

**Framework concept
for a long-term solution of the status and the living standard of older persons
in the Slovak Republic**

September 2004

Introduction

The problems of the ageing population related to the unfavourable demographic development worldwide are reflected in the need to adopt, also in the Slovak Republic, a conceptual solution of the issues of older people in order to ensure a sustainable development and quality of life for older persons. To achieve sustainable development requires that a corresponding balance between the socio-economic and environmental effects and the change in the population development and structure be maintained. The ultimate objective is to ensure a balanced and integrated development that would guarantee a satisfactory living standard for the increasing number of older persons and continuous attention to the problems associated with longevity and its consequences. To capture the process of ageing in its complexity and consequences, as well as the interlinking nature of social and economic policies and their interfaces and interdependence require a coordinated and integrated approach and a conceptuality of the solution within the framework of overall economic and social planning.

By Slovakia's accession to the European Union acceleration is anticipated in the economic growth coupled with an increase in the living standard. The dynamics of the generation of GDP should also be positively affected by an increased volume of direct foreign investment, the financial support from the Structural Funds, and the growing consumption linked to wage level shifts, while the Slovak Republic should also become part of the single internal market and customs duties area. The key objective of the economic policy is to achieve a high and sustainable economic growth and consequently also a faster-growing living standard for the whole population and older persons, in particular.

The framework concept for the long-term solution of the status and the living standard of older persons, in the light of the complexity of approach and the scope of the mesh of the issues affecting the status and living standard of older persons, draws upon international legal documents covering the issues of ageing in its complexity. The International Plan of Action on Ageing, which guides the thinking and the formulations of policies and programmes for the issues of ageing was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982 (Resolution 37/51) after it had been adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna. Furthermore, the material presented relies on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991) and the conclusions of the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (8-12 April 2002) and the adopted International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The basic socio-economic trends in the development of the Slovak Republic, strategies, principal objectives, key tasks, and political measures for the solution of the issues of social security, poverty, inclusion, employment, housing policy, family policy, gender equality and health promotion, with emphasis on the specific issues of senior citizens, are contained in the approved national conceptual and strategic documents. They include in particular, the Concept for the pension security reform in the SR, the National Action Plan of Inclusion for 2004 to 2006 in the SR, the Strategy for supporting employment on the basis of the reform of the social system and the labour market, the Concept of the Employment Policy, the National Plan of Employment, the Strategy for the reform of the employment in the public sector, the Concept for the State family policy, the Concept for housing policy, the Concept for equal opportunities between women and men, the National Action Plan for Women in the SR, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the SR, the National Programme for the Development of Living Conditions of Citizens with Disabilities in All Areas of Life, the National Health Promotion

Programme, the National Mental Health Programme, the Concept for long-term and social care and the National Programme for the Protection of Older People.

For this reason, the presented material does not reproduce the objectives, key tasks and political measures which have been presented in the above documents, but rather, comprises a framework concept for a long-term solution of the status and the living standard of older persons, drawing - in a concise form - on the analyses, goals, tasks and measures produced.

The living standard of older persons is delved in under eight main pillars which have a bearing on the situation of older persons and the approaches to it, namely:

- I. work activities,
- II. income security,
- III. healthy lifestyle, the quality of life,
- IV. health care,
- V. comprehensive social services,
- VI. housing,
- VII. education,
- VIII. active ageing.

This systematic structuring of the framework concept for long-term solution of the status and the living standard of older persons in the Slovak Republic is preceded by a section on fundamental ethical principles which offer – in a concise form - a cross-sectional vision for the status of older persons.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic is currently working on the National Report on the Strategy, Sustainability and Adequacy of Pensions in Slovakia. The Joint Commission/Council Report on adequate and sustainable pensions is the baseline for the preparation a of this report.

The European Commission will be concerned with the issues of access to systems of health care and long-term care for older persons and their sustainability and quality in a separate report that will identify a common strategy in this area for formulating national reports, as well as identify the common goals that will orientate the strategy through applying the open method of coordination.

The process of population ageing – the demographic development

Demographic ageing is shaped by the size, proportion and the structure of the age population groups as these alter the proportion of the young and the older persons, who depend on others, and the size of the working population. The initial data for the calculation of the projections of the development in the population of the SR by 2050, prepared by the Statistical Office of the SR, was the number and the structure of the population at 31 December 2001. Projections were made in eight variants (low, medium, high, very low, young, old, and excluding migration) which differ from each other in the scenarios of the demographic development expected and their probability. The medium variant is considered to be the most likely. The main characteristics of the development in the population of the SR in the first half of 21st Century will be a reduction in the number of population and ageing of the population. The intensity of these

processes will directly depend on the development in the rate of birth, death and migration but it will also be indirectly affected by other demographic factors, as well as social, political, economic and cultural factors.

The process of ageing of the population will be accelerated in the forthcoming decades. It will be the result of the anticipated drop in the number of births and the extension of human life. The process of ageing of the population is irreversible in this projection, it can be neither halted nor mitigated. In terms of importance, ageing of the population will be the most profound consequence of the current population development, which is evidenced in the development of the ageing index, with the ageing process accelerating in all projection variants. While there are two persons aged up to 17 years for every person older than 65, in 2050 this ratio will be reversed under the medium projection. There will be almost two persons aged over 65 for every person aged up to 17 years. The anticipated demographic development will entail a number of profound changes. The society must prepare for an increased proportion of older and the oldest old people and the tensions in international relations as well as the integration of greater numbers of foreigners. New approaches in devising family, social, economic and migration policies will be needed to tackle the situation, taking account of the phenomenon of ageing and its consequences in order to ensure and maintain the living standard for older persons. This will imply coordination of the relevant policies and their implementation in mutual links and interrelated connections.

Fundamental ethical principles which will need to be pursued in implementing policies in particular areas

The fundamental ethical principle to be applied with regard to the status of older persons is to respect the uniqueness of an older person while fully acknowledging equality of people as to their dignity and rights, to respect the dignity of personality of the older person, to respect his or her independence, the right of self-determination, the right to privacy and freedom of will. It is crucial to support, strengthen and protect the family as the basic unit of the society, in which intergenerational solidarity, reverence and respect for older persons are naturally realised.

Objective:

Create conditions for equal and active life of older persons; eliminate causes of inadmissible restriction of basic human rights and freedoms based on age and social status; prevent discrimination and social exclusion of older persons; strengthen intergenerational solidarity, self-sufficiency; recognise the contribution of older persons to the family and the society; promote understanding, tolerance and solidarity between and among generations.

Measures:

- In drafting legislation, place emphasis on the provisions ensuring prevention and elimination of potential disadvantages in legal relations based on age.
- Undertake a review of effective legal regulations from the aspect of potential disadvantages based on age and propose measures to eradicate identified weaknesses.
- Apply the aspect of non-discrimination on the grounds of age in conceptual, decision-making and evaluation processes.

- Reveal and remove causes of inadmissible restrictions of basic human rights and freedoms based on age and promote action for the protection of rights and interests of older persons.
- Raise the level of legal awareness in the area of equal treatment with respect to age and ethical principles. Exploit knowledge in the field of human rights to eliminate potential disadvantages and social exclusion. Promote production and dissemination of legal, psychological, social, health and other specialist materials that combat discrimination, social exclusion based on age, unacceptable restriction of the rights and freedoms of older persons.
- Encourage research and projects focusing discrimination on the grounds of age in all areas life and the research and monitoring of such unfavourable phenomena, as abuse, battering, ill treatment, restriction of older persons, including domestic violence. Extend the body of research into the process of ageing and old age, the status and the needs of older persons with regard to gender differences, making use of the method of gender mainstreaming.
- In educating the young generation, emphasize the view of ageing and old age as a natural process that concerns all the age groups as a symbol of experience, highlight the irreplaceable role of older persons in the family, in the community, and in all forms of social life. Promote the importance of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational links as a major prerequisite for social cohesion and the foundation of the society for all ages, encourage non-discriminating attitudes with regard to older persons in all spheres of life of the young generation and in all settings.
- Integrate into the education programmes at all levels of formal schooling information on ageing and preparation for old age, design education programmes with a view to positively shape stereotyped views of ageing and older persons.
- Urge mass media, education institutions, nongovernmental organisations, government institutions to include in their programming topics conducive to eradication of negative stereotyped ideas of older persons, and, on the other hand, highlight and promote positive attitudes to old age in the thinking of the young generation.
- develop education programmes presenting older persons as resources and bearers of knowledge, culture and spiritual values, give coverage to older persons who in adopting an active attitude to life uproot the stereotyped views of useless old age.
- Ensure that students of study subjects with elements of human care in the curriculum are adequately trained in, both, the practical knowledge and skills in the important areas of geriatrics and care for older persons.
- Support involvement of young people in provision of services and care for older persons, in the work with older persons, in voluntary activities thus encouraging intergenerational links.
- Within the framework of the crime prevention programme, continue supporting projects specifically designed for the protection of older persons against violence, ill treatment, and crime, particularly through supporting projects focused on awareness raising and security of older persons, the area of services and advice centres in the place of residence.
- In crime prevention apply and promote multifaceted assistance and cooperation in communication with and approaches to older persons.

I. Work activities

Equal opportunities in the labour market and the broadest possible support of employment of older persons are a means for their activation and full integration in the society. At the same time they involve work and economic benefits for the society.

Objective:

Publicly encourage deferring retirement and remaining in employment, create conditions for increased employment and employability of older persons, create conditions and opportunities for older persons to remain employed or return to employment thus influencing extension of their active phase of life. Based on the objectives set at the European Council in Lisbon with regard to rate of employment of the workforce as a whole and employment of women and setting of the target of 50% rate of employment for older persons (aged 55-64 years) by the Stockholm European Council, to be achieved by 2010, achieve progressively this target also in the Slovak conditions. At the same time there is a need to improve corporate training, work conditions and the organisation of work, increase adaptability of older workers to change, apply a comprehensive approach to eradication of inequalities in the workplace based on age, and improve options for older workers and retirees to join the working process, including making use of their experience.

Measures:

1. Apply the principle of equal opportunities, i.e. preclude discrimination in the treatment based on age in access to all kinds of work and remuneration for the work Identify and analyse groups at risk of discrimination on the ground of age with a view to more effective targeting of activation measures; monitor, evaluate and penalise cases of discrimination in employment relations based on age made by employers.
2. Increase flexibility of the labour market and accessibility and diversity of different types of work, support temporary forms of employment, contribute to the introduction of flexible forms of work arrangements, enabling part-time employment, and progressive retirement of older persons through flexible hours of work.
3. Ensure efficient human resource management and personnel management on the basis of the Sectoral Operational Programme – Human Resources which includes approaches to solving the problems of the senior workers and workers approaching that age, namely within the measure dealing with the integration of specific population groups at risk of social exclusion, where persons over 50 are one of the target groups.
4. Strengthen the opportunities for employee participation in addressing the issues of safety and health protection at work, particularly giving them a chance to voice their views on issues decisively affecting their conditions of work and performance of work (to be addressed by social partners within collective bargaining over working conditions, including options for flexible forms of the organisation of work). Strengthen the awareness efforts aimed at overcoming prejudice of employers against employing older persons and disseminate best practice.

5. Popularise and promote optional and voluntary work of older persons in areas where they can put to use their interests, skills and capabilities.

Responsibility: all ministries and other central bodies of state administration

6. Apply individual and targeted approach to unemployed older citizens, intensify provision of information and advice services as the main tool for early identification of individual needs of the unemployed. Upon first contact with the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, provide every unemployed person with assistance in job search through information on vacancies and their requirements, options to participate in programmes of active labour market measures, activation programmes, and programmes for increasing employability. As part of these services, offer counselling assessing clients' personal aptitudes and skills with a view to early identification of their needs and optimal type of intervention.
7. Evaluate active labour market policy measures as to their cost-efficiency, effectiveness for the target groups, including older persons; a system of follow-up monitoring of active measures programme participants from the aspect of their entry into employment or return into unemployment will be a component part.

Responsibility: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

8. Ensure higher participation of employers and social partners in addressing the social impacts on older workers of national economy restructuring.

Responsibility: Ministry of Economy of the SR.

II. Income security

Income security in old age is the result of the lifelong activity of every individual and his or her responsible approach to the preparation for old age and is a prerequisite for the economic independence of older persons.

Objective:

Encourage personal responsibility of the individual for the preparation for old age, which is a continuous life-long process. Strengthen the significance of pension insurance, old-age pension savings scheme, complementary pension insurance (saving), life insurance and other forms of accumulating financial reserves for old age. Adopt adequate measures responding to population ageing in areas of pension insurance and the whole social security. Modernise the system of social protection and provide targeted assistance of the society in cases where older persons are unable to secure their material needs owing to serious health and social reasons, and they are unable to do so even with the help of the family.

Measures:

1. Ensure sustainability and adequacy of pension insurance and provide for long-term financial stability of the pension system within the implementation of the concept of pension insurance.

Responsibility: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice of the SR.

2. Favour motivation of citizens to remain active in the labour market thus increasing the rate of employment and extend the working life in the interest of ensuing sustainability and adequacy of pensions, give preference to gradual retirement over the option of early retirement or some other forms of material security.
3. In cooperation with social partners, take action in the social security system responding to the process of ageing of the population and the increase in the number of older persons in the society.
4. Promote awareness of one's own responsibility for the preparation for ageing and old age, popularise creation of financial reserves for old age.
5. Increase information of citizens of productive age and pre-retirement age about entitlement conditions for old-age pension and the significance of supplementary forms of security and the creation of reserves for old age (e.g. complementary pension insurance /savings scheme/ life insurance and others).

Responsibility: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR.

III. Healthy lifestyle, quality of life

A healthy lifestyle is integral to responsible preparation for old age. It is a prerequisite, ensuring active and dignified ageing and the quality of life of older persons. Both, the society and the individuals themselves have to contribute to the achievement of a healthy lifestyle and the quality of life.

Objective:

In the long-term, promote and develop measures, programmes and procedures which would result in betterment of the health state of the population by means of promoting healthy lifestyles and healthy ageing; reduce the growth of the number of older persons dependent on others for help, and promote active life of older persons; create prerequisites for maintenance of physical and mental capacities of older persons namely through activation of social inclusion, creation of equal opportunities, extension of the available range of reconditioning, rehabilitation and personal development. Improve the quality of environment, which in turn has an impact upon the quality of life; prevent accidents and dependence of older persons by eliminating barriers (architectural, and transportation) in the public and home settings.

Measures:

1. Increase information of the population in the area of health protection, disease and accident prevention, prevention of unfavourable consequences of diseases, highlight the responsibility of the individual for the quality of his or her life.
2. Conduct targeted educational and counselling activities for the intermediate generation and the seniors focusing the principles of active ageing, particularly well-balanced diet, regimen, physical and mental activities.
3. Promote measures to improve the working environment and environmental quality as factors of quality of life.
4. Create conditions for the application of rehabilitation and reconditioning, extend the capacity of recreation facilities, promote sports and recreation activities, fitness exercises as a vehicle to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Responsibility: all ministries and other central bodies of state administration

5. In the area of protection of the consumer – the senior, focus the attention on the elimination of the possibility to confuse different kinds of products; update and harmonise denotation of products in compliance with analogous regulations of the EU. Promote senior-friendly design that takes account of their needs.

Responsibility: Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture of the SR

6. Improve protection and quality of environment and nature; ensure a well-balanced use of natural resources as a means for sustainable development of cities and communities and a healthy life and ageing.

Responsibility: Ministry of Environment of the SR

7. Within the transport policy, apply specific requirements laid on transportation systems with regards to the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, particularly regarding safety, accessibility and stability. Make the transport network accessible to all persons with regards to their mobility and risk-free safety.
8. Retain the advantages in the transportation of seniors granted by public transport services and the advantageous conditions for seniors in the area of telecommunications.

Responsibility: Ministry of Transport, Post, and Telecommunications of the SR in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance of the SR

IV. Health care

The importance for the society of health care for older persons has not only its ethical aspect but is related also to the economic situation in the society. The rising number of older persons who need and will need health care is bound to bring about increasing demands on the

health care system. It is therefore necessary to encourage interest and participation of all generations in the prevention and health keeping programmes .

Objective:

The objective of health policy is to improve the health state of the population, increase the action capacity of the health care system that would meet the needs of the population, and ensure the financial protection of individuals against the so-called catastrophic costs of health care. Develop a health care system capable of coping with the new demographic situation through increasing effectiveness and cost-efficiency of health care, while maintaining access to it. Apply the principle of equal access to health care, support measures associated with primary and secondary prevention. Create a system for long-term social and health care, while addressing comprehensively the problems of older persons depending on long-term social and health care. Strive to improve the health state of the ageing population, with emphasis not only on extending the average life expectancy but on a disability-free life expectancy. Solve systematically the care after chronic patients depending on nursing care; promote the development and competencies of certified nursing and rehabilitation of older persons, including extending services of home care. Support the development of hospice care; support restructuring and re-profiling of health facilities; increase awareness of the population in areas of health keeping and prevention of unfavourable consequences of diseases; emphasise co-responsibility of each individual for his or her health; strengthen the role of the patient and his/her family. Promote geriatric research.

Measures:

1. Building on the reform of state administration and the local self-government, create a framework for the provision of flexible community services, emphasising the importance of care in the home of the older person, while improving coordination of health care and social services.
2. Create legislative prerequisites for long-term social and health care.

Responsibility: Ministry of Health of the SR in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

3. Provide health care through implementation of the fundamental principles which include: equal care for equal need, the capacity to pay, a universal coverage, protection of the rights of patients, enforcement of the rules of the game, health care - technically a service and ethically a mission, and free access for licensed health providers to the health care market. Apply these principles within the reform of the health care provision aiming at a more efficient use of resources.
4. Jointly with professional medical societies, support the inception and implementation of projects aimed at mental health of older persons, accident and injury prevention, prevention of consequences of civilisation diseases, and prevention promotion. Strengthen the contribution of educational programmes of self-help patient organisations aimed at secondary prevention.
5. Ensure equal access to health care for older persons.

6. Strengthen prevention in the system of health care, particularly preventive programmes for early detection of cardiovascular and cancer diseases and strengthen the role of rehabilitation.
7. Develop the system of health care, increase the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of health care for older persons.

Responsibility: Ministry of Health of the SR

8. Create conditions for a multidisciplinary approach to assessment of the needs of the patient – the senior- at the community level in the area of provision of health care in the home. Support the development of an integrated home care.

Responsibility: Ministry of Health of the SR in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and Ministry of Interior of the SR

V. Comprehensive social services

The growth of the number of older persons and the increasing demand for social services call for the development of social services that would reflect the diversity of social situations of older persons and minimise the risk of their social exclusion and the need of institutional care. The ability to live in the natural social environment is a prerequisite for the maintenance and development of the social status of older persons. The family as the basic societal unit creates security for the life of older persons, helps them maintain their independence and self-reliance, provides room for the application of intergenerational solidarity and prevents social isolation.

Objective:

Create a comprehensive system of social services that will involve all spheres of life of older persons, that will respect the rights and individual needs of older persons and will enable them to remain in natural home surroundings as long as possible or throughout their lives, that will be conducive to the maintenance of their independence, participation, and dignity in experiencing this phase of life and at the same time will ensure help to those families that take care after an older member of the family who depends on others for assistance. Support approaches to the maintenance of the natural social environment as a prerequisite for the maintenance and development of the social status of older persons.

Measures:

1. In working with social partners, produce legislation in the area of social services that will cover:
 - provision of professional advice for older persons on social services,
 - focussing of the attention of social workers and all social service providers on outreach efforts, looking for older persons who are in unfavourable health and social situation,
 - supporting extension of the range of social services and their accessibility – local, time and financial,
 - creation of conditions for a dignified and active life of the clients of social facilities for older persons,

- provision for access to social service facilities, giving preference to day care over residential all-year-round care,
 - provision for high quality care and dignified conditions of life in social service facilities,
 - advocating the development of social services that help keep the older persons in their home settings.
2. Develop measures helping families that provide long-term care for their older family members, as well as families with an older member.
 3. Give support to the further development of social services, ensuring their quality, effectiveness, access and enforceability of basic human rights and freedoms of the citizen in the social service provision.
 4. Respect the role of social services as a productive factor creating conditions for employment and employability, while making use of the instruments of employment policy.

Responsibility: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

5. Support the development of a network of the so-called respite and support services for family caregivers to help reconcile family and work responsibilities (e.g. day station, night station, hotline, professional visiting services – care-giving and nursing, help with household chores, counselling – support groups for informal caregivers, community centres – a complex of interlinking institutional care and field services).
6. Support the development of assistance for older persons in their natural environment and encourage research into the quality of life of older persons and their needs

Responsibility: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, self-government regions and municipalities

7. Develop a system of rehabilitation as a means and instrument of social inclusion for older persons enabling them to remain in their natural social environments.

Responsibility: Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

8. Motivate and strengthen the role of the individual, family, community in the process of ageing and create room for an active life of older persons.
9. Continue creating and improving conditions of life for older persons and support all activities conducive to the improvement of intergenerational relations.
10. Support and create life conditions for older persons in their natural social environments, support care for older persons in the family.
11. Support activities and projects aimed at counselling and assistance for older persons and families giving care to an older member dependent on others for assistance.

12. Encourage services and programmes for older persons within the social programmes of individual sectors.

Responsibility: all ministries, other central bodies of state administration, self-government regions and municipalities

13. Ensure finances for adequate provision of self-government functions of local authorities in the area of social assistance through social services.

Responsibility: Ministry of Finance of the SR and municipalities

14. Support building and developing social service infrastructure, using the principle of proportionate regional development tailored to the needs through the preparation and support for the projects of transformation of social services and building and developing infrastructure of social service facilities using the financial support within the EU Structural Funds, loans from the Development Bank of the Council of Europe and the involvement of state resources and other legal and natural persons participating in co-financing of projects.

Responsibility: Ministry of Construction and Regional Development and the Ministry of Finance, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

VI. Housing

Adequate housing for older persons is particularly important, deferring or preventing the departure of older persons to facilities, where they would be separated from their families, losing their previous social contacts.

Objective:

Continuously create conditions for decent and adequate housing for older persons, including economic and legislative prerequisites for access to sheltered housing of pensioners with low and medium incomes; provide older persons with support in adjusting housing to their needs; improve the housing conditions for older persons, with an emphasis on their individual character and regard these measures as prevention and postponement of institutional care.

Measures:

1. Create conditions for sustainability and accessibility of adequate household housing, including low- and medium-income sheltered housing for pensioners.

Responsibility: Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

2. Within the new and existing housing development enforce general technical requirements enabling use of public buildings by persons with restricted mobility and orientation.

Responsibility: Ministry of Environment of the SR

3. Implement a programme of supported housing construction (adjustable and sheltered apartments) within the State Housing Development Fund and the provision of subsidies

towards construction of tenant houses for socially weaker population groups in an assumption to extend the range of municipal tenancy housing for persons that are disadvantaged in access to housing not only because of income, but for other reasons as well (age, health state) and thus create conditions for decent and adequate housing of older persons, persons requiring integrated care, and persons with disabilities.

4. Review and create new forms of support of the acquisition of housing by older persons, including access to small floor area apartments and apartments in houses providing nursing service and new forms of support for adequate adjustments of home environment and housing for older persons, particularly those dependent on assistance from others.

Responsibility: Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Finance of the SR

5. Support research into the area of housing for older persons and their needs, with a view to creating a baseline for the design of a housing policy accommodating also the specific issues of housing for older persons.

Responsibility: Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

VII. Education

Education is one of the crucial conditions of an active and fulfilling life. Access to long-life education is an indispensable prerequisite for retaining the knowledge and skills by ageing persons and seniors as it contributes to the mental well-being, maintenance of working skills and ability to remain in the labour market and strengthens independence. It can contribute to the reduction of marginalization, loneliness, generational intolerance and improve the opportunities to take part in the life of the society. Education contributes to humanization, social integration and qualification, enabling one's assertion in the labour market.

Objective:

Through a system of life-long learning, provide people with training opportunities throughout their lives, in accordance with their needs and interests. Adult education should build on their initial training, further developing knowledge and skills, values and attitudes, interests, personal and social skills necessary for a gratifying work even beyond the working life. Education creates an environment and programmes enabling ageing persons and seniors to cope with new knowledge and information technologies, which can be conducive to the maintenance and development of their capacities, contribute to coping with the demands of modern society, and cater for their needs and interests. Develop the area of education of all age groups in preparation for ageing and old age, with a focus on creating good relations, learning about the needs and problems of seniors, and promoting attitudes of respect and understanding.

Measures:

1. Advocate the implementation of the concept of life-long education and training and support the development programmes of life-long education and training.

2. Support education programmes of universities of third age, with a view to stimulating life activities of the seniors, extending their education opportunities as one of the vehicles to maintain and promote mental health and delay the process of ageing.
3. Within universities of third age support training in the use of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies.
4. Contribute towards the Slovak Republic's joining the European and world structures dealing with education for the seniors (EURAG, AIUTA, LiLL, EFOS).
5. Engage the interested training institutions and individuals in the training programmes of the European Union that deal with the issues of the seniors (Socrates, Grundtvig).
6. Design training, information and retraining programmes for the seniors, design joint education programme with the young generation.
7. Annually open development programmes designed to support life-long education and support selected study programmes.
8. Increase information of the seniors on the opportunities and forms of education, create a unified comprehensive system of generally accessible relevant information on the range of opportunities and forms of education available.

Responsibility: Ministry of Education of the SR

9. Create, implement and develop a system of life-long education and training as a necessary prerequisite to maintain or regain employment; improve measures conducive to the return of older persons into the education system. Achieve the development and quality of life-long education through stimulating supply of life-long education, including support for new forms of education, training in information and communication technologies, and corporate and managerial skills. Stimulate the demand for education of older workers by incentives for employers to invest in training of older workers through reimbursing part of their training costs.

Responsibility: Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

10. Maintain and increase the activity and flexibility of the ageing persons and seniors through investment into education, support the development of models of continual education, including education for the seniors in information technologies, language skills, and systematically extend the supply of training programmes.
11. Ensure preparedness of public service staff to work with older persons and seniors.

Responsibility: all ministries and other central bodies of state administration, self-government regions, municipalities.

VIII. Active ageing

A broadest possible participation of older persons in the life of the society is a major prerequisite for the development of the society, healthy attitudes to ageing, mutual respect and solidarity between generations.

Objective:

Enable older persons to influence political and social development, to voice their needs and demands and to take part in realising them. Attract older persons' participation in social activities, utilising their potential; create conditions for active participation of older persons in designing programmes and projects for them.

Measures:

1. Provide opportunities for individual development of older persons, both in the workplace and the community; provide safeguards for enjoyment of economic, social, cultural and civil rights of older persons, as required by the development of an open society for all generations.
2. Support and use older persons' participation in global programmes at all levels and in all spheres of life. Encourage foundation and activity of community centres for seniors.
3. Draw up a concept of continual care for ageing workers and former workers - pensioners. Extend social programmes of employers with the area of care for seniors.
4. Create conditions to facilitate social inclusion of ageing and senior workers, using modern technologies.

Responsibility: all ministries and other central bodies of state administration, self-government regions, municipalities.

5. Support a systematic approach to the issues of older persons in the area of physical education and sports; develop activities of voluntary workers – seniors for the needs of physical education and sports; support their training for these activities.

Responsibility: Ministry of Education of the SR

6. Support the projects aimed at fostering international ties and mutual intergenerational tolerance and projects designed to meet the needs of seniors in the cultural area.
7. Support the interest, cultural and amateur artistic activities of seniors.
8. Make calls for research projects on cultural dimension of the life of seniors in the sectoral research and development.

Responsibility: Ministry of Culture of the SR

9. Encourage, give coverage and create conditions for the development and dissemination of activation, information and education programmes for seniors in the mass media.

Responsibility: Ministry of Culture of the SR and the Ministry of Education of the SR

Conclusion

Recognising that older persons are not one homogenous group is a prerequisite for devising solid social policy in respect of older persons. Given the limited resources of public budgets, in order to achieve sustainability of the system, cost-efficiency and targeting of state interventions on behalf of older persons are critical. Statistical data relating to the older age population group, which are gathered through the census, surveys, or statistics, are fundamental for the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes, catering for older persons and ensuring integration and monitoring of the living standard of older persons.

In the light of the increasing numbers of older persons and the need for a concerted and integrated approach to the solution of their status and their living standard in drawing up unified policies, in the horizon by 2010, foundation of a national institutional mechanism is anticipated, which will use effective partnerships between the government, local and regional self-government and all other components of the civil society and will permanently and from a long-term point of view deal with the issues of the status and coordination of the protection of older persons having cross-sectional supra-sectoral and broad-spectrum character, as coordination is seen as necessary. It would equally pay attention to the protection of older persons in the public life, particularly in the social, health, cultural and economic areas, monitoring the implementation of international documents, laws, and other generally binding legal regulations affecting life of older persons.