventing mortality and protecting citizens, as well as the health system as a whole.

Many of the projects started in the reference period have changed the course of implementation precisely because of the pandemic. For example, In the reporting period, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the implementation of the Strengthening Nursing Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Phase 2), the implementation of which has been ongoing since December 2017 and ends in November 2021. Within the framework of the project, the activities under Component 2 - Access to Community Nursing were successfully implemented. The aim of this component is to develop gender-sensitive nursing/polyvalent patronage services in the local community and make them available to everyone, especially vulnerable and socially excluded groups, all with the aim of creating a comprehensive community nursing model that will have strong sustainability elements and will be integrated and implemented through the health care system.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most health centres in 22 selected local communities reorganized their community patronage/nursing departments, but nearly 300 nurses continued to provide services to patients in their homes, especially the most vulnerable patients (chronically ill and palliative patients). Telephone consultations and triage replaced home visits to some extent to protect patients and medical staff. Nurses took on new roles, such as sampling for COVID-19 testing, quarantine shifts, etc. The services provided in most of the health centres where the results were monitored are mostly curative (on average 80%) and should be both curative and preventive. Among other things, the reasons for this are the COVID-19 crisis, insufficient recommended number of community nurses in relation to the number of the population, especially in view of the ageing population with multiple health needs. The project of strengthening nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Phase 2) is implemented by the Fami Foundation in cooperation with partner institutions from different levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵⁸

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the end of 2019 when the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Federal Ministry of Health has mostly focused its activities on combating it. Among other things, through the project unit of the Federal Ministry of Health, it implements the COVID-19 Emergency Project, which has two components: Healthcare - in which the medical service is improved, especially public health laboratories, but also hospital service as well as intensive care units, through the procurement of missing laboratory and medical equipment, and the Social Protection Component within

⁵⁸ Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

which social benefits are realized for socially vulnerable categories, which includes in the largest percentage third age persons. This Project is planned to continue in 2022.

According to the instructions, orders and recommendations of the Federal Crisis Staff of the Federal Ministry of Health, during the COVID-19 pandemic, people of third age were placed in the first priority for the Vaccination Program. Recommendations were made on the importance of vaccination, especially for those over 65, as well as a number of recommendations on the treatment and behaviour of the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Crisis Staff regularly monitors the epidemiological situation among the FBiH population, including the monitoring of the percentage of vaccinated people. At the time of drafting this Report, despite great efforts, there remains a non-negligible percentage of unvaccinated persons over 65, although they are included in the front row of priorities. Calls for vaccination were realized electronically, but also by other media that were available to third age persons, including calls by family medicine doctors. Also, the organization of the entire vaccination process for third age persons was well planned and organized. Third age persons will continue to be the first priority in the COVID-19 vaccination program, since the coverage of third age persons, despite the efforts made, is neither sufficient nor satisfactory. Activities will be conducted and efforts will be made continuously to raise awareness among the population of the importance of vaccination programme and the reasons why the population needs to be vaccinated against COVID-19, including in particular third age persons belonging to vulnerable groups.⁵⁹

In accordance with the Decision on the Acceptance of Indebtedness under the Loan Agreement between BiH and the World Bank – International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for the Emergency COVID-19 Project for Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶⁰, the Federal Ministry adopted the Instruction on the Implementation of Component 2 of the Emergency COVID-19 Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (P173809) under the Project Agreement between the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In accordance with the Agreement, the funds intended for the implementation of Component 2 of the aforementioned Project Agreement are aimed at supporting the social protection system and persons in a state of social need in the Federation of BiH, as well as persons with disabilities of the first category through 3 sub-components related to: 1. financial assistance to persons in a state of social need in the FBiH, which will be realized as a temporary supplement to the permanent financial assistance realized in accordance with the applicable Cantonal regulations; 2. financial assistance to persons with non-war disabilities and civilian victims of war, but exclusively to beneficiaries of the right to care and assistance by another person of the first category, which will be realized as a temporary supplement to the monetary compensation realized in accordance with the applicable Federal regulation for a period of six months; and 3. support to public social assistance institutions with collective accommodation in the Federation of BiH, which will be realized one time through the procurement of necessary medical equipment and devices.

During the implementation of the Emergency COVID-19 Project in the period October, November and December 2020, financial assistance was realized by a total of 7956 beneficiaries of the right to permanent financial assistance, and 15730 persons exercising the right to care and assistance by another person (non-war persons with disabilities and civilian victims of war of category I). Temporary allowance for permanent financial assistance was paid through the SOTAc database in the period October/November 2020 in the monthly amount of BAM 100.00. Also, in the same period of 2020, a temporary allowance was paid for the care and assistance to non-war disabled persons as well as civilian victims of war in the monthly amount of BAM 100.00. In the stated period, payment orders were sent for funds in the amount of BAM 6,738,028.80, of which BAM 2,280,109.20 for persons exercising the right to permanent financial assistance, and BAM 4,457,919.60 for persons exercising the right to care and assistance by another person.

⁵⁹ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

⁶⁰ "Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH" number 28/20);

In July 2021, the Government of the Federation of BiH, at the proposal of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, adopted the Decree on the one-off monetary amount of the pension in support of pensioners in the Federation of BiH, who are residents of BiH. The aim of this assistance was to alleviate the consequences caused by the coronavirus pandemic, primarily those related to the costs of health care for pensioners, and to protect the standard of living of this population.⁶¹

A person himself/herself can partially influence the course of ageing and prevent problems that may befall him/her in old age. The positive impact of family and community can greatly facilitate the elderly to cope with problems of isolation and loneliness. It is necessary to initiate the provision of special protection and support to the elderly during and after natural or health disasters. It is also necessary to take into account the current state of depopulation (reduction of working age population, emigration of young and active persons, and increase in the share of older persons, especially women, in the total population).⁶²

In the Republika Srpska, from social protection institutions for the accommodation of the elderly, founded by the Government of Republika Srpska, we cite some examples of working with beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Interviews were conducted with beneficiaries by teams: social workers, psychologist and occupational therapist, who provided support and clarification on a daily basis in overcoming the existing situation related to the coronavirus (observing physical distance measures, wearing masks, the importance of disinfection, reducing contacts with beneficiaries from other departments and within departments, communication with families and the inability to visit them).
- The Department of Social Protection at the PI Gerontological Centre Banja Luka adapted to the new circumstances and found new ways of maintaining contacts between beneficiaries and relatives, which were possible in these conditions. Although a lot of our beneficiaries have their own mobile phone, however, the phone contact was not enough. We suggested them to get a high-quality mobile phone and number, so that beneficiaries could contact relatives through video calls. This suggestion was very well accepted and brought relief to our beneficiaries; the Department of Social Protection took over the procurement of all necessary things, as well as fruits and vegetables. Procurement was done collectively for all beneficiaries from all departments on a weekly basis. In this way, we were able to maintain peace among the beneficiaries because they had what they needed.
- The first visits to beneficiaries were organized at the PI Banja Luka Gerontology Centre, which were very emotional; the Department of Social Protection organized 153 visits via telephone in three days. Checkpoints were prepared, appointments scheduled, beneficiaries prepared for visits, protective equipment and disinfectant material provided, and visits were supervised. In order to reduce the impact of long-term isolation on the mental state of beneficiaries, when the epidemic situation allowed, outings were organized several times in smaller groups outside the institution, and sports and recreational gatherings were organized in smaller groups in the open air; Since we could not receive visits of schools and performers, we looked for ways and activities that could be carried out: Work-occupational activities were carried out individually in the beneficiaries' rooms, in accordance with their possibilities and interests. The following activities were included: reading, writing, painting, solving crosswords, handicraft (crocheting, knitting, embroidery, paper modelling), listening to music, decoupage, training on "smartphones", etc.
- In connection with the celebration of 1st October – International Day of Older Persons, an exhibition of works created during the pandemic was organized in the ceremonial hall of the Centre, as well as the promotion of the book by the beneficiary Slavica Pejaković "Dolina leptira" ("The Valley of Butterflies"), which was also written during the Coronavirus.

⁶¹ Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

⁶² Source: Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- In the last year (2020), due to the pandemic, they were not able to organize the New Year's program or spend holidays with families. An idea came to provide the "Festive Magic" in the one and only way available, to acknowledge the persistence so far and to inspire the strength to remain persistent, and over 3000 greetings cards arrived, and the effort put into making the greeting cards and wishes that were sent caused a positive reaction among the beneficiaries;

- In the upcoming period, it is planned to implement many concrete activities with beneficiaries, all in accordance with epidemiological recommendations.

Institutions for the accommodation of elderly persons continue with the activities of implementation of all epidemic measures prescribed by the competent institutions, with the immunization of as many newly admitted beneficiaries as possible, in order to maintain a constant percentage of 95% of the vaccinated, and testing continues with rapid tests of beneficiaries suspected to have COVID 19. Specifically, 228 beneficiaries have been fully vaccinated at the PI Gerontology Centre Banja Luka so far, i.e., they received the third dose (out of 300 beneficiaries we have on average at the moment), because they also include beneficiaries who passed away from the time of the second dose to the application of the third dose (vaccination with the second dose was carried out from 06 April to 08 April 2021), and they received the third dose on 18 October and 19 October 2021, and they also have 52 vaccinated employees of the Institution, with the aim of increasing this number, through education of employees on the importance of vaccination for employees in such institutions.

The Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at this time when the entire world is facing the greatest challenge it has faced in modern times, has entered into a fight with it using all available capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the organization and internal connectivity of society as a whole, especially health systems, and the readiness to act quickly, stop the spread of infection and the ability to organize and coordinate effectively.

The Assembly of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in difficult conditions and despite oscillations in the epidemiological situation, managed to carry out tasks within their competence effectively and contribute to its control.

The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through a body formed as the backbone in the fight against the pandemic caused by the occurrence and spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Protection and Rescue Headquarters, and through relevant departments, primarily the Department of Health and Other Services and the Division for Public Health, and the PHI "Health Centre" Brčko, regularly monitored the situation in the local community and, by analysis and comparison with the rest of the country and the region, adopted measures in the form of orders, recommendations and instructions to the citizens of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to act as effectively as possible in terms of preventing and stopping the spread of infection.

Currently, there is a decrease in the number of newly infected people on a daily basis. Observing the recommendations and orders of the relevant authorities, economic operators are allowed to work, the teaching process takes place regularly, but the restriction of movement is still in force. A strict set of measures has yielded results and the spread of the virus infection has been reduced to a minimum. It is encouraging to note that a very small number of student infections were recorded in 2021, which is a parameter that determines the regularity and continuation of the teaching process.

Since COVID-19 is a relatively new strain of the coronavirus, about which not all the facts are yet known, it is certain to assume that fighting it will be a challenge that the world will face in the near future. It is not possible to predict when the consequences of the infection will be remedied, but the effort of the Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina in its full capacity to control the spread of the virus is evident. In addition to the protection and prevention measures already taken, the Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its own Department of Health and Other Services, is focusing its activities in the coming period on vaccination of the population, as the most optimal system of defence against viruses.

In this regard, the primary basis of further work of the Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus the Department of Health, is the procurement of vaccines and regular procurement of tests. Preliminary activities for the receipt of the already ordered 32,000 doses through the COVAX system at the state level, and the procurement of 48,000 additional doses, have been realized, and it is expected to receive a new cold chain with specifications that correspond to their storage and then to receive vaccines.

By continuously purchasing protective equipment for healthcare professionals, necessary medical equipment, tests and laboratories and laboratory equipment, the Department of Health has contributed to reducing the spread of infection.

With the adoption of the Vaccination Plan, priority groups of citizens have been clearly identified, taking particular account of the most sensitive ones.

Ultimately, all instruments of government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue their activities in the prevention and fight against the pandemic, until it is fully brought under control, and the Department of Health continues to carry out all activities within its competence.⁶³

4. Decade of Healthy Ageing

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, "*Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030*" was accepted as an invitation to all States of the world to consider the importance of a ten-year period for taking joint actions to improve the lives of older people, their families and the communities in which they live. Concrete actions are set out in the priorities on healthy ageing, in order to highlight their importance, because it is necessary to: connect all the people of the world by building a common platform for innovation; plan actions that create new policies for longer life; collect global data and promote research on the needs of the elderly; organize long-term health and social protection according to the needs of the elderly; provide human resources for the implementation of integrated care for the elderly; launch a global campaign against "ageing" and changes in thinking and actions on age and ageing; support economic investment and a better understanding of healthy ageing; develop a global network of friendly cities on healthy ageing.

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Institute of Public Health of the Federation of BiH, within the Health Promotion Service, carries out appropriate promotional activities related to healthy ageing, through the celebration of the World Day of Ageing, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations dealing with third age persons, and in such a way that it provides professional support. One example of good practice is the Healthy Aging Centres that were formed in the Sarajevo Canton. Although not in the mandate of the health sector, the same gave full support, both to the formation of centres and to all activities taking place in Healthy Ageing Centres.⁶⁴

For the Republika Srpska, the answer to this question is given in Section III of the information on the contribution the UN Agenda 2030.

5. Priorities for the Future

In order to improve the provision of services to the elderly, a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the situation of the elderly in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be carried out in the coming period, which must include statistical indicators from the aspect of the total population, but also from the aspect of the place and type of residence; the percentage of elderly people in rural and urban areas; the amount of pension and other income; the precise age structure; the health status and family circumstances. Such a comprehensive analysis will be of great use in the adoption of the law on the elderly.

⁶³ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

⁶⁴ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

Taking into account that the share of the elderly population in the total population is increasing from year to year (results of population projections up to 2070), as well as the increasing outflow of working age population abroad (children of third age persons), it is necessary to pay greater attention to the need to care for these persons, both in health care terms and in terms of increasing the capacity to accommodate these persons.⁶⁵

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Preliminary Draft Law on Social Services in the FBiH was prepared in 2021 and submitted to the Cantonal Ministries responsible for social and child protection for their opinion. The Law on Social Services in the FBiH uniquely regulates the types of social services, their provision and modality of financing, the standards under which they are provided, supervision, licensing of service providers, as well as other issues of importance for the exercise of the right to social services in the Federation of BiH, so that the adoption of this Law would be of great importance for the elderly persons as well.

In the Three-Year Work Plan of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for the period 2022-2024, it is planned to develop a comprehensive Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, so that the previously prepared, Draft Strategy for Improving the Position of Older Persons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would become part of the sectoral strategy. Improving the accessibility of the environment for people with disabilities through the removal of architectural and information and communication barriers is a key aspect for their full integration into the social community. In this regard, it has been assessed as a priority to take appropriate measures for the so-called "reasonable adjustment" through legislation and by-laws. Achieving the stated goal will be beneficial not only for people with disabilities, but also for old and infirm persons who find it difficult to move due to changes caused by the physiological process of ageing.

At the level of the Canton, higher quality services for the protection of the elderly will be developed in the coming period through programs for the protection of the elderly, working on improving coordination between institutions that care for the elderly in their jurisdiction, creating better conditions for the care of the elderly within the community through day-care centres and other alternative forms of care. Care for the old population must also be addressed through home care programs, home assistance, purchase of medicines, payment of utilities, maintenance of hygiene, etc., because a lot of old people cannot afford to be placed in a home.⁶⁶

In mid-2020, an analysis of the state of social protection was conducted in three Cantons in the Federation of BiH, with special reference to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the social protection system. The survey was conducted by UNICEF in cooperation with the Associations of Social Workers (Central Bosnia Canton, Tuzla Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton). The key findings of the survey in the shortest are: it is clearly observed that the pandemic as a form of state of emergency in the Federation of BiH revealed weaknesses of policies, omissions of key actors, clearly indicating a high level of social exclusion of the beneficiaries' group. The pandemic has left significant consequences because there has been a significant number of layoffs of workers, and one part of citizens is in a state of social need, which requires finding new models of support for individuals and groups at risk. The results of the survey also confirmed that the pandemic further complicates the material position of beneficiaries of social protection rights, especially children and the elderly, due to additional needs for material and professional support to which the system is unable to respond adequately and in a timely manner. It is also important to point out that the applicable regulations and criteria for exercising rights are, of course, not based on real needs, but on status, for which systemic changes at the level of FBiH and BiH are necessary.

⁶⁵ Source: Federal Institute of Statistics;

⁶⁶ Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;

In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Schools of Medicine and Faculties of Health Studies at the Universities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar and Zenica, activities on the development of syllabuses of medical and related faculties were initiated with the aim of proposing a supplement to the work programme related to the elderly population and recommendations for a multidisciplinary approach to research on the needs of the elderly (including studies of gerontology and geriatrics). During the reporting period, training of trainers was conducted to educate health professionals through family medicine education centres at health centres.⁶⁷

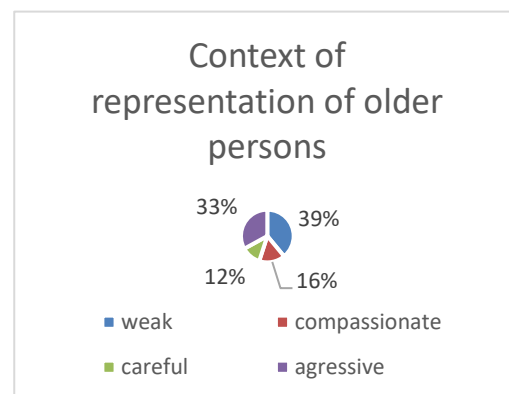
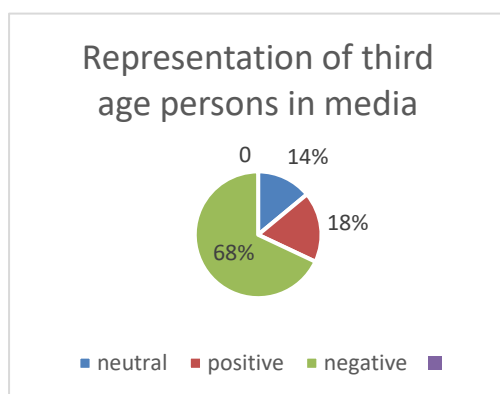
According to the Plan for conducting statistical surveys of interest to the Federation of BiH for 2022, the priorities are:

- Household Consumption Survey (HCS) – Conducting the fieldwork of the Household Consumption Survey during the first three months (January-March) of 2022, as a continuation of the fieldwork from 2021, with the aim of providing annual data on the habits and patterns of consumption of households and their members, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of households and individuals, as well as calculating the poverty rate and other social inclusion indicators, based on data on total household consumption.
- Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) - Preparation, organization and implementation of the first Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2022, with the aim of calculating poverty indicators based on the income of households and their members, providing annual data on the socioeconomic characteristics of individuals, social exclusion, material deprivation, housing conditions, etc.

Adult Education Survey is planned for 2023.⁶⁸

Also, for the future period, it is planned to continue working on improving the quality of life of the elderly, by linking as many institutions and NGOs, to include as many target groups as possible to be assisted through the provision of integrated home care services; the active participation of elderly people in creating an age-friendly environment and lobbying for their needs; and strengthening service providers in the field of ageing and health to meet the needs of vulnerable elderly men and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶⁹

Based on the analysis of electronic and print media in the reference period, it is concluded that there is very little representation of topics about the elderly (about 3%), and this information is purely informative, e.g., about the maturity of pensions for the current month and the like. This situation needs to be changed in the future.



⁶⁷ Source: Federal Ministry of Health;

⁶⁸ Source: Federal Institute of Statistics;

⁶⁹ Source: The Government of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

The need to build a society free of any forms of discrimination and inequality stems from the obligation to support the achievements of contemporary democratic societies. This implies a commitment to recognise the specific needs of different marginalised groups in all programmes, strategies, action plans and the like, especially in the case of multi-vulnerable categories, such as those of older women.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been celebrating the International Day of the Family for years and points to the importance of the family as the basis of a healthy society, in which all members are provided with human rights, and on this occasion, it emphasizes the need to protect and improve the rights of those members who are vulnerable (children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.).

The third Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018-2022, as a strategic document for achieving gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, recognized the need to improve the position of multi-marginalized groups, including older women, in transversal areas of activity. Activities carried out through the Financial Mechanism for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan of BiH have influenced the improvement of the position of vulnerable groups, and therefore people of older age. For the coming period, the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights of BiH, plans to continue similar activities on promoting gender equality and improving the position of marginalized groups, especially through the Generation Equality Project.⁷⁰

6. Conclusion

The proposed text of the Second Periodic Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) prepared by the Interdepartmental Working Group made up of appointed representatives of the competent institutions, as referred to in Part I, 2. General information of the Report.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to fulfil the obligation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as subject to international law, submits the report on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing to the UNECE United Nations Commission in Geneva, SWGA – Standing Working Group on Ageing. Starting from the foregoing, it is proposed that the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after considering the Second Periodic Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, adopt the following:

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Second Periodic Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Implementation of the Madrid Action Plan on Ageing (MIPAA), for the reference period January 2017-December 2020, is hereby adopted;
2. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is nominated to submit the Second Periodic Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), for the reference period January 2017-December 2020, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the UNECE United Nations Commission in Geneva, SWGA – Standing Working Group on Ageing, upon its adoption at the session of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁷⁰ Source: Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

