



MINISTERUL MUNCII
ȘI SOLIDARITĂȚII SOCIALE

**NATIONAL REPORT
FOR THE FOURTH REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF
THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR AGING
(MIPPA/RIS)**

**ROMANIA
2018-2021**

Bucharest, 2022



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PART I Executive summary

This report represents an analysis of the public policies on elderly in Romania and an assessment of the progress registered by the country after the adoption of MIPAA/RIS during the implementation of the fourth cycle.

The assessment is based on the:

- analysis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained during assessing national policies in the field of aging;
- analysis of reports and studies on aging.

The report uses instrumental and final indicators, based on data provided by all stakeholders (national government bodies, local government, non-governmental organizations) on the actions taken to achieve the objectives of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (2017) and the implementation of MIPAA / RIS in Romania during the period 2018-2021.

Implementation of the *National Strategy for the Promotion of Active Aging and the Protection of the Elderly for the period 2015-2020 and the Operational Action Plan* (adopted by the Government Decision no. 566/2015) it was one of the most important activities in the field of elderly`s protection during the last years.

The strategy set out three strategic objectives in the field of active aging:

- (1) prolonging and improving the quality of life of older people,
- (2) promoting active and dignified social participation of older people, and
- (3) achieving a higher degree of independence and safety for people in need of long-term care.

Other important action for improving the elderly situation is related to the development of the integrated social services in Romania within vulnerable communities, starting with 2018. There is in progress, in an advanced stage, implementation of a non-competitive project financed through European Social Fund/POCU 2014-2020 on *Creating and implementing integrated community services to reduce poverty and social exclusion*, a project developed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity in partnership with 2 other ministries: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

In the view of this project, providing integrated community services is related to a systemic approach of needs and efficient correlation of needs with specific service packages from different areas to reduce duplication, to assure harmonization of resources and to create a sustainable process to escape poverty and to obtain social and economic integration.

The core team that provides a range of services through integrated community service, it is composed of: social worker, community nurse and school counsellor. The social worker as case manager, identify the specific needs of the vulnerable persons and could refer



him to other specialized public services, as: population record service, employment services, assessment of persons with disabilities, etc.

A protocol for implementation of integrated community services to prevent social exclusion and combat poverty was approved in 2019, by a common order of the three ministries involved (Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education) establishing the collaboration framework for the integrated community teams in relevant areas such as: social services, health, education, employment, housing and obtaining identity documents. This protocol framework and the local development strategies of social services design a strong background for intersectoral cooperation between local public social assistance services, town halls, county school inspectorates, county departments of public health, community public services for persons record, county agencies for employment, county agencies for payments and social inspection, etc.

Increasing the quality of social services represents another important achievement in the area of active ageing policies since 2018: improving the legislation on accreditation of the social services providers, streamlining the licensing system of social services (Law No. 177/2019 of October 10, 2019 for the amendment and completion of Law no. 197/2012 on quality assurance in the field of social services, Governmental Decision no. 476/2019 for modification and completion of the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions of Law no. 197/2012 on quality assurance in the field of social services, approved by Government Decision no. 118/2014, and of the Government Decision no. 867/2015 for the approval of the Nomenclature of social services, as well as of the framework regulations for the organization and functioning of social services), improving the minimum quality standards of social services (Order of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection no. 29/2019 for the approval of the Minimum Quality Standards for the accreditation of social services for the elderly, the homeless, young people who have left the child protection system and other categories of adults in difficulty, as well as for services provided in the community, services provided in integrated system and social canteens), the cost standards for social services (Government Decision no. 426/2020 on the approval of cost standards), strengthening the evaluation, monitoring and control mechanism regarding the quality of social services and strengthening the institutional capacity of social inspection.

Currently in Romania, a number of 1.401 public and private social services for elderly are licensed in accordance with the minimum qualitative standards: 723 residential and assistance centers for the elderly, 317 home care services for the elderly and people with



disabilities, 169 day care centers for elderly and dependent people, 192 residential and medical care centers for elderly people, chronically ill in the terminal phase. ¹

Romania has set out to prepare a Long-Term Care and Active Ageing Strategy which, based on the current situation, commits to policy measures in order to:

- Prolong lives and achieve healthy ageing
- Promote longer employment
- Increase the social and political participation of older age groups, and
- Decrease dependence of the elderly and provide long-term care.

Romania, as a member state of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), has expressed its support for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution A / RES / 70/1, in the framework of UN Summit on Sustainable Development since September 2015.

General information

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Name, reference, and date of adoption or status of preparation of national strategy, action plan or similar policy document on ageing

- ✚ *Long-Term Care and Active Aging Strategy and the Plan of Actions 2022 - 2027* - in preparatory process
- ✚ *National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction and the Plan of Actions 2022 - 2027* - in approval process²

1. National ageing situation

1.1 Presentation of current demographic indicators and their projections

2021 is the 32nd consecutive year characterized by a demographic decline. The resident population was in 2021 (1st of January) of 19.186.201 (EUROSTAT data, 2021).

After 1990, the birth rate steadily declined, thus reversing the permanent surplus since World War II. Compared to 2002, when Romania's population number, registered by the March 2002 Census, it was 21,680,974 inhabitants, the Romania's population decrease during the period 2002 - 2021, it was about 2.494.773 persons. In 2021 (1st of January), the urban population, as well as the female population are the majority (53.6%, respectively, 51.0%).³

Changes in the structure of the population by age highlight the accentuation of the demographic aging process by reducing the number of young people (those under 15 years), simultaneously with the increase of the elderly population (60 years and over). The sex ratio is uniform in Romania with the men and the women sharing almost equal numbers in the country. From 64 years and beyond, the sex ratio is skewed in favour of the women as the ratio then is 0.68 male per 1 female.

In 2021, 3 661 763 persons aged 65 years or more live in Romania, representing 19% of the total population.

The process of demographic aging has deepened, compared to January 1, 2020, noting increasing the share of the elderly population (65 years and over). Demographic aging index increased from 120.8 (on 1 January 2020) to 123.9 elderly people per 100 young people (on 1 January 2021).⁴

According to the National Institute of Statistics, median age and middle age, the two relevant indicators to highlight the aging of the population of a country, they place

² https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMPS/Transparenta_decizionala/310321HG_strategi_e_2021-2027ANEXA_NR1.pdf

³ https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/poprez_ian2021r.pdf

⁴ https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/poprez_ian2021r.pdf



Romania below the level of the European Union, although in the last 15 years they were constantly growing.⁵

Resident population indicators on 1 January 2020:

	Median age	Median age	Middle age	Middle age	The share of the population aged 65 and over total population (%)	The share of the population aged 65 and over total population (%)
Year	European Union	Romania	European Union	Romania	European Union	Romania
2003	38,9	35,3	39,8	37,8	18,2	16,3
2017	42,9	41,8	42,5	41,8	19,5	18,8
2018	43,1	42,1	42,7	41,9	19,7	18,2
2019	43,3	42,5	42,8	42,1	20,0	18,5
2020	-	42,8	-	42,3	-	19,0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The share of the population aged 0-14 in the total population decreased by 0.1 percentage.

Population ageing is affecting Romania as a result of three distinct trends: low fertility rates, increases in life expectancy and migration.

- low fertility rate:

In 2020, Romania registered the lowest birth rate in its history. In the last 30 years, from year to year, fewer and fewer children have been born. The downward trend meant that in 2020, the number of new-borns to be half that of 1989.

- increase in the average life expectancy:

In Romania, life expectancy at birth in 2022 is estimated 72.97 years for men and 79.79 years for women. Healthy life expectancy at birth for women was 60.6 years in 2019, compared to 61.9 years in 2009, and for men 59.9 years in 2019), compared to 59.6 years in 2009.⁶

⁵ https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/persoanele_varstnice.pdf

⁶ World Population Prospects, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/romania-population>



- migration of the population:

According to the estimates of INSEE, the balance of long-term temporary international migration was negative (- 28,825 people). Romania continues to be a country of emigration, the phenomenon of emigration being the second cause main factor in reducing the country's population. The balance of international migration in 2020 was negative, the number of emigrants exceeding the number of immigrants by almost 29 thousand people. During 2020, men emigrated more than women (54.1%). And in turn immigrants, men were the majority (60.5%).⁷

According to the Eurostat data, the share of the elderly population in the total population will increase sharply from 18.2% (in 2018) to 32.6% (in 2100) which will lead to an increase in the degree of demographic aging of population of Romania. The total dependency ratio of the young and elderly population will increase from 51 young and old people (in 2018) to 87 young and old people (in 2100) reported to 100 adults aged 15-64. Compared to 2018 when they were 2 times more people aged 15-64 than young and old people together, in by 2100, the proportion will decrease to 1.2 times.

Projecting the population on the horizon of the years 2018, 2020, 2040, 2060, 2080, 2100
-thousand persons-

	2018	2020	2040	2060	2080	2100
Romania	19 531	19 282	17 409	15 945	14 334	13 344

Eurostat, Population projections at national level⁸

The effects that the aging process has on both development of economic and social life, as well as on the perspectives of evolution demographics are also highlighted by the dependency ratio in the ratio between the elderly and the active population.

1.2. Presentation of key quantitative social and economic indicators

At the level of 2018, 6,360,000 people were exposed to poverty and social exclusion, being for the first time when it fell below seven million, the difference from the European Union average remaining substantial. (Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC)

Relative poverty rate (calculated at the threshold of 60% of the median disposable income on adult-equivalent) reached in 2018 the value of 23.5%, a slight decrease compared to the year previous, but higher by 1.9%, compared to the minimum recorded in the period 2008-2018 of 21.6% in 2010. (Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC).

⁷ https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/poprez_ian2021r.pdf

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=People_in_the_EU_-_population_projections&oldid=497115#Population_projections_by_country



The share of the population at risk of relative poverty after social transfers (AROP) is the first of the three indicators used to assess the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the European Union. Although it declined by 3.5 percentage points between 2007 and 2010, the poverty risk rate in Romania followed an upward trend between 2010 and 2016, reaching 25.4% in 2016 as compared to the EU-28 average of 16.9%; Romania has still both the highest poverty rate and the lowest relative poverty line¹ of all EU member states. In 2017 to 2019, AROP shows a steady value of approximately 23.5% of the total resident population; this means that about 4.5 million people are at risk of income poverty. Source: Eurostat

Almost 17% of people in relative poverty face persistent poverty, decreasing by 3 percentage points compared to 2018, meaning that their income is below the poverty line in the reference year and in at least two of the past three years. Inequality of opportunities remains one of the main challenges for Romania: unequal access to education, healthcare and other services, along with intergenerational transmission of poverty, prevents children or families from disadvantaged areas from reaching their full potential. Also, the Romanian population shows a high level of income inequality, disparities being highlighted especially between rural and urban areas. Although small improvements have been noted, in 2020, Romania has the second highest level of income inequality in the EU, with the richest 20% of the population earning almost 8 times more than the poorest quintile, the S80 / S20 rate being 5.1 for EU-28 countries. According to the European Semester Report - Country Report Romania 2020, published by the European Commission, poverty continued to decline but inequality has deepened. Despite higher wages and pensions, income inequality increased in 2018 following a two-year decline, while slightly decreasing in almost all Member States. This change is driven by both income increases for people in the highest income group and decreases for those in the lowest income group. High inequality is due both to high inequality of market incomes and to low redistributive impact of the tax and benefit system.

In 2018, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion a significant decrease to 6,360 thousand people compared to 9,115 thousand people in 2008, that is, a reduction of 2,755 thousand people.

The risk of poverty is three times higher in rural areas than in urban areas; 38% of those living in rural, sparsely populated areas were exposed to this risk, compared to only 11% of people living in densely populated or intermediate urban areas; there are also large regional disparities in the AROP distribution; the regions with the highest percentages of people at risk of poverty are North-East (41.1%), South-West Oltenia (31.6%) and South - East (31.6%) compared to only 2.9% in the Bucharest-Ilfov region.

According to the European Semester Report - Country Report Romania 2020, GDP per head continues to converge with the EU average but regional disparities persist. Income disparities are among the highest in the EU, mainly driven by the large gap between the capital region of Bucharest and the rest of the country.



In the capital region, GDP per head corresponds to 144% of the EU average and has grown the fastest over the last six years. At 67% of the EU average, the Vest region has the second highest GDP per head in Romania. In the other Romanian regions, GDP per head ranges from 39% to 60% of the EU average. Inequality of opportunities remains a challenge for Romania.

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

Romania faces major disparities between urban and rural areas or between its development regions. The urban-rural disparities create very high income and opportunity inequality across the population. The risk of poverty decreased in cities but remained relatively constant in rural areas, almost five times higher compared to cities. The average overall disposable income for a household member in urban areas is 1.9 times higher than in rural ones. More than half of the rural employed population is not covered by pension, unemployment or health insurance, despite their compulsory nature. Access to health care is especially poor and self-reported unmet needs for medical examination was twice as high as in urban areas and four times higher than the EU average.

Romania is affected by uneven development, with a significant gap between the Eastern and Western regions of the country. The Eastern part of the country (North-East and South-East regions) faces the highest levels of poverty and severe material deprivation. The southern part (regions: South Muntenia and South-West Oltenia) also contain areas of poverty and material shortages that are either higher than the national average or at least at the same level. The central and western regions have levels of poverty and material shortages that are below the national average.

Unequal access to education, health care and other services, along with intergenerational transmission of poverty prevents children and families in disadvantaged areas to reach their full potential. Rural areas are particularly affected by the inequality of opportunities due to insufficient infrastructure, insufficient employment opportunities and non-existent or poor qualitative public services.

Roma people are at a much higher risk of poverty than the general population, regardless of age, education or residence. According to the absolute poverty line based on consumption, Roma are ten times higher exposed to a poverty risk than the rest of the population. According to the European Semester Report - Country Report Romania 2020, the integration of the Roma community remains a challenge. Roma people are much more affected by poor housing conditions, while discrimination in accessing social housing and forced evictions are still present. The Roma also continues to face obstacles in accessing health services due to lack of identification documents, low coverage of social security, stigma and discrimination. Enrollment of Roma children in education is still below the country's average.



Another important determinant of poverty is the employment status of people of working age. Unpaid rural workers in their own households or in self-employed forms are in the worst situation because more than half of them face the risk of financial poverty. A large percentage of the unemployed have also a high risk of poverty.

Inactive people (such as housewives or people with disabilities) are also at high risk of poverty. Despite the relatively low unemployment rate, Romania shows a very high poverty rate among the employed population, with 15.7% of the employed living below the poverty line in 2019. This represents almost twice the rate of the EU-27. The relatively high percentage of in-work poverty is due to the relatively large number of workers with almost zero official earnings: unpaid rural workers in their own household or self-employed workers in agriculture; there are also a high percentage of registered employees which earn the minimum wage (about one third of the total number of employees). According to the European Semester Report - Country Report Romania 2020, in-work poverty is among the highest in the EU while social benefits and minimum income are failing to reduce poverty.

In-work poverty has been declining but remains among the highest in the EU. This is also related to a lack of quality jobs, especially in rural areas, and the precariousness of nonemployees. There is a high rate of self-employment in rural areas and a high proportion of non-remunerated contributing family members (in small family businesses) among non-employees. Most of the self-employed in Romania work in subsistence agriculture, some of them in construction and other small family businesses. The minimum wage increases have resulted in higher gaps between the income of employees and those of the self-employed, as incomes of the latter are growing at a slower pace.

In Romania, people with disabilities have a limited support to obtain an independent job and they have limited access to the labor market. The support for people with disabilities is mainly focused on providing health care and less on helping them to develop independent living skills. Also, children with disabilities have limited access to pre-school facilities and they drop out of the school twice as often as other children¹⁰. People with disabilities have limited access to support services. The rate of persons with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Romania is among the highest in the EU (37.6% vs an EU average of 28.7%). The lack of synergies and complementarity between educational, employment and social services further aggravates the situation of this group. The deinstitutionalization of care of adults with disabilities is only being taken up slowly, while significant EU funds are available.

Social conditions continue to improve but vulnerable groups still face substantial challenges. However, one in three Romanians is still at risk of poverty or social exclusion: families with children, the unemployed, inactive, atypical workers, Roma, elderly women and people with disabilities among the most exposed. This rate is still more than twice as high in rural areas than in cities. Once in poverty, overcoming it is increasingly difficult, due to the high level of intergenerational transmission of poverty and inefficient labor activation measures. Regional disparities remain high. Severe material and social



deprivation are among the highest in the EU. Close to one Romanian in two is unable to face unexpected expenses. Access to essential services, such as energy, is also a challenge.

Statistical data reflect a growing phenomenon of demographic aging with the potential to put strong pressure on budgets for pensions, health care and long-term care⁹. These challenges are exacerbated by the significant migration of the active population, which also contributes to the increase in the percentage of people aged 65 and over (especially those living alone) who risk being left without family help in the context of a low percentage of the population. Romania's age actually benefits from home care services.

1.4. Description of important measures to revise/adjust social and economic policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Romanian Government was taken specific measures to protect vulnerable groups (elderly, dependent persons, persons from rural area), specific measures in order to prevent the spread of COVID 19 infection among social services beneficiaries and to maintain the minimum qualitative standards of social services and also their functionality.

In 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection implemented the project *Support for Vulnerable People in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic*. The specific objectives pursued were:

- 1) Increasing the quality of life and combating situations of risk and social exclusion for at least 100.000 elderly people and people with disabilities, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) Increasing the capacity of at least 1000 public authorities to respond to the needs of vulnerable people in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

This project complements other projects already being implemented at the level of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: *Development and implementation of integrated community services to combat poverty and social exclusion* and *Development of social assistance to combat poverty and social exclusion*.

In 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity have elaborated a series of recommendations addressed to the social service providers regarding the measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within residential social services.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity developed a program with European funds to establish a Call centre services to coordinate the institutional efforts to support elderly

⁹ National Strategy for the Promotion of Active Aging and the Protection of the Elderly for the period 2015-2020 and the Operational Action Plan (adopted by the Government Decision no. 566/2015)



people and people with disabilities isolated at home or with restrictions and travel difficulties, in the context of the COVID19 pandemic.

The National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions together with the UNICEF Representation in Romania and 2 NGOs launched a free hotline to support institutionalized children and adults, to reduce the feeling of insecurity of children and adults in residential centres, to provide counselling and psychosocial assistance, but also to prevent and identify possible challenges and abuses to which they may fall victim, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, this hotline is also intended for specialists working in residential institutions.

During the period 2020 - 2021, the Romanian Government initiated complex measures to protect workers, measures to support companies, a series of fiscal - budgetary measures, measures for tourism enterprises, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Emergency Governmental Ordinance no. 29/2020 on some economic and fiscal-budgetary measures, Emergency Governmental Ordinance No. 224/2020, Emergency Governmental Ordinance no. 10/2021). Among the specific measure, we can specify:

- Support by the state of 75% of the basic salary of the employees of the companies that registered losses of at least 25% due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the technical unemployment
- Granting state subsidies to companies that have modified their activity to start the production of sanitary products, such as masks and sanitary disinfectants.

In 2020, governmental actions to limit the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health system were aimed at: preparing hospitals to provide healthcare to patients tested positive for SARS-CoV-2; elaboration of the surveillance methodology of COVID-19, of some normative acts, protocols, measures of prevention and control of the disease in different sectors of activity; monitoring of COVID-19 outbreaks in medical units, residential centres, educational units, production units, community; evaluation of risk analyses performed in different health units, in order to establish / extend / lift quarantine measures; the purchase of equipment and reagents necessary for the management of infections with the new virus for several county hospitals, including from the structural funds available within the project Improving the quality and efficiency of the health system. By mid-2021, there were 193 public and private testing centres, over 900 vaccination centres, and 8 million people were already vaccinated against COVID-19.¹⁰

¹⁰ The Action Plan for the implementation of the National Reform Program 2021



2. Method

This report is an analysis of public policies on the Romanian elderly and an assessment of the progress registered by the country after the adoption of MIPAA/RIS during the implementation of the fourth cycle.

The assessment is based on the:

- analysis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained during assessing national policies in the field of aging;
- analysis of reports and studies on aging.

The report uses instrumental and final indicators, based on data provided by all stakeholders (national government bodies, local government, non-governmental organizations) on the actions taken to achieve the objectives of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (2017) and the implementation of MIPAA / RIS in Romania during the period 2018-2021.

3. 20 YEARS OF MIPAA/RIS

3.1. Recognizing the older people potential

In Romania, the Constitution guarantees, in equal measure, the right to life and to physical and mental integrity (art. 22), the right to defence (art. 24) and freedom of conscience (art. 29) or expression (art. 30). Along with the Constitution, there are a number of other specific laws that complete the system of fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the Civil Code, the Criminal Code, Law no. 17/2000 on social assistance for the elderly (with subsequent amendments and regulations), Law no. 448/2006 on the protection of persons with disabilities (with subsequent amendments and regulations), Governmental Ordinance no. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, Law no. 217/2003 for preventing and combating domestic violence Law no. 174/2018 (with subsequent amendments and regulations).

The legislative framework in the field of social services, of the prevention of marginalization and social exclusion, of social inclusion through employment, was revised by: adopting the Law on social assistance no. 292/2011 (brought elements of reform that established the complementarity between the two components of social assistance and integrated social assistance measures to prevent and combat poverty and the risk of social exclusion, for the social assistance of the child and the family, social assistance of persons with disabilities and social assistance for the elderly); approval of the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020 and the Strategic Action Plan for 2015-2020; approval of the National Strategy for the promotion of active aging and the protection of the elderly for the period 2015 - 2020 and of the Operational Action Plan for the period 2016 - 2020.



During the period 2009 - 2017, the legislative framework was improved by approving measures aimed at regulating, functioning and financing social services, such as: developing new minimum quality standards for all types of social services, approving cost standards for social services, creation of the Nomenclature of social services, improvement of the procedure for accreditation of social service providers and the procedure for licensing of services, improvement of the organization and functioning regulations of public social assistance services, continuation of social services financing programs (grant program Romanian associations and foundations with legal personality that set up and administer social assistance units, programs of national interest, projects with European funds).

Also, during the same period, progress was made in the granting of state allowances for children, for family support and placement, for the granting of leave and allowance for raising children, for the granting of social assistance, for the granting of heating allowances, housing and the program on stimulating the participation in preschool education of children from disadvantaged families, by increasing the amounts and correlating them with European models, in order to activate people and reduce dependence on passive social measures.

Law no. 196/2016 on the minimum income for inclusion is a social assistance benefit granted to families and single people in difficulty, in order to prevent and combat poverty and the risk of social exclusion.

In order to ensure a coordinated and evidence-based approach in the development and implementation of policies, programs and interventions aimed at poor and vulnerable people and poor and marginalized areas, respectively to increase the quality of public services, a set of strategic planning tools was created. Interactive data on the territorial distribution of social services and their infrastructure, the need for social services and infrastructure, the relative poverty rate and the labour poverty rate.

Law no. 219/2015 on the social economy, with subsequent amendments and completions, created the necessary premises for the development of the social economy in Romania, with a direct impact on social inclusion by employing people from vulnerable groups. As of December 31, 2017, at national level, 99 social enterprises were certified in 33 counties and 9 social insertion enterprises were certified in 5 counties.

Recognition of the potential of older people is at the heart of the concept of active aging, which involves development of better opportunities and working conditions to enable older people to play a role in the labour market, combat social exclusion by stimulating active participation in social life and promoting aging, good health conditions. On this basis, the *National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2015-2020 and its Action Plan* was developed and implemented.

The Romanian Active Ageing Strategy 2015 - 2020, adopted by the Governmental Decision no. 566/2015 had a distinct chapter regarding the social participation of elderly. The action plan contained specific objectives and priority actions in this area:



1. Raising Social Profile of Older Population and Promoting Social Participation:

- Establish a department of Active Ageing Advocacy within the social protection ministry
- Develop a curriculum for group counselling of the older population, and a plan for identifying and reaching out to the groups of older adults at the greatest risk of loneliness, social exclusion and depression,
- Promote participation of older persons in social and physical activities through dedicated events,
- Encourage volunteering,
- Employ mass media to improve attitudes towards older people and their role in the society,
- Strive for greater access by the older population to public health programs and healthcare through public information campaigns,
- Establish periodic surveys to monitor social, behavioural and biomedical aspects of ageing.

The Romanian Government targets several groups which are the most vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion and marginalization, in order to improve their quality of life as much as possible. These are as follows: 1. Persons with low income 2. Children and young people who don't have the care and support of the parents 3. People with disabilities 4. Alone or dependent old people 5. People with Roma ethnicity 6. Other vulnerable groups (drug or alcohol addicts, victims of domestic abuse, ex-convicts and persons on parole, refugees) 7. Persons living in marginalized communities The Romanian Government has made progress in putting forward measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Romania adopted the National Strategy and Strategic Action Plan on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2015-2020, and it passed a comprehensive anti-poverty package of 47 measures to combat poverty in the country through 2020. Some of the key measures, including increasing the employment rate, reducing early school leaving rate, scaling-up of national health programs and others will strongly contribute to narrowing the urban-rural poverty gaps. In order to implement the objectives of 2015-2020 National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, a program with a budget of 21 million Euro (2014-2020 ESF) will finance the technical assistance provided to local public authorities in order to establish and operate public social assistance services in territorial-administrative units where these services were not established (2014-2020 HCOP, PA 4 Social inclusion and fighting poverty, IP 9iv - Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services, including health care and social services of general interest). As in the previous years, in 2020 too, there is a high probability that a lot of measures will have a small and delayed impact or they will be considered overambitious, especially considering the impact of Covid-19 pandemic which has hindered even more the projects' implementation. For example, as most of the funding to support the anti- 28 poverty



measures/ projects comes from the European Structural Funds and there is a delay in actually utilizing the funding, it's possible that most projects' implementation will face even more difficulties besides the administrative and bureaucratic ones. Also, the level of investing (including social investment) is very low. The longer-term success will hinge on the capacity to effectively target and absorb available EU funding. Structural Funds are considered the panacea to all the difficulties Romania is facing as, in almost all the cases, the European Structural Funds represent the only funding available to support the proposed measures. The European Funds are the solution to respond to the challenges in the areas of social inclusion and poverty, inclusive labor market, access to quality social services, investing in social infrastructure, better access to education, labor market, healthcare and social services for the Roma or for people living in rural areas, support for people with disabilities or care for elder persons. Nevertheless, the level of attracting the EU funds period 2014-2020 is still low, however, a lot of calls on the above-mentioned priorities have been launched in 2018 and 2019.

Some examples of projects funded with European Structural financing that can support the efficient delivery on national poverty target:

- In order to increase access to sustainable and quality services, in 2018, the Government allocated ESF funds to create and develop integrated community services in 139 disadvantaged communities (132 in rural and 7 in urban areas). The integration of health and social services, the development of affordable and quality social care and the community healthcare network will benefit from ESF funding.
- Other projects aim poverty reduction and socio-economic integration of people in marginalized communities, including those with Roma population, both in developed and less developed areas. The contracted projects aim investments to participate in facilitate early education and prevent early school leaving, facilitate access / retention on the labor market, entrepreneurship, social services and medical, improving living conditions, anti-discrimination actions and legal assistance. Investments that contribute to the physical, social and economic revitalization and to the improvement of the quality of life of the urban population are financed by the Regional Operational Program.
- Poor infrastructure in the Danube Delta area represents a hindrance on its economic development and for new employment opportunities. Three investment contracts for local infrastructure (worth EUR 2,918 million), one for educational and social infrastructure (EUR 0,495 million) and one for water / waste water (amounting to EUR 1,211 million) were signed by March 2018.
- In the context of the implementation of the National Strategy for Promotion of Active Aging 2014-2020, from the ERDF 2014-2020 and state budget, funds were allocated for the development of social services infrastructure without a residential component for elderly people at risk of poverty or other vulnerability.
- Reducing poverty among people at risk of severe material deprivation is funded under FEAD to provide basic food packages and assistance facilitating the social inclusion of



disadvantaged people. During the 2014 - 2018 period, 6,347,777 29 people benefited by support, out of which 2,879,267 women, 1,277,604 children aged under 15 years old and 1,555,962 persons aged over 65 years old. Moreover, 4.7 million packages comprising personal hygiene products, cleaning and home care products will be delivered to people at risk of poverty and social exclusion through a project amounting 141.2 million euros. The project was launched in the year 2020.

Another call for proposals worth over 28.767 million euros (FEAD and national contribution) will target people who are temporarily in critical life situations, including the homeless.

In order to diversify the support given to these persons, hot meals will be provided by social canteens. Complementary to other national initiatives intended to reduce poverty, pupils and students enrolled in the pre-school, primary and secondary education system and who come from the most disadvantaged families receive packs of supplies and schoolbags. Therefore, 153,240 students receive schoolbags and 28,153 pre-school pupils receive packs of supplies. Mother - new-born couples who are vulnerable and who are at high social risk will benefit of kits for new-born. The intervention helps mitigate the risk of abandonment of new-born from disadvantaged families. It is accompanied by other measures such as health education, first aid for new-born, hygiene, access to medical and social services, etc.

At the same time, the Romanian Government undertakes to assist people and families in difficult situations with a future program - Minimum Inclusion Income (MI). MI conciliates measures to tackle poverty and consolidates three social assistance benefits (minimum guaranteed income, family support allowance and house heating aid). The MI is considered to be the main support measure to prevent and tackle poverty and social exclusion. MI was supposed to enter into force on April 2018, but was postponed until 2022 in order to develop the IT infrastructure and payment methods.

3.2. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work

Currently employment rates of the older working age population in Romania are quite low by EU standards notwithstanding an important upward bias in measurement which will be discussed below.

According to the Employment Performance Monitor 2018 (EPM), Romania's labor market challenges are:

- Labor market participation:

- low women's employment rate,
- low elderly's employment rate,
- high youth and NEETS' unemployment rates,



- low professional life's duration,
- the large share of population employed/self-employed in agriculture and land-owners
- Active labor market policies:
 - low level of spending/ financing of active measures for employment,
 - insufficient delivery, targeting and personalization of active measures for employment,
 - SPO's malfunction,
- Adequate and employment oriented social security systems:
 - inadequate level and coverage of employment benefits,
 - poverty trap, in-work-poverty, low wages trap,
- Work-life balance:
 - insufficient provision of quality care facilities for employees' children or dependent relatives,
 - high rate of inactivity and involuntary part-time employment,
- Gender equality:
 - significant gap in employment between men and women,
- Improving competences' offer and productivity,
- Lifelong learning:
 - inadequate qualifications,
 - lack of a system to predict the necessary competences,
 - low level of adults' participation in LLL,
- The education system:
 - high rate of early school dropout,
 - low attractiveness of education and professional training,
 - insufficient provision of high-quality education opportunities.

The high rate of poverty and social exclusion, especially in-work poverty, a large share of long-term unemployment in total unemployment rate, the low level of ICT use/ digital alphabetization there are also barriers against a longer working life.

The *National Employment Strategy 2014-2020 (NES)* designed a vision for Romania's 2020, in which work force's potential is optimally valued and planned in a competitive, participative, inclusive and innovation and research based national economy. Transposing



this vision and fulfilling this aim means increasing Romania's capacity to create new and quality jobs, and thus a competitive advantage for the national economy through well trained, highly skilled human capital.

One of the NES specific objectives consisted in prolonging elderly's active life by increasing elderly's labor market participation. There were settled measures with the aim of implementing elderly employment schemes, developing knowledge and know-how transfer initiatives (from elderly to young employees, such as through mentorship and coaching programs), facilitating elderly's access to flexible work forms by promoting them, by amending the Labor Code and encouraging active life including through fiscal measures.

Complementary, the *National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2015-2020 and its Action Plan*, approved by GD no.383/2015, proposes a set of flagship initiatives/ key interventions in various policy fields, including employment.

The key interventions recommended in the area of employment have been the following:

- more funding for employment policies,
- providing personalized employment services,
- strengthening the mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of labor market policies,
- supporting small medium farms (by strengthening and developing the advisory and support institutions for small farmers and subsistence agriculture and extending the agricultural vocational education, in order for farmers to acquire the necessary skills,
- promoting professional training and Life Long Learning (including training in ICT) in a labor market facing constant changes and challenges, as well as training programs meant to increase digital literacy.

Another important objective of the strategy was to develop the social economy sector, as a way to provide more employment opportunities for people belonging to vulnerable groups, by providing:

- support (such as training, counselling, entrepreneurial consulting, market identification, capacity building and skills development in various areas, etc.) for the setting up of new social enterprises and the development of existing ones, including financial support in the form of micro-grants,
- support for the implementation of active aging measures, such as social enterprise jobs for the elderly.

Taking into account the demographic challenges, the Strategy also underlined the need to support and encourage longer, healthier lives and careers for vulnerable persons able to work and to prolong the existing professional careers in the formal sector.



The Strategic Action Plan 2014-2020 had a separate section dedicated to actions and measures in the field of employment, such as:

- Key initiative 1: Activating poor population which is not in employment, education, professional training for persons with disabilities.
- Specific objective 1.1. Mobilizing unemployed and inactive persons able to work and investing in their education, professional training, developing skills and competences to increase their chances for employment (including through measures such as increasing the financing for efficient active measures for employment, such as subsidies for employers hiring people over 45 years and single parents),
- Specific objective 1.2. Reducing employment in informal sector and supporting small and medium farms' productivity increase (by reducing fiscal and administrative pressure on employers and employees, providing fiscal incentives for unemployed and other vulnerable persons at risk of working on the "black market"/ in the informal sector, supporting farmers' professional training in agriculture and forestry, facilitating access to loans for activities in the food industry, supporting subsistence farms and groups of farmers in order to become more productive and sustainable).

Another specific objective aims at increasing the able to work beneficiaries of minimum guaranteed income's employment chances and access to the labor market, through personalized counselling and mediation services, taking into account those persons' diversity of needs and abilities.

Another specific objective of the Strategic Action Plan aims at developing the social economy sector, in order to increase employment opportunities for people belonging to vulnerable groups, by actions such as: promoting social economy entities from disadvantaged / poor areas' sustainable development through measures such as:

- developing a supporting mechanism (technical assistance, subsidies, microloans, loans' guarantees and facilities) for social economy entities from disadvantaged / poor / marginalized areas,
- providing counselling, professional training, consultancy in entrepreneurship, identifying markets, developing capacity and skills in various domains for the setting up of social economy enterprises and developing the existing ones,
- creating support and cooperation networks, closing partnerships for exchanging best practices.

In 2016, the National Strategy "A society without barriers for people with disabilities" 2016 - 2020 and the Operational Plan on its implementation were approved.



3.3. Ensuring aging with dignity

The development of social services has been a strategic goal of the Romanian Government since 2006, taking into consideration the *Strategy for Social Services 2006-2013*, approved through Governmental Decision no. 1826/2005: “Government’s goal is to ensure the development of a national network of social services of good quality, adequately distributed in the territory and accessible to all potential beneficiaries at national level”.

This interest continues to remain as such until 2020, as confirms the *National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020*, approved by Governmental Decision no. 383/2015. Such a concern is completely justified, given the high rate of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including elderly and the multiple deficiencies in the social services sector, in terms of needs assessments, management information systems and territorial coverage with public social assistance services (as over a third of the rural localities and ten percent of the small cities do not have one). The aim of the strategy was to ensure that all citizens live in dignity, are valued, have equal opportunities, have their basic needs met and their individual differences respected. According to the above-mentioned strategy, integrated services, involving social protection, employment, education, healthcare, and development of the capacity of the public social assistance services (needed to provide support to an increasing number of vulnerable elderlies, families) need to be developed, too.

Moreover, the *National Strategy for promotion of Active Ageing and Elder Protection 2015-2020* implemented relevant measures in this area:

Improving the accessibility of the infrastructure

- Revise and enforce the universal design guidelines for public spaces and public buildings for all new and retrofitting public construction projects,
- Complete a pilot survey of the older population for a city or a municipality to identify most important public infrastructure barriers for the mobility and independence of older persons; require that a set proportion of infrastructure maintenance budget is annually dedicated specifically to the elimination of such barriers,
- Undertake a review of municipal and intercity public transport fleets to identify proportion of buses / carriages that comply with universal design requirements and proportion of routes at least partially covered by such buses / carriages; redeploy accessible transport fleets to maximize the number of routes covered and redesign publicly displayed schedules by adding information on transport accessibility.

Preventing Elder Abuse and Exclusion

- Improve legislation on elder abuse prevention covering definition and consequences of elder abuse, acknowledgment of the right to legal protections, and mandating provision of public financial resources for identifying victims of abuse and providing them with needed social services,



- Develop curriculum on prevention, detection and resolution of elder abuse cases and mandate formal training on elder abuse for professionals, paraprofessionals, and students in all relevant fields, including health workers, law enforcement professionals, social workers and clergy,
- Establish a 24-hour Social Emergency helpline for provision of counselling, referrals and psychological help, with older persons being a priority target group.

Decreased dependence of the elderly and improving long-term care (LTC) as part of Active Ageing concept was a strategic objective assumed by the Romanian Government in the National Strategy for promotion of Active Ageing and Elder Protection 2015-2020. A detailed technical analysis of the context of the current situation and policy challenges in this area can be found in the World Bank report “Living Long, Staying Active and Strong: Promotion of Active Ageing in Romania” (2014).

To ensure a qualitative level of the social services for elderly, to promote the dignity value of elderly life, an important objective of the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity was to develop the research in this area. In this respect, the ministry funded during 2018 -2019 a research project” Methodology for continuous monitoring of the quality of care in the institutions providing long-term care services”¹¹. As results of this project, we can specify: design of methods and instruments to assess the quality of care in institutions providing long-term care services; development of the national database regarding the quality of care in institutions providing LTC services - a survey made among public and private LTC accredited providers; development of a periodic investigation system of quality at the level of LTC services providers; proposals of policy measures aimed to improve the quality of LTC services.

Other important research in the field of elderly`s social protection, it is a study implemented during period 2018 -2020 - Quality of elderly`s life in Romania-¹². The objectives of the project were:

¹¹ A project funded under The Research and Development Program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice for the period 2018-2020 in coordination of the National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection -INCSMPs, partners: University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași and S.C. Novel Research S.R.L; http://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/2019_PSCD-3_Monitoriz-evaluare_calitate_ingrijire.pdf

¹² A project funded under The Research and Development Program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice for the period 2018-2020 in coordination of the National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection - INCSMPs, partners: Research Institute for Quality of Life (ICCV) and S.C. Novel Research S.R.L; http://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMPS/Rapoarte_si_studii_MMPS/DPSS/2020_-_PSCD_4_-_0_CALITATEA_VIEII_PERSOANELOR_VRSTNICE_DEPENDENTE_N_ROMNIA-CARTE.pdf



- ✓ To analyse the theories and methods for assessing the quality of life of dependent elderly people;
- ✓ To identify the main indicators that defines the quality of life of the elderly in Romania;
- ✓ To define the methodological framework for assessing the quality of life of dependent elderly people in Romania;
- ✓ To implement the methodology designed to assess the quality of life of dependent elderly people in Romania;
- ✓ To formulate policy recommendations aimed at improving the quality of life of older people.

Recommendations of policy measures were formulated to contribute to the promotion of active and dignified social participation of older people in society and their social inclusion, but also to achieve a higher degree of independence and greater safety for people in need of long-term care.

4. HEALTHY AND ACTIVE AGING IN A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

4.1. Contribution of aging policies to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Objectives

For the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the areas of social inclusion and poverty reduction are long-term goals.

The ministry continues the implementation of the Program for granting subsidies to Romanian associations and foundations with legal personality, which establishes and administers social assistance units based on Law 34/1998 from the funds allocated from the state budget.

Currently, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity has as a priority the adoption of the draft National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2022-2027. Its strategic objectives are:

- a. a decent living for all, by combating transitional situations of monetary poverty, with an emphasis on ensuring adequate amounts (wages, pensions and social benefits) on the basic needs of the population; access to services of general public interest, including quality social services; social and economic participation of vulnerable groups, social responsibility, development of public-public and public-private partnerships;
- b. social investment to promote cohesion through education and employment,
- c. lifelong social protection through access to housing, medical services and integrated social services.



d. improving the administrative capacity to implement policies in line with European provisions.

MMPS implements a series of projects with European funds to increase the social inclusion of people from vulnerable groups:

- within the project developed in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education aimed at creating and implementing integrated community services for poverty reduction and social exclusion in 139 vulnerable rural and small-urban communities with above average and severe marginalization, in the month were functional 115 integrated community services.
- Development of the social assistance system for combating poverty and social exclusion by strengthening the technical and administrative capacity of the public community social assistance network, by recruiting and training a minimum number of 350 social workers and implementing a national training and certification program for specialists in the field of social assistance and the training of at least 39,000 people employed in the social assistance sector.
- Development of a national assessment system for the needs of homeless people through the project "EVERYONE MATTERS! Assessing the needs of homeless people and the impact of existing social services on their quality of life".
- Development of a HUB of services that implies an integrated computer system, necessary for the integration, correlation and optimal management of all the information in the specific fields of activity.

In 2020, MMPS managed two Programs of National Interest (PIN) - "Community services at home for dependent elderly people" (25,184.32 thousand lei) and "Increasing the capacity of public social assistance services in some administrative-territorial units" (89,216.4 thousand lei).

Regarding the policies on improving the social assistance provided to elderly, through National Resilience and Reform Plan, the support proposed by the MLSS aims at implementing the reform of the long-term social care services system and addresses the issue of social infrastructure for the elderly. The proposed investment aims to develop a network of 71 day service centres to provide social assistance and rehabilitation services and mobile teams of service providers for the elderly who cannot travel. At the same time, the aim is to design and implement the National Strategy on Long-Term Care for Elderly and Active Ageing.

Also, MLSS, as a partner, together with the Ministry of Health, runs the project "Increasing institutional capacity for coordinated national development of palliative care and home care" which aims to create and introduce a unitary and fluent mechanism for planning, development, evaluation and monitoring of a national palliative care (IP) and general home care (ID) system.



4.2. Lessons learned from managing the consequences and impact of emergencies on people: the COVID-19 pandemic

The national system has only been partially prepared for public health emergencies. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social inequalities, indicating possible gaps in the adequacy and coverage of social protection and highlighting the problems facing the social assistance system. An integrated, personalized approach is needed to address the needs of vulnerable people throughout their lives and to address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.

Measures were adopted during the state of emergency to ensure the social protection and to guarantee the payment of social benefits to the beneficiaries and to meet all their needs:

- the insertion incentive granted to parents returning to work before the end of the parental leave and the support allowance for raising children with disabilities continues to be provided, for a period of 90 days. The payment of these rights does not end in case of: parent's employment contract has been suspended or ended by restructuring/restraining the employer's activity; during the parents' days off in case of the temporary closure of educational establishments, according to the Law No 19/2020 on granting days off to parents for monitoring their children; the technical unemployment of parents, according to the Law No 53/2003 - Labor Code, republished, with subsequent amendments; the parent benefits of medical leave for temporary work incapacity caused by common illnesses or accidents outside work, for preventing illnesses and recovering the work capacity, exclusively for situations resulting from accidents at work or occupational diseases and care for the sick child. After the 90-day period, if the parent obtains an income subject to taxation, then the rights will continue applying the legal provisions.

- the beneficiaries of the child raising allowance will be given the allowance in case the child reaches the age of 2 years, respectively 3 years in the case of the disabled child, or who will reach the age provided by law during this period. As an exception to the current regulations, these persons may subsequently request the insertion incentive from the date of submission of the application, if they achieve a taxable income, until the child reaches the age of 3 years, respectively 4 years, in case of the disabled child. 17 According to the National Reform Program, Romania, April 2020 25

- the benefits of social assistance conditioned by the attendance of classes by children or young people, or the kindergarten in case of preschool children are given without interruption during the temporary closure of the educational institutions.

- the conduct of the social inquiry on providing the minimum guaranteed income (MGI) and the family support allowance is suspended. After the end of the state of emergency, if the inspection finds that the beneficiary does not meet the conditions for granting the right, the right ceases. - the obligation of performing actions and works of local interest by the beneficiaries of MGI ceases, the beneficiaries of MGI do not have to prove that



they are searching for a job, that they have not refused a job, the participation in training and qualification courses, or performing seasonal activities.

In addition, the obligation of beneficiaries of works to transmit to the mayor, in writing, the situation with the persons able to work from families receiving social assistance who have carried out seasonal activities and the number of hours performed ceases. - the activity of social public or private services such as residential care and assistance centers for older people, residential centers for disabled children and adults and for other vulnerable categories is forbidden to be ceased or interrupted. GD No 867/2015 approving the Nomenclature of social services and the framework regulations for organizing and functioning the social services defines the social services. Provisions were approved for the administrative simplification of the relationship with the beneficiaries of the social assistance rights, so that the applications for the social assistance benefits would be submitted in letter format or via e-mail. The decision to grant/ reject/ terminate/ interrupt a social assistance right will be notified to the beneficiary by a hard copy letter format or via e-mail by the issuing territorial agency. Only in exceptional cases, provided by the law, the territorial agencies and/ or the local public administration authorities may request the physical presence at the institution's premises of persons who submitted the documents via e-mail.

Other measures aimed at reducing the social impact of the effects of COVID-19 aim at:

- distributing hygiene products and food packages (financed through FEAD) for 70,000 people placed in quarantine, isolation and self-isolation, as well as the elderly institutionalized in care and assistance centers and children institutionalized in residential placement centers;
- payment (ESF through HCOP) of the salary for minimum 1,000 community social workers/ nurses who are involved in supporting elderly people self-isolated at home during the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus epidemic, the target group served by them being 100,000 elderly people, over 65 years old. The initiative provided protective materials for the personnel involved in providing support services and for their beneficiaries, as well as disinfection and hygiene materials for housing, transport means, goods and equipment. Tools were developed to support the traffic limitation measures - call center service.
- the local public administration authorities had the duty to identify and keep the records of persons over 65 years old without caregivers or other form of assistance and to ensure their support, as well as of the homeless persons in order to ensure their shelter and care.
- other measures refer to associations, foundations, cults with legal 26 personality that manage social assistance units whose activity has closed because of measures to combat the spread of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. These would still benefit by the subsidy granted through the State Budget provided that they perform activities to support the local public administration authorities in implementing social measures for home-isolate persons, information and counselling measures delivered to these persons - in addition, other civic



and private initiatives aimed at using online platforms and call center services that bring together people in difficulty - people with disabilities and the elderly - and volunteers who can help them. This support consists of placing orders, delivering packages with food and medicines, information about organizations that can help them to purchase products, etc.

4.3. Activities in preparing and implementing the WHO Decade for Healthy Aging 2020-2030

Romania intends to continue the series of structural reforms and strategic actions in the field carried out in the last 20 years, complementing them with new initiatives tailored to the current national context and which leads to achieving the target set by the Madrid Strategy Europe 2020. In this respect, one of the most important actions is reforming the national system of social assistance by applying an integrated approach and balancing preventive measures (such as social services for early intervention, insurance, contributory pensions and unemployment benefits), protective measures (such as benefits of non-contributory social assistance) and promotion measures (on employment and skills programs) to ensure basic needs and to help people affected by poverty to overcome this difficult situation.

Transforming the society of ageing from one of dependency to active ageing is an essential aim. The main directions for improving public policies for the older people are: prolonging working life, promoting active and dignified social participation for the elderly and achieving a higher degree of independence and security for people in need of long-term care, establishing modern mechanisms, adapted to the objective realities, for financing the services made by private social service providers.

Conclusions and recommendations for future

The setting of future priorities in the field of active aging will have to start tacking into considerations the results of the previous strategy, the impact of previous policy measures, but also ensuring complementarity with the measures set out by the National Strategy for Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2022-2027, such as:

- ensuring the right to social assistance and the implementation of social policies in the field of protection of the elderly, people with disabilities, groups or communities in social need, or at risk of social exclusion, at the level of each locality
- identifying rapid and sustainable measures to counteract the negative effects, vulnerabilities caused by the SARS - CoV-2 pandemic
- reducing social and economic disparities at the level of local communities, by placing local development under the responsibility of the community;
- strengthening and supporting social entrepreneurship and the social economy;



- improving social dialogue mechanisms;
- improving the process of developing active employment policies based on real social dialogue, through better integration with education and social services, including increasing the employability of older people;
- improving social protection for those in precarious and / or informal employment, workers exposed to abuse by employers or intermediaries facilitating the employment process, the unemployed and low-income people.

The social assistance system is going to undergo a radical transformation in which the emphasis will be on prevention measures, on the provision of social services. A priority will be the development of integrated social services for vulnerable categories, strengthening the capacity of public social assistance services, ensuring and professionalizing staff in the field, promotion of the public -private partnership.

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