



The Government of the Republic of Serbia

In accordance with Article 38, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 30/18),

The Government hereby adopts

**THE STRATEGY FOR ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA FOR THE PERIOD 2024-2030**

I. INTRODUCTION

For some time, the Republic of Serbia has not had a strategy for the ageing process and support for active and healthy ageing,<sup>1</sup> which would include the transition to this category for persons over 65 years of age (hereinafter: older people)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, as an authorised legislator pursuant to Article 29, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia, has initiated the development and adoption of a new public policy document on old age and the ageing process, namely the *Strategy for Active and Healthy Ageing in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2024-2030* (hereinafter: the Strategy).

On the basis of Decision No. 560-00-00206/2023-03 of 18 April 2023, the Minister of Family Welfare and Demography has formed a working group to prepare the proposal for the above strategy. The members of the working group included representatives of the relevant line ministries, civil society organisations and academia. The aim was to prepare the proposal for a government planning document that would support the concept of active and healthy ageing in the Republic of Serbia. The working group held four meetings until 22 August 2023. The public discussion on the strategy took place from

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<sup>1</sup> The National Strategy on Ageing for the period 2006-2015 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 76/06) has expired.

<sup>2</sup> Article 23, paragraph 2 of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 22/09 and 52/21)

27 July to 15 August 2023. The comments and suggestions collected during the public discussion were analysed at the joint session of the Council on Old Age and Ageing<sup>3</sup>, which led to the formulation of the exact title of the Strategy and its text, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). At the end of August 2023, the draft Strategy was submitted to the competent authorities for comments before being forwarded to the Government for decision.

The Strategy is based on demographic data, the concept of active ageing, and a holistic approach. It focuses on the needs of older people, taking into account both their abilities and the attitudes of their social environment. For this reason, the Strategy addresses the entire population, as it aims to strengthen positive attitudes towards older people and create the perception that this population group has a clear potential in our modern society. As part of the implementation process—which will be carried out through action plans for the implementation of the Strategy that will be developed after the Strategy is adopted—this government planning document will specifically monitor poverty indicators among older people and analyse the impact of the proposed measures.

Ageing touches all areas of life and affects the needs of all generations. It is therefore necessary to adopt a strategic direction that addresses the issues of population ageing in a gender-sensitive, responsible, high-quality, multi-faceted and engaging way. This strategic direction encompasses all sectors of society and is equally important for the economy and the labour market, democracy and social equality, the social security of our citizens, education and culture, healthcare and social welfare. Achieving an integrated, holistic approach to healthy and active ageing requires coordinated action by all relevant public authorities — a cross-sectoral approach—in order to create a broader framework for a more effective social action targeting the process of ageing, old age as an outcome of this process, and older people as a diverse population group.

The modern understanding of ageing—the prospective approach—is based on the fact that a certain number of years that used to be considered advanced old age can no longer be regarded as such. In contrast to chronological ageing, which defines older people as those who have reached a certain age (usually 60 or 65), the prospective approach shifts the focus from chronological ageing to healthy life expectancy, the process of active ageing, and the importance of older people's participation in society. Mortality has decreased, while life expectancy has risen. This means that the generations that are formally considered older can still spend their remaining years living an active, high-quality life that is not significantly different from the lifestyle of younger people. In this way, lived age will not lead to differentiation between generations, unlike expected age, according to which old age today lasts much longer than in the past.

## II. PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK RELEVANT TO THE STRATEGY

The Strategy is based on the relevant legal acts and public policy documents that provide the national framework for the development of policies targeting older people. Public policies and attitudes towards older people are a cross-sectoral issue: there are a number of strategies and laws relevant to ageing,

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<sup>3</sup> The Government issued the Decision to establish the Council on Old Age and Ageing in April 2023 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 29/23)

some of which are highlighted in the Strategy. In addition, legislative changes have improved the position of older people in the Republic of Serbia. The Strategy therefore highlights the main laws that have contributed to this, as well as the list of international instruments relevant to the treatment of persons over 65.

### ***1. The strategic framework of the Republic of Serbia***

Some strategies adopted in the last 15 years have directly or indirectly regulated the individual protection of older people and the improvement of their position as a group. In the past decade, the Republic of Serbia has implemented a number of planning documents, all of which have expired along with the above-mentioned National Strategy on Ageing (for the period 2006-2015). These include, for example, the Strategy for the Development of Social Welfare (for the period 2005-2015), the National Strategy on Social Housing (adopted in 2012) or the Strategy on Palliative Care (adopted in 2009). The objectives and measures of all these strategies focused on the financial situation and institutional protection of older people, both directly and indirectly.

With regard to the current policy documents relevant to the Strategy, the following should be taken into account:

- The Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation and Development of Community-based Social Services for the period 2022-2026 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 12/22), which is the key document that provides for family placement as an alternative to group and non-functional care for older people;
- The Public Health Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2026 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 61/18), which states that there are numerous health-related challenges in the Republic of Serbia resulting from the consequences of the economic crisis, population migration and growing inequalities, and underlines that the prevalent diseases and injuries are due to social and economic aspects of health, which means that they disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable groups and lead to health inequalities;
- The Strategy for Improvement of Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2024 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 44/20), which provides for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, with full respect for their dignity and individual autonomy, and ensures their independence, freedom of choice and full and effective participation in all spheres of social life, including life in the community;
- The Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Civil Society in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 23/22), which aims to promote a more active participation of civil society organisations in local communities and strengthen their cooperation with state authorities;
- The Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia for the period until 2030 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 63/21), which has two goals and several objectives within each goal. Goal 1 concerns primary and secondary education and aims to achieve better quality of teaching and learning, fair and equal access to preschools, primary and secondary schools, and a stronger character-building role of educational institutions. Goal 2 concerns tertiary education and aims to improve the accessibility, quality, relevance and fairness of tertiary education;
- The Strategy for Digital Skills Development in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2024 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 21/20 и 8/23), which focuses on improving the digital

knowledge and skills of all citizens, including members of vulnerable social groups, in order to keep pace with the latest developments in all areas of IC technologies and meet the needs of the economy and the labour market. This strategy foresees the improvement of basic and advanced digital skills of all citizens and lifelong learning;

- The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2026 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 18/21 and 36/21 – corrigendum), which aims to create stable and sustainable employment growth based on the principles of knowledge and decent work by improving the implementation of active employment policies and adopting new measures, strengthening the monitoring of trends and fluctuations in the labour market, and measuring the impact of the measures taken, with a focus on those targeting people in an unfavourable position in the labour market;

- The Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021-2030 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 103/21), which aims to bridge the gender gap and achieve gender equality as the most important condition for a better daily life of women and men, with equal opportunities in business, science and education, which are crucial for the social and economic development of our society. The Government adopted the Action Plan for the Implementation of this Strategy (2022-2023) in September 2022 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 99/22);

- The Strategy for Prevention and Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence for the period 2021–2025 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 47/21), which aims to provide effective prevention and protection against all forms of violence against women and girls and domestic violence, and to build a gender-sensitive system of services for survivors of violence<sup>4</sup>, and

- The Programme for the Protection of Mental Health in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2019-2026 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 84/19), which identifies older people as a particularly vulnerable group whose mental health is at risk, and establishes mechanisms for the prevention of mental disorders and the improvement of mental health.

## **2. The legal framework of the Republic of Serbia**

The Law on Pension and Disability Insurance (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 34/03, 64/04 – CC, 84/04 – state law, 85/05, 101/05 – state law, 63/06 – CC, 5/09, 107/09, 101/10, 93/12, 62/13, 108/13, 75/14, 142/14, 73/18, 46/19 – CC, 86/19, 62/21, 125/22 and 138/22) regulates, among other things, voluntary and mandatory pension and disability insurance. This Law is one of the most important acts that regulate the rights of older people. According to Article 19 of this Law a person shall acquire a right to an old-age pension: 1) after reaching the age of 65 and completing a minimum insurance period of 15 years; 2) after completing 45 years of insurance period. In recent years, this Law has been amended and the age limit for the old-age pension for women has been raised from 60 to 65. Article 19a sets the conditions for a gradual increase of this limit until 2032, when the conditions for entitlement to an old-age pension will be fully equal for women and men. In accordance with the

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<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination for the period 2022-2013 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 12/22) in early 2022 and the Action Plan for its implementation in October 2022 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 112/22). In these planning documents, persons over 65 are recognised as a vulnerable group (at risk of discrimination). For example, Chapter 3.1, paragraph 9 of the Strategy states: "Older people face discrimination in almost all areas of life, especially in the areas of work, employment and healthcare. Older people often live in poverty and are exposed to neglect and violence." The Strategy does not single out older people or any other population group in particular, but is structured by area. For persons over 65, the relevant areas are healthcare and housing, and Chapter 3.3, which deals with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rulebook on the Social Standard of Pension Beneficiaries of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 3/23 and 18/23), the social standard includes the following: 1) rehabilitation of pension beneficiaries in healthcare institutions and health resorts; 2) cultural and sporting activities that promote the social inclusion of older people; 3) solidarity support for pension beneficiaries in the form of packages of basic food and hygiene items, as well as other forms of support aimed at raising the standard of living of pension beneficiaries; and 4) provision of special services to pension beneficiaries who are in possession of the so-called senior citizens' cards issued by the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia.

The Law on Contributions for Mandatory Social Insurance (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 84/04, 61/05, 62/06, 5/09, 52/11, 101/11, 47/13, 108/13, 57/14, 68/14 – state law, 112/15, 113/17, 95/18, 86/19, 153/20, 44/21, 118/21, 138/22 and 6/23) regulates the calculation and payment of contributions for mandatory social insurance, which includes pension and disability insurance.

The Labour Law (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 24/05, 61/05, 54/09, 32/13, 75/14, 13/17 – CC, 113/17 and 95/18 – binding interpretation) provides older persons with the opportunity to be employed. The provisions of Article 197 of the Labour Law state that a beneficiary of an old-age pension may enter into a contract to perform temporary or periodical work. According to other relevant articles of the Labour Law relating to work under an employment contract and other forms of work outside the employment relationship, there are no restrictions on an old-age pension beneficiary to resume employment and take out insurance while continuing to receive his or her pension.

The Law on Social Welfare (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 24/11 and 117/22) regulates the area of social welfare, which includes services for older people. These services include accommodation, day care and home assistance. According to Article 41 of this Law, a person older than 65 years is entitled to social welfare rights and services if his or her wellbeing, safety and productive life in society are at risk due to old age, disability, illness, family problems and other life circumstances.

The Law on the Rights of Beneficiaries of Temporary Accommodation in Social Welfare Institutions (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 126/21) regulates the rights of beneficiaries of temporary accommodation in social welfare institutions that are in the process of deinstitutionalisation. This includes the general principles, the placement procedure, the process of preparing beneficiaries for life in the community after deinstitutionalisation, and protection against abuse, exploitation and neglect.

The Law on Public Health (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 15/16) regulates the field of public health in terms of responsibilities, planning, and implementation of activities to maintain and improve the health of the population. According to Article 6 of this Law, public health in the sense of physical, mental and social health of the population includes monitoring and analysis of healthcare for citizens of all ages.

The Law on Health Insurance (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 25/19) regulates mandatory and voluntary health insurance in the Republic of Serbia. According to Article 16 of this Law, persons over 65 are considered insured persons for the purposes of this Law.

The Law on Healthcare (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 25/19) regulates the system, organisation and implementation of healthcare in the Republic of Serbia. Healthcare is an organised and comprehensive activity that affects the entire society. Its aim is to maintain and improve the health of people at the highest level, which includes prevention, elimination and early detection of diseases, injuries and other health disorders in order to ensure timely, effective and efficient treatment, care and rehabilitation. According to Article 11 of this Law, social care for health also includes people over 65.<sup>5</sup> The Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 33/06 and 13/16) regulates the general prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of disability, specific cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities, the protection procedure for persons subjected to discrimination and the measures to promote equality and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. This Law is important for the inclusive approach and systematic support to activities organised by associations of older people.

The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 36/09, 32/13 and 14/22 – state law) is based on the following principles: 1) respect for human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities; 2) equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of social life – according to their professional capacities; 3) promotion of employment of persons with disabilities in appropriate jobs and under appropriate working conditions; 4) prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities; 5) equal rights and obligations; and 6) gender equality.

The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* Nos. 22/09 and 52/21) defines the notion of discrimination, indirect discrimination, segregation and forms and cases of discrimination. It establishes the general prohibition of discrimination and describes the procedure for protection against discrimination based on personal characteristics, which include age. Article 23 of this Law deals specifically with the treatment of older people.

The Law on Volunteering (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 36/10) regulates issues related to volunteer work such as the understanding of terms relevant to volunteering, the principles of volunteering, contracts for volunteering and the rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteering organisers.

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<sup>5</sup> Older people have special needs because of their age and physical condition. Therefore, it is important to mention how they are treated in emergency situations, focusing on emergency procedures that take into account their specificities. In this sense, the experience of older people during the Covid-19 pandemic is particularly interesting. In 2018, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Situations Management (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 87/18). Seven years earlier, in 2011, the Government adopted the National Strategy for Protection and Rescue in Emergency Situations (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 86/11). In mid-2022, the competent line ministry – the Ministry of Interior – informed the public that it had started preparing the proposal for the Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2027. The proposal aims to be in line with the provisions of the above-mentioned Law, changes caused by pandemics and natural disasters such as climate change, EU practises, and the monitoring mechanism of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. One of the objectives of the proposed Strategy focuses on vulnerable populations, which include older people. It includes measures and activities aimed at providing effective protection in emergency situations, as defined in the Law.

### 3. *International documents*

The Madrid International Plan on Ageing (MIPAA) with the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) (United Nations, 2008)<sup>6</sup> has the following priorities: 1) older people and development; 2) improving health and wellbeing in old age; and 3) creating an enabling environment for the personal development of older people.<sup>7</sup> Member states are required to submit a report on the implementation of MIPAA and RIS every five years, including the measures they need to take to improve the situation. The expired National Strategy on Ageing 2006-2015<sup>8</sup> largely incorporated and consolidated the provisions of MIPAA and RIS into the local strategic framework. In the last year of implementation of this Strategy, an evaluation was conducted<sup>9</sup> which showed that despite some achievements and progress, the document was implemented more slowly than expected. The evaluation also made it clear that a new strategy must maintain the same ten strategic directions as the old one, which means that tackling poverty among older people must remain one of the priority areas for action.

In line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution (75/131), the World Health Organisation will lead the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 in collaboration with other UN agencies. During the period between 2015 and 2030, the World Health Organisation will focus in particular on the concept of healthy ageing, defined as “a process of developing and maintaining the functional capacities that enable wellbeing in old age” so that older people can remain an important resource for their families, their communities and society as a whole.

The Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide (World Health Organisation, 2007) defines eight areas that need to change in order for cities to be better adapted to ageing populations: housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, community support and health services, communication and information.<sup>10</sup>

The Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe (Dublin, 2013) is an important document for the European Union.<sup>11</sup> The member states of the Dublin Declaration commit to implementing activities to improve the quality of life of older people, strengthen systems and services in all sectors, and promote a culture of innovation in order to make communities age-friendly. The Declaration fully incorporates the principles of active ageing and the eight priority areas of WHO, as well as the UN principles for older people – independence, self-actualisation, participation, care and dignity.

In its report “Ageing in a Digital World – from vulnerable to valuable”, the International Telecommunication Union identifies new trends, best practises and solutions to ensure that older people become an integrated and active part of the digital society. The report provides guidelines and

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/media/1254/vodic-za-nacionalnu-implementaciju-mipaa.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://unece.org/DAM/pau/MIPAA.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2018-11/Nacionalna%20strategija%20o%20starenju\\_1.pdf](https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2018-11/Nacionalna%20strategija%20o%20starenju_1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/media/1253/evaluacija-primene-nacionalne-strategije-srpski.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43755/9789241547307\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43755/9789241547307_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.agefriendlyeurope.org/sites/all/modules/custom/features/age\\_covenant/files/Dublin-Declaration-on-AFC-2013.pdf](https://www.agefriendlyeurope.org/sites/all/modules/custom/features/age_covenant/files/Dublin-Declaration-on-AFC-2013.pdf)

recommendations for policies aimed at engaging older people, reducing their vulnerability, and boosting economic growth by making societies more inclusive.<sup>12</sup>

The EU Pillar of Social Rights is an important policy framework that contains 20 principles to strengthen the social dimension of the European Union. Principle 15 concerns old age income and pensions.<sup>13</sup> It contains two important guidelines: 1) retired workers and self-employed persons have the right to a pension that is commensurate with their contributions and provides an adequate income; women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights; and 2) everyone has the right to resources in old age that ensure a life of dignity. Furthermore, other principles of the EU Pillar of Social Rights are relevant to ensuring a quality life in old age, such as healthcare, inclusion of persons with disabilities, long-term care, assisted living and access to basic services. As a candidate country for EU accession, the Republic of Serbia needs to harmonise its policies in line with the EU *acquis communautaire*, which includes the principles of the EU Pillar of Social Rights.

The Green Paper on Ageing is based on the findings of a report on the impact of demographic change published by the European Commission in June 2020. The Green Paper addresses the challenges and opportunities of ageing demographics and highlights intergenerational solidarity as a crucial component.<sup>14</sup>

The European Commission's Report on the Impact of Demographic Change presents the drivers of demographic change and their impact across Europe.<sup>15</sup>

The UN Global Report on Ageism contains recommendations for various stakeholders (states, UN agencies, civil society organisations, private sector) regarding the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of age.<sup>16</sup>

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>17</sup> The 2030 Agenda is a universal strategy that expects member states to mobilise all their resources to implement the global Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The 2030 Agenda includes 17 global goals (SDGs) covering three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The main purpose of the Agenda is to eradicate poverty in the world. Given the global nature of the Agenda, the SDGs do not specifically highlight any vulnerable groups (such as older people, youth or rural populations). However, the 2022 Progress Report on the Implementation of SDGs in the Republic of Serbia<sup>18</sup> notes that the country is falling short of the SDG that addresses poverty reduction among persons over 65. SDG 1 of the 2030 Agenda ("World without Poverty")

<sup>12</sup> Ageing in a Digital World – from Vulnerable to Valuable, ITU Development Sector, 2021, <https://www.itu.int/dms.pub/itu-d/opb/phcb/D-PHCB-DIG-AGE-2021-PDF-E.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, (2022). Green paper on ageing, Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/785789>

<sup>15</sup> Report on the impact of demographic change (2020) – Reader friendly version | European Commission (europa.eu)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240016866>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnf-kBhCnARIsAFlg492b07R4TTbNVcmIaUYNSjNnaSHIVMPJACIYj-xZBKxh8JG2QBcpzYaApFGALw\\_wcB](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnf-kBhCnARIsAFlg492b07R4TTbNVcmIaUYNSjNnaSHIVMPJACIYj-xZBKxh8JG2QBcpzYaApFGALw_wcB)

<sup>18</sup> <https://sdg.indikator.rs/media/1621/izvestaj-o-napretku-u-ostvarivanju-ciljeva-odrzivog-razvoja-do-2030-godine-u-srbiji-2022.pdf>

envisages the eradication of poverty everywhere and in all its forms. It includes 7 targets, which are monitored by 13 indicators. In the Republic of Serbia, 7 targets and 9 indicators are currently monitored for progress. According to the above-mentioned Report, the Republic of Serbia has made significant progress in reducing the risk of poverty or social exclusion. This progress has been achieved for all age groups, with the exception of older people (persons over 65), who fall significantly short of the goal. In terms of mobilising resources to implement policies to eradicate all types of poverty, Serbia lags behind SDG 1. Data from the Report show that the share of total government expenditure on basic services (education, healthcare and social welfare) has fallen from 56% in 2015 to 51.2% in 2020. Within these three sectors, only the healthcare sector saw an increase in allocations of 2.4 percentage points, while the social welfare sector actually experienced a decline of 6.6 percentage points (from 36.6% to 30%).<sup>19</sup>

The World Health Organisation’s Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030<sup>20</sup> introduces key principles that should underpin all actions aimed at older people: human rights, equality, fairness, anti-discrimination, gender equality, and intergenerational solidarity. This Strategy has been developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and taking into account the above principles and relevant issues. Therefore, this Strategy is fully aligned with the priorities of the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030.

### III. BASELINE ANALYSIS

The analysis of the demographic situation, trends and problems for the purpose of policy formulation is based on the demographic characteristics of persons over 65. It is therefore crucial to look at the main factors and expected changes in the recent future and how they differ from the previous period.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of December 2022, the Republic Statistical Office stated that according to the latest census (2022), the total population of the Republic of Serbia is 6,647,003 (48.6% men and 51.4% women).<sup>22</sup>

The average age of the Serbian population is 43.8 years. Women are on average three years older than men—the average age of women is 45.2 years, while for men it is 42.4 years:

Table 1. *Population by sex and average age, total and per region.*<sup>23</sup>

	number of inhabitants			average age		
	total	men	women	total	men	women
Republic of Serbia	6,647,003	3,231,978	3,415,025	43.8	42.4	45.2
Region of Belgrade	1,681,405	794,413	886,992	42.7	41.03	44.2

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnf-kBhCnARIsAFIlg492b07R4TTbNVcmIaUYNSjNnaSHIVMPJACIYj-xZBKxh8JG2QBcpzYaApFGEALw\\_wcB](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnf-kBhCnARIsAFIlg492b07R4TTbNVcmIaUYNSjNnaSHIVMPJACIYj-xZBKxh8JG2QBcpzYaApFGEALw_wcB)

<sup>20</sup> WHO Europe, decade of healthing ageing; <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/healthy-ageing/news/news/2021/01/decade-of-healthy-ageing-2021-2030>

<sup>21</sup> To facilitate the development of action plans that will accompany this strategy, 2019 was chosen as the base year, as the previous years – 2020 and 2021 – were marked by special circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic crisis.

<sup>22</sup> <https://popis2022.stat.gov.rs/sr-Cyrl/>

<sup>23</sup> Census of population, households and residences 2022, Republic Statistical Office

Region of Vojvodina	1,740,230	845,739	894,491	43.6	42.03	45.2
Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	1,819,318	895,840	923,478	44.3	43.1	45.5
Region of South and East Serbia	1,406,050	695,986	710,064	44.9	43.7	46.02

If we compare the data from the last two censuses (2011 and 2022 respectively), we can see that the depopulation trend in the Republic of Serbia has worsened. The depopulation is due to both the negative birth rate and the negative migration balance.

The Republic of Serbia has had a negative birth rate for over 30 years, starting in 1992. The birth rate per thousand inhabitants is very low and in 2019 it was -8%.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the birth rate in the EU is positive.<sup>25</sup>

According to population statistics, life expectancy at birth in the Republic of Serbia was 73.1 years for men and 78.3 years for women.<sup>26</sup> Compared to the 2011 census, the average age has increased by about 18 months. Life expectancy in the Republic of Serbia is five to ten years shorter<sup>27</sup> than the EU average.<sup>28</sup>

The shift in population distribution towards older age—known as population ageing—has begun in high-income countries (in Japan, for example, 30% of the population is already over 60). By 2050, however, two-thirds of the world's population over 60 will live in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, these countries will face major challenges in maintaining their healthcare and social welfare systems to fully support the ongoing demographic changes.

In every country in the world, the proportion of older people in the population is increasing. Compared to 2010, the average age has increased by two years for both sexes. By 2030, one in six people in the world will be 60 or older:<sup>30</sup>

Table 2. *Population by age groups, per region:*

	Total		0–14		15–64		65 and older	
	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%
Republic of Serbia	6,647,003	100	955,452	14,4	4,222,696	63,5	1,468,855	22,1

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population>

<sup>26</sup> <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2022/Pdf/G202214019.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.udruzenjesz.rs/images/PDF/nacrt-strategije-socijalne-zastite-2019-2025-27032019.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.euronews.rs/evropa/vesti/85964/prosecan-zivotni-vek-evropljana-raste-u-kojim-zemljama-stanovnici-zive-najduze-a-u-kojim-najkrace/vest>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

	Total		0–14		15–64		65 and older	
	total	%	total	%	total	%	total	%
Region of Belgrade	1,681,405	100	254,270	15,1	1,086,113	64,6	341,022	20,3
Region of Vojvodina	1,740,230	100	254,971	14,7	1,108,342	63,7	376,917	21,7
Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	1,819,318	100	258,234	14,2	1,143,283	62,8	417,801	22,9
Region of South and East Serbia	1,406,050	100	187,977	13,4	884,958	62,9	333,115	23,7

Between the two censuses, there were no major changes in the share of under-15s in the total population of the Republic of Serbia – 14.3% (2011 census) compared to 14.4% (2022 census). However, the share of the 15-64 age group has decreased significantly—from 68.3% (2011) to 63.5% (2022), i.e. by around 5%. At the same time, the share of persons over 65 has increased from 17.4% (2011) to 22.1% (2022). The demographic situation is the most drastic in the region of South and East Serbia, where almost every fourth person (23.7%) is older than 65.<sup>31</sup>

Depopulation and ageing mean that there are fewer people of working age. This affects the economy and reduces the potential for financing social security, which is largely based on the taxation of labour. The ageing of the labour force, as part of population ageing, requires measures to address its consequences and consequently more resources for retraining and reskilling, and possibly for unemployment or disability benefits, as older people remain longer in the labour market.<sup>32</sup> Pension and disability insurance, social welfare and healthcare are responding to these demographic challenges by following the trends of European policies, while taking into account, of course, the needs and capacities of the Serbian economy.

Another factor is outmigration. Outmigration contributes to the faster dissolution of traditional multi-generational family models, increases the number of older persons' households and creates a growing demand for care services, which are usually provided by extended family members.<sup>33</sup> According to 2019 data, 23.8% of older people in the Republic of Serbia live in one-person senior households.<sup>34</sup> About one third of these people (31.5%) have difficulties in performing everyday household activities (grocery shopping, food preparation, simpler and more difficult household chores), while almost one in ten (9.5%) have serious difficulties in performing personal care activities (dressing and undressing, going to the toilet, bathing, showering).<sup>35</sup> Women, persons over 75, people living outside urban areas,

<sup>31</sup> <https://popis2022.stat.gov.rs/sr-Cyrl/>

<sup>32</sup> Matković G. (2018). Welfare State in the Western Balkan Countries, Centre for Social Policies, Belgrade

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show/.do?dataset=\\_Ivps30&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show/.do?dataset=_Ivps30&lang=en)

<sup>35</sup> Republic Statistical Office and Batut (2021). National Health Survey 2019. Belgrade: Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia

people with the lowest level of education and the poorest population groups were much more likely to have difficulties in performing everyday household and personal care activities. Among older people who have difficulties in performing household activities, 29.7% do not need help, 33.3% receive sufficient help, while more than a third (37%)<sup>36</sup> report that their need for help is not met.

One third of persons over 65 (31.9%) report being in very good and good health, slightly more than one third (41.3%) describe their health as average, while one quarter (26.8%) report being in poor and very poor health. The population in South and East Serbia and those living outside urban areas are much more likely to describe their health as poor (31.4%). However, compared to 2013, the indicator of general health has improved—in 2013, only one-fifth of the older population (22.4%) described their health as good and very good.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the Republic of Serbia is below the EU average. According to EUROSTAT data, in 2019, more than a third (42.4%) of EU citizens over 65 described their health as very good and good, while only 14.4% reported poor health. Almost every second older person in the Republic of Serbia has functional mobility problems (44.8%). Functional vision problems affect 40.7% of older people and functional hearing problems 45.9%. In addition, every fourth older person (25.8%) has significant mobility problems, while 8.7% of older people are affected by significant vision problems and 13.9% by significant hearing problems.

In 2019, the occupancy rate of nursing homes for adults and older people was 85% in the private sector and 93% in the public sector.<sup>38</sup> Since 2015, the number of people employed in nursing homes in the private sector has been steadily increasing—in 2019 it was increased by 3% compared to 2018.<sup>39</sup> We must emphasise that in the last ten years only eight doctors have specialised in geriatric medicine. Given the rapidly growing proportion of older people in the total population, this low number is alarming.<sup>40</sup>

In the past period, the number of pension beneficiaries aged 65 and older has risen steadily:<sup>41</sup>

Table 3. *Number of pension beneficiaries aged 65 and older in the period 2017-2022 (on December 31st 2022):*

year	old-age pension		disability pension		survivors' pension			total
	men	women	men	women	men	women	children	
2017	455,078	377,934	106,797	66,227	4,891	223,564	8,932	1,243,423
2018	471,358	397,119	105,202	66,491	5,110	223,795	8,403	1,277,478
2019	488,418	417,566	103,819	66,656	5,345	225,610	8,053	1,315,467
2020	500,206	434,555	101,356	66,381	5,566	224,162	7,535	1,339,761
2021	500,921	443,963	95,095	63,810	5,687	221,063	6,835	1,337,374
2022	505,976	451,656	90,629	62,114	5,964	221,465	6,415	1,344,219

Note: The number of survivors' pension beneficiaries is the number of persons receiving a survivors' pension, not the number of survivors' pensions to which they are entitled.

<sup>36</sup> National Health Survey 2019, Republic Statistical Office, 2021

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/media/2162/izvestaj-o-radu-ustanova-za-smestaj-odraslih-i-starijih-za-2020.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Fourth report on the MIPAA implementation 2017-2021, supported by UNFPA.

<sup>41</sup> Source: Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia

Among survivors' pension beneficiaries older than 65, 95% are women. According to the data from 2022, women account for almost 70% of the total number of survivors' pension beneficiaries of all ages. This illustrates the importance of survivors' pensions and pension and disability insurance as such for the livelihood of this population group. According to the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia, of the total number of female old-age pension beneficiaries in 2017, 72% were women over 65, while these figures increased to 82% in 2019 and 89% in 2022:

Table 4. *Number of pension beneficiaries by insurance category, May 2023:*

Employed	Self-employed	Farmers	Total
1,397,624	109,544	139,020	1,646,188

Table 5. *Number of beneficiaries by type of pension, May 2023:*

Old-age	Disability	Survivors'	Total
1,081,594	236,404	328,190	1,646,188

In the Republic of Serbia, violence against older people is primarily recognised and treated as domestic violence. In recent years, significant efforts have been made in this area to prevent this type of violence and to provide adequate support to survivors. At the municipal level, the response to cases of domestic violence is coordinated through intersectoral bodies led by the prosecutor's office and involving the police, the centre for social welfare and other services and institutions.<sup>42</sup>

According to the records of social welfare centres, older people account for about one sixth of all domestic violence cases reported to these institutions:<sup>43</sup>

Table 6. *Proportion of older people (65+) in the total number of domestic violence cases reported to social welfare centres:*

Year	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Psychological violence	Economic violence	Percentage of older survivors
2016	17%	8%	19%	29%	18%
2017	16%	15%	18%	17%	17%
2018	15%	12%	17%	29%	16%
2019	14%	15%	15%	25%	15%
2020	15%	27%	16%	25%	16%

The Republic of Serbia belongs to the group of countries with older demographics, where the population continues to age and life expectancy is increasing. These dynamic and significant demographic changes pose major social challenges, both in terms of the financial stability of older people (receiving adequate pensions and social and healthcare benefits) and the provision of various services to this population group to the required extent. Treating others with dignity and providing them with the right opportunities to meet their needs is not only a crucial prerequisite for the equality of older people, but concerns all generations in view of the inevitable process of ageing.

<sup>42</sup> Fourth report on the MIPAA implementation 2017-2021, supported by UNFPA.

<sup>43</sup> Annual Report of the Social Welfare Centres, Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia, 2020

An important dimension of older people's daily lives is their marital status, as it indirectly illustrates the relationships within a household. The census has shown that among persons over 65, most women are widowed and most men are married. As far as the households of older people are concerned, we need to consider two important characteristics – firstly, the household structure in terms of the people living in it, and secondly, the nature of living in one-person senior households.

As a science, demography needs to be familiar with the different data sources it will analyse, and apply appropriate techniques to transform them into relevant and user-friendly indicators. Therefore, in order to become familiar with older people as a population group, including their activities, daily life, intergenerational solidarity and health, it is recommended to take a look at the following surveys: Labour Force Survey,<sup>44</sup> Household Budget Survey,<sup>45</sup> Time Use Survey,<sup>46</sup> and Survey on Income and Life Conditions (SILC).<sup>47</sup>

Given the growing proportion of older people in the total population, it is not enough to study only those who fall into this category (persons over 65) or to measure only the dimensions of the ageing process. We need to get to know this population group in detail and explore its structure according to various characteristics such as gender differences, spatial distribution and density. We also need to recognise their potential and importance as a human resource. Our task is to capture the complete demographic profile of older persons. Only with this knowledge can we make plans for the ageing society and the role of older people in our world. In seeking answers to these questions, we must start from the concept of healthy and active ageing.

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Considering the current situation and condition of older people, we can group together areas and contents that are similar in terms of relevance and type of activities required, aiming to solve the difficulties and unresolved social relations that hinder the daily life of persons over 65. Taking into account the other relevant policy instruments in the Republic of Serbia, which already target some areas of importance for older people such as anti-discrimination or emergency management, we have identified the following issues:

- 1. There is a lack of respect for differences and gender equality, a lack of solidarity between generations and within generations in the general population, and a lack of (generational) dialogue;**
- 2. There is a lack of a much needed enabling and supportive environment tailored to older people and their mental and physical health, a lack of clear support for informal care providers, a lack of developed and accessible public and alternative care services that would protect older people from neglect and abuse, and a lack of awareness raising and outreach activities on ageing and older people;**
- 3. The social participation of older people is inadequate when taking into account their abilities and aspirations for personal development. Older people deserve to take up existing employment opportunities and improve their living conditions in rural areas. Moreover, the**

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/trziste-rada/anketa-o-radnoj-snazi/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-Latn/oblasti/potrosnja-prihodi-i-uslovi-zivota/potrosnja-domacinstva>

<sup>46</sup> [https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1447?language\\_content\\_entity=sr-Cyrl-RS](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1447?language_content_entity=sr-Cyrl-RS)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/potrosnja-prihodi-i-uslovi-zivota/prihodi-i-uslovi-zivota/>

**participation of older people in policy-making and decision-making is insufficient despite their significant life experience and potential;**

**4. The knowledge and life experience of older people and the contributions they can make to society are not sufficiently appreciated, while the volunteering of people over 65 is undervalued;**

**5. Healthy and active lifestyles in old age are still not widespread enough for older people to adequately maintain their health, prevent illness and disability, and receive effective institutional protection when exposed to violence.**

#### IV. VISION

##### **Older people living a dignified and fulfilled life thanks to healthy and active ageing**

The prerequisites for realising this vision are more information and awareness-raising, and respect for and inclusion of older people in the social community as a resource with multiple capabilities. In addition, communities as a whole should be sensitised through activities where older women and men can participate equally in all aspects of social life (political, social, economic, cultural, sports).

Therefore, the Strategy shall be based on the following principles:

- Equality – older people have the same rights and opportunities as other citizens to participate in the economic, labour, social, cultural, political and other life of the community, as well as equal access to all social structures;
- Gender mainstreaming – to all structures and policies aimed at older people;
- Prevention of discrimination and violence – access to fundamental rights, respect for dignity and physical integrity, individual autonomy and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity – the knowledge and life experience of older people and their contribution to the community shall be valued and recognised as a resource in our modern society;
- Individuality – independent decision-making and respect for personal choices of people over 65.

#### V. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

##### **Goal: Active and healthy inclusion of persons over 65 in all social spheres and other areas of life**

This goal is mainly based on international documents that promote the empowerment of persons over 65, namely the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), with priorities such as: 1) older people and development; 2) improving health and wellbeing in old age; and 3) creating an enabling environment for the personal development of older people. In addition, the World Health Organisation's Strategic Framework for Healthy Ageing (Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030) highlights the economic, behavioural, personal and social components, healthcare and social welfare services, and the physical environment needed to promote the concept of healthy ageing. In view of this, the objectives of the Strategy are also based on the positions of the global instruments mentioned above:

Indicator outcome	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Proportion of healthy life in remaining life expectancy at age 65	%	31.9%	42%	Republic Statistical Office
Higher quality of life for older people	%	0	Increase by 45% compared to the baseline value	Results of the <i>WHOQoL-BREF</i> survey; Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Ensured full social integration and participation of older people	%	0	Increase by 45% compared to the baseline value	Survey results; Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

### Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness among the general population about the needs and potential of persons over 65,**
2. **Improve access to public services for older people, especially in rural areas,**
3. **Provide access to lifelong learning programmes, sports and cultural content for older people,**
4. **Encourage volunteering by older people, especially in local self-governments,**
5. **Improve institutional and non-institutional protection of older people (healthcare, social welfare, security and violence prevention).**

In today's world, the number of older people is constantly increasing. Modern states are striving to create the conditions for the implementation of comprehensive strategies focused on older people, their wellbeing, health and quality of life. To improve the quality of life of the older population, it is very important to understand the social aspects of ageing. Social support networks, good mental health, lifestyle, changes in social and economic status and social roles are just some of the areas that are important for improving and maintaining a healthy and active ageing process. To promote intergenerational solidarity and create a social environment that meets the needs of older people, the following quality of life and wellbeing assessment tools have been developed:

- Subjective Well Being Index,<sup>48</sup>
- Life Satisfaction Index,<sup>49</sup>
- Quality of Life Indicators.<sup>50</sup>

Quality of life is defined by the objective conditions of life and their subjective perception in the form of satisfaction and wellbeing. Each person has an individual perception of the quality of certain aspects

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264191655-en.pdf?expires=1689500328&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=04793CEB2FE1B7E891DD39106BEC8AFA>

<sup>49</sup> <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/s/life-satisfaction-index-lsi/>

<sup>50</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality\\_of\\_life\\_indicators](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators)

of his or her life, even though certain conditions must be met for the actual quality of life, such as health, love, hobbies, work, friendships, family, wish-fulfilment, hopes and dreams, and financial resources. Quality of life is thus a subjective feeling of each individual and includes joy, life satisfaction, inner peace, bliss and a life free of stress, anxiety and insecurity.

Activities and specific measures to achieve a higher quality of life for older people in the Republic of Serbia shall be defined on the basis of their demographic characteristics. The concept of healthy and active ageing is adopted as a possible response to modern population trends. This is a radical departure from the concept of demographic ageing, as it does not focus directly on the issues of institutional protection and care of older persons, but promotes the social inclusion of older people by relying on their knowledge, skills, competences and, above all, their life experience. The paradigm of healthy and active ageing includes the expansion of employment, lifelong learning, intergenerational solidarity, quality healthcare and cultural content. Ultimately, it will lead to a stronger social role for older people and a higher quality of life.

### ***1. Active ageing***

The MIPAA proposes to include active ageing as a fundamental strategic action in public policies.<sup>51</sup> It recommends that the UN member states incorporate the concept of active ageing in the design of their public policies. The aim of this action is to bring the economy and society in line with demographic changes. The main strategic direction is to promote active ageing in all sectors of society in a way that demonstrates the economic, social and any other justification for such action.

All relevant indicators suggest that older people can expect a better, healthier life in the future, i.e. a safer and more dignified old age. Such an old age will be secured through social activism, among other things. A more intensive and active involvement of older generations in social, economic, political and other activities is crucial to neutralise the negative aspects and consequences of the ageing process. Even if older people are willing to become more actively involved in the community, their actual participation is rather low at the moment. However, we can assume that we will have a great activist potential in the future when the new generation of older people arrives who are in better shape, and have better health and a higher average education.

### ***2. Gender equality***

In preparing this Strategy, we have taken into account all the data and information pointing to specific forms of social and economic exclusion that typically affect women over 65. The WHO points to the particularly vulnerable position of women over 65 compared to men of the same age, especially in terms of poverty and exposure to violence. Our intention is to promote and develop a social sensitivity towards this category of women that takes full account of the particular economic and social constraints they face (especially widows). In all promotional activities related to the implementation of the Strategy, we promote the equal participation of women and men by ensuring equal access to the rights and opportunities offered by this strategic document.

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/media/1254/vodic-za-nacionalnu-implementaciju-mipaa.pdf>

### **3. *Intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity***

Life expectancy in the Republic of Serbia has become longer in the 21st century than in the past, which has led to a shift in generational needs. Different generations have different life experiences, different values and worldviews. In practise, this can lead to a low level of mutual tolerance. To prevent this, but also to address the problem of loneliness and social isolation of older people, we need to consistently implement the principles of solidarity, interaction and communication between generations. Therefore, this Strategy recognises the need for additional social incentives to strengthen the position of older people and create the conditions for all generations to take their place in society.

Demographic projections on population ageing underline the need to strengthen the role and importance of family in caring for the oldest family members. Social communities support families indirectly through various services for older people, both financial and non-financial, as far as existing resources and practises allow. The rights of older people who cannot care for themselves and have no family members to care for them are protected. Nevertheless, it is necessary to provide a range of accessible measures and services for family members and informal caregivers who care for sick, adult and older people.

### **4. *Lifelong learning***

Even though the Republic of Serbia has adopted the concept of lifelong learning, the results achieved in practise show that no significant progress has been made. The fact that the process of lifelong learning must include all generations (from the youngest children to the oldest people) has been somewhat neglected. There can be no continuous learning and education without including older persons.

Infrastructures to support lifelong learning are unevenly distributed and lacking, especially in rural areas and small towns. ICT options for older people are underdeveloped. The “new” media are still not sufficiently understandable and accessible for older people (with the exception of mobile phones).

Health experts emphasise the positive effects of continuous mental stimulation on maintaining good health. According to them, higher education reduces the risk of dementia. Furthermore, personal development leads to social integration and the promotion of a positive social perception of old age, increases physical and mental wellbeing, and has a positive impact on civic engagement and volunteering. For older people, education means learning skills and building capacities to cope with daily life.

### **5. *Digital competencies***

Older people need support to keep up with digital literacy so that they are not excluded from the social participation processes that are increasingly taking place in new technological areas (e-Government, e-Health, e-Inbox, e-Agriculture, online shopping). Access to ICT equipment and the use of media are not only determined by age and gender, but also by region, level of education and occupation. Persons over 65 are not a monolith: this means that we need to provide diversified training opportunities for media literacy and digital skills (e-learning).

## **6. *Educate the general population about the health, psychological and social aspects of ageing***

It is necessary to educate the general population about these topics, in order to create a different cultural climate and improve the status and role of older people in our modern society. On one hand, we need to counter many stereotypes, prejudices and misconceptions related to old age. On the other hand, we need to promote solidarity and transfer between and among generations. To this end, it is important to continuously disseminate knowledge among all generations and promote intergenerational solidarity as a lifestyle. In the Republic of Serbia, the solidarity model—the support we provide to the vulnerable members of our society—is traditionally based on families, individuals and social support networks, rather than on public and private institutions.

The portrayal of old age in the media often contains many misconceptions and lacks a diversity that truly reflects the multi-layered reality of life in old age. Age-related stereotypes and prejudices in the media need to be systematically eliminated, paying attention to both the language and imagery used in the media.

## **7. *Participation and integration of older people in the social community***

In local communities, there is a lack of activities in which older people can participate. Only a few initiatives offer interested persons over 65 a space to get involved and improve their lives. Therefore, older people with their skills, knowledge, abilities and competences are an untapped resource, while this social exclusion leads to a lower quality of life in old age.

Several adopted strategic documents already include the need to promote activities for older people and to emphasise the importance of work and employment after retirement. To this end, the law has already raised the age limit for the old-age pension as one of the conditions for entitlement to this benefit. However, the number of older people who remain in employment after reaching retirement age is very low, making work and employment after retirement rare. To reverse this trend, we should consider more flexible forms of post-retirement employment, such as remote work or career reorientation. In addition, work in old age can encompass a wide range of socially important activities, both for older people and for the communities in which they live, such as volunteering, caring for family members, childcare and informal childrearing. Volunteer work enables older people to use their skills and makes them visible in the outside world, which earns them recognition and respect.

Life satisfaction is higher among those who have achieved self-actualisation. In an intergenerational context, activities such as sharing knowledge, helping and advising neighbours and taking on other voluntary tasks in the community mean that older people become visible beyond their own age group and identity.

## **8. *Support mechanisms and cross-sectoral cooperation***

In order to improve the health status and general situation of older people, healthcare and social welfare services need to be at least coordinated, if not integrated. This Strategy focuses on educating older people and their family members and promoting healthy lifestyles. Therefore, infrastructure development, especially in rural areas, must be promoted so that older people living there have adequate living conditions and access to healthcare, social welfare, cultural content and sports facilities. It is necessary to adopt protocols with clearly defined procedures and mechanisms for the roles of

institutions from different sectors to support older people. It is also strongly recommended to strengthen the role of the Council on Old Age and Ageing and the Council on Intergenerational Solidarity and Cooperation.

Persons over 65 suffer from all forms of violence, including psychological, physical, social and economic violence, with neglect and abuse being common. Older people rarely report domestic violence. They usually see domestic violence as their own failure to raise their children and therefore do not share this with others.

### 9. *Prevention of institutionalisation*

By developing open, community-based services that support the lives of older people in their natural environment (such as respite and day care centres), we provide meaningful support to this population group in line with the strategic documents of the Government of the Republic of Serbia which focus on the deinstitutionalisation process.

## VI. MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL AND THE OBJECTIVES

### **Objective 1 – Raise awareness among the general population about the needs and potentials of persons over 65**

Raising awareness about the needs and potentials of persons over 65 will sensitise society to this population group and promote the integration and participation of older people in their environment. Older people have a lot of knowledge and experience that they have gained throughout their lives. Their knowledge and experience should be seen as a resource that can be used for the benefit of all. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness about older people's competences. By the end of the implementation of this Strategy, school curricula should be amended according to the recommendations on awareness raising and intergenerational solidarity towards older people:

Outcome indicator	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Older people are more satisfied with their family relationships and with the attitudes of other members of the community towards them	In part/in full	In part in 2019	In full in 2030.	Survey results on satisfaction of older people with their family lives – Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Amended curricula for all levels of education are adopted	No/Yes	No	Yes	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia

#### *Measure 1.1: Public perception of older people no longer leads to their social exclusion*

**Description and effects:** By organising outreach campaigns about the needs and possibilities of older people (65+), the awareness of the general population is raised. In this way, persons over 60 can

prepare themselves in a timely and systematic manner for the period of life after reaching the age of 65 and become entitled to a pension, with the support of the competent authorities and the enabling regulations that have been adopted.

Type: Outreach (information and education).

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 1.1.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of regulations adopted to promote and improve digital literacy	0	2	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia
Number of promotional activities in the media	0	6	Report of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 1.2: Develop intergenerational solidarity and sensitivity towards older people*

Description and effects: It is necessary to analyse the curricula for pre-school, primary and secondary education by focusing on how the needs of older people are presented and improving this perception. Therefore, the curricula should be amended in line with the recommendations on awareness raising and intergenerational solidarity towards older people, which also entails a change in regulations.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Education

Output indicators for measure Mepy 1.2.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Conducted analysis of curricula	0	All curricula for preschool, primary and secondary school education are analysed	Reports of the Ministry of Education
Amended curricula	0	All curricula for preschool, primary and secondary school education are amended	Reports of the Ministry of Education

Implementation period: 2024-2030

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## **Objective 2 – Improve access to public services for older people, especially in rural areas**

Improved access to public services to meet the basic life needs of older people, especially in rural areas, means ensuring access to primary healthcare services, postal services, and banking services (e.g. “mobile bank counter”), and adapting public spaces to the accessibility standards for (older) people with disabilities. The baseline analysis also shows that public transport in rural areas should be improved:

Outcome indicator	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value (2030)	Verification sources
Percentage of local self-governments that have made public transport accessible to all older people	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	The target value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024, i.e. as soon as the baseline value has been set	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Accessibility and adaptation of public and private buildings for all older people	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	The target value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024, i.e. as soon as the baseline value has been set	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare

*Measure 2.1: Ensure access to public transport in all rural settlements for older people, including older persons with disabilities and mobility problems*

Description and effects: Analyse the possible solutions for the introduction of transport on the so-called unprofitable bus lines in order to make recommendations for better access to public transport services.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure Mepy 2.1.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Conducted analysis of all so-called unprofitable bus lines with the recommendations for local self-governments	No	Yes	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Number of bus line recommendations adopted and implemented by local self-governments	0	100	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare

Implementation period: 2024-2026

*Measure 2.2: Ensure that public buildings are accessible to older people by implementing the principle of universal design*

Description and effects: The prerequisite for older people and persons with disabilities to participate in public life and function in their communities is the removal of architectural barriers that prevent them from entering and moving around buildings. This also includes the removal of information and communication barriers. This process is equally important for public and private buildings (sports facilities, healthcare institutions, backyards and gardens) as well as post and bank buildings.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure Mepy 2.2.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of public institutions that have removed access barriers for older people	500	1,000	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography based on the data from centres for social welfare

Implementation period: 2024-2030

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### **Objective 3 – Provide access to lifelong learning programmes, sports and cultural content for older people**

Access to lifelong learning programmes and sports and cultural content for older people depends primarily on increasing the accessibility of these activities in the community. It is important to inform older people about various cultural, sporting, recreational and educational programmes and events and to ensure the accessibility of these programmes and events:

Outcome indicators	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Persons over 65 attending cultural, sporting, recreational and educational events	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Percentage of older people in education	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Labour Force Survey, Republic Statistical Office
Percentage of older people using the internet	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Republic Statistical Office: “Use of Computers and Mobile Phones in the 55-74 Age Group”

*Measure 3.1: Promote lifelong learning and continuation of employment (in preparation for retirement)*

Description and effects: The general public will be informed about the opportunities that people have once they acquire the right to retire by distributing outreach material and developing media campaigns to promote lifelong learning as a form of personal development for persons over 65. Such promotion of lifelong learning through media campaigns and outreach material will also encourage older people to actively participate. A number of people in the older population group have incomplete primary education or have not attended primary school at all. We can assume that a large number of older people have not mastered the elements of the so-called functional or new literacy, which includes foreign languages and basic computer skills, as well as the willingness and motivation to learn. This is particularly prevalent in rural areas.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 3.1.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of outreach campaigns conducted	0	6	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Number of media campaigns organised	0	6	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Increased motivation of older people to learn new skills	0	30%	Survey done by the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 3.2: Meet the cultural, educational and sporting needs of older people*

Description and effects: Cultural, educational, sports and recreational content should be made more senior-friendly, and older people should be motivated to participate in various events in their communities through continuous outreach. Local self-governments should be encouraged to make their range of events more senior-friendly. Leisure time should be organised, filled with content and spent in a quality way, because leisure time plays an important role in maintaining physical and mental health.

Type: Enabling

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 3.2.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of implemented projects and programs in the areas of culture, education and sports aimed at older people and co-funded by local self governments or competent ministries	0	18	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Percentage of local self-governments with organised	17%	87%	Reports of the Ministry of Family

cultural, educational and sporting events aimed at older people			Welfare and Demography
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Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 3.3: Provide public sports facilities and similar centres for the physical recreation of older people*

Description and effects: Promoting active and healthy ageing has an impact on older people's motivation to participate in sports, which directly affects their psychosomatic health. Empirical evidence shows that older people are less physically active, which leads to an increase in health problems (biological, cognitive and emotional). Therefore, we need to work on providing spaces for exercise, procuring the appropriate equipment and ensuring (volunteer) support from professional staff.

Type: Enabling

Competent institution: Ministry of Sports

Output indicators for measure 3.3.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Increased percentage of older people who exercise on regular basis	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Increased percentage of active local communities	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Increased percentage of actively engaged professional staff	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 3.4: Promote active and healthy ageing and the impact of sports and recreation on the health of older people*

Description and effects: To improve the health of older people, we need to prioritise the promotion of active exercise. One of the most important activities for this purpose is the provision of public sports facilities and similar centres for sports and recreation for older people under the supervision of professional staff.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 3.4.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Developed Guidelines for Preventive Exercise for Older People	0	1	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia
Number of local self-governments where training is provided to test the functional abilities of older people	0	87	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Number of older people who have participated in the tests of their functional abilities	0	870	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare

Implementation period: 2024-2030

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#### **Objective 4 – Encourage volunteering by older people, especially in local self-governments**

Encouraging older people's volunteering in local communities will change community attitudes towards the needs and potential of older people and contribute to intergenerational solidarity through various humanitarian, volunteering events and actions that promote interpersonal relationships. It is also important to create various volunteering opportunities that bring younger and older people together in the community. In this way, older people will become more involved in society and feel useful, which strengthens their self-esteem and self-respect:

Outcome indicator	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Active participation of older people in volunteering activities in local self-governments	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	SILC
Engaging older people to care for pre-school and primary school children	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 30%	SILC

##### *Measure 4.1: Improve volunteering in local communities*

Description and effects: There is a need to establish volunteering services at the local community level. For some older people, volunteering is an opportunity to give back to their community. In this way, they remain active members of society and participate in the life of their community. Volunteering can be seen as a substitute for the employment and work habits that older people had before retirement, and therefore helps them to maintain a sense of their own worth—especially when helping others. Certain life events, such as the loss of family members or friends, often provide a motive for volunteering in

the local community as a source of comfort and a coping mechanism for loneliness and grief, enabling people to get on with their lives.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 4.1.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of local self-governments that have established volunteering services with older volunteers	1	60	SILC – Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Number of local self-governments that have organised outreach campaigns on volunteering for older people	1	87	SILC – Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Implementation period: 2024-2030

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### **Objective 5 – Improve institutional and non-institutional protection of older people (healthcare, social welfare, security and violence prevention)**

To improve the health status and general situation of older people, it is particularly important to integrate and coordinate social welfare and healthcare services (including visiting nurses). In addition, improving social welfare for older people leads to better access to the rights and services to which they are entitled. Finally, prevention of violence against older people includes activities to inform older persons about protection measures if they are exposed to violence in their environment or family:

Outcome indicator	Measuring unit	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Increased percentage of healthcare services for persons over 65	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 20%	Report of the Ministry of Health
Adopted palliative care regulations in line with modern standards	No/Yes	No	Yes	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia
Adopted amended curriculum for medical studies with content on gerontology and geriatric medicine	No/Yes	No in 2019	Yes by 2030	Ministry of Education: Medical studies curriculum – chapters on palliative care

Capacity building of healthcare institutions to provide palliative care services	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 20%	Report of the Ministry of Health
Increased proportion of people over 65 in family placement	%	The baseline value will be determined after the baseline analysis has been carried out in 2023/2024	Increase of the baseline value by 20%	Reports of the Centre for Social Welfare
Decrease in reported cases of domestic violence against older people	Number	868	434	Annual report of the Centre for Social Welfare

*Measure 5.1: Promote healthy ageing in line with the specific needs of older people*

Description and effects: The aim of this measure and its activities is to raise awareness about the health of older people and their family members. To improve the quality of health of older people, additional education, training and capacity building of healthcare workers to communicate and work with older people is needed. For this reason, a survey on the habits and needs of older people will be conducted and outreach materials will be developed and distributed, followed by a media campaign.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Health

Output indicators for measure 5.1.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Conducted survey on the habits and needs of older people	0	2	Annual report of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Number of healthcare workers trained to work and communicate with older people	0	150	Report of the Ministry of Health
Number of outreach and media campaigns on the habits of older people	0	6	Report of the Ministry of Health

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.2: Build the capacity of healthcare workers to work with older people*

Description and effects: The health of older people can also be improved by establishing and promoting regular visiting nurse services in community healthcare centres. In addition, healthcare workers should

be trained to communicate and work with older people, focusing on diseases that are common in old age (including mental health problems). The curriculum for the specialisation studies of doctors of family medicine should be expanded to include content on gerontology and geriatric medicine. Finally, nurses' curricula and practise should include gerontology and geriatric medicine in basic studies.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Education

Output indicators for measure 5.2.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of trained healthcare workers	0	150	Report of the Ministry of Education
Amended curricula for basic medical studies and specialisation studies of doctors of family medicine	0	1	Report of the Ministry of Education
Amended curriculum for basic studies or additional specialisation of nurses	0	1	Report of the Ministry of Education
Increased percentage of healthcare institutions that provide visiting nurse services	0	25%	Report of the Ministry of Health

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.3: Promote the use and accessibility of palliative care and integrated services for palliative care patients*

Description and effects: Build capacity in healthcare institutions to provide palliative care; develop new regulations that govern palliative care in the public and private sectors.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Health

Output indicators for measure 5.3.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of palliative care patients	1.500	7.500	Report of the Ministry of Health
Adopted new regulation on palliative care	1	1	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia
Increased percentage of healthcare institutions that provide palliative care		20%	Report of the Ministry of Health

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.4: Build the capacity of social welfare service providers for older people*

Description and effects: Even when regulations are in place, certain rights and social welfare services are not sufficiently available in local communities. Creating conditions that facilitate older people's access to these services and improve their quality has multiple impacts (health, social and economic) on both individuals and the community as a whole. This would increase the number of beneficiaries

accessing these services, especially in rural areas. Capacity building will target providers offering services such as day care centres, assisted living, counselling and therapy, social and educational services, accommodation for older persons and other services provided for in the Law on Social Welfare.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

Output indicators for measure 5.4.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of local self-governments with an organised provision of social welfare services for older people (total)	126	151	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia
Number of new institutions supporting social welfare services as of the implementation of the Strategy	56	58	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia
Number of newly founded shelters for older people	0	6	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.5: Improve family placement for older people*

Description and effects: In order to contribute to the principle of deinstitutionalisation, we need to work on building capacity for family placement of older people so that this becomes the prevailing practise and institutionalisation is seen as a last resort in older persons care. This includes organising training for families caring for older people, including those with disabilities and cognitive problems, such as dementia in particular.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

Output indicators for measure 5.5.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of campaigns to promote family placement for older people	0	6	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia
Number of trained families	0	200	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia
Number of older people in family placement	355	514	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.6: Improve access to rights and social benefits for older people in precarious situations who urgently need housing*

Description and effects: One of the most important prerequisites for improving the quality of life of older people is to reduce poverty in this population group. The main problem affecting older people is low monthly income. Older people who have no family (spouse, children, grandchildren) and do not receive family care are at the highest risk of poverty, as are older people who live in inadequate conditions and do not have access to institutional services. Each municipality should keep records of older people without family care, which will be used to create a plan of services and support for these people.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

Output indicators for measure 5.6.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Amended regulation on the work of social welfare centres so that they can keep records of older people without income	No	Yes	Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia
Number of self-governments keeping records of older people without income	0	87	Reports of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.7: Prevent domestic violence, raise awareness of the importance of reporting domestic violence, and provide rehabilitation services for older people who have survived domestic violence*

Description and effects: The first step in preventing domestic violence against older people is to raise awareness of how to recognise the signs of abuse, followed by drawing public attention to this problem. This requires organising outreach campaigns on the prevention of all forms of domestic violence, emphasising the importance of reporting violence, and providing rehabilitation services for older people who have survived domestic violence.

Type: Outreach

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 5.7.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Number of outreach campaigns to prevent domestic violence against older people	0	6	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography
Number of outreach campaigns for the prevention of domestic violence	0	6	Reports of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Implementation period: 2024-2030

*Measure 5.8: Build the professional capacity of multisectoral teams that work with older violence survivors*

Description and effects: One of the most important measures to protect older people is to recruit more professionals and train them on how to recognise and respond immediately to violence by providing psychological and physical protection to persons over 65. Therefore, more social work professionals should be recruited in mental health centres, social welfare centres and police stations.

Type: Regulatory

Competent institution: Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Output indicators for measure 5.8.	Baseline value	Target value	Verification sources
Percentage of professionals in police stations who are trained in mental healthcare for older persons	0	20%	Report of the Ministry of Interior
Number of professionals employed in social welfare centres who are trained in mental healthcare for older persons	1,697	2,206	Report of the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia

Implementation period: 2024-2026

## VII. MECHANISM FOR STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

The Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography shall be responsible for coordinating, reporting, monitoring and evaluating the planned measures and activities to improve the situation of persons over 65, within the competences of this Ministry pursuant to Article 20 of the Law on Ministries (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, Nos. 128/20 and 116/22). The Minister of Family Welfare and Demography shall have the possibility to establish special working groups such as committees, departments or operational/expert working groups for specific topics that require a high level of expertise in the subject matter. These groups would assist in the coordination and evaluation of this Strategy with their technical and expert knowledge.

The timeframe for implementation shall be set out in two action plans (2024-2026 and 2027-2030 respectively). In accordance with the provisions of Article 43 of the Law on the Planning System, the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography shall prepare an ex-post analysis and report on the results of the implementation of the Action Plan for the period 2024-2026. The preparation of the second Action Plan shall be started in due time, at least six months before the expiry of the first Action Plan. The Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography shall prepare the ex-post analysis and the final report within the timeframe specified in the Law.

The main tools to achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategy are cooperation between the national, provincial and local levels, cooperation between line ministries, and the establishment of partnerships.

The Strategy covers the period between 2024 and 2030.

## VIII. FINANCIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The funds required for the implementation of this Strategy shall be provided from various sources, such as the budget of the Republic of Serbia, the budget of local self-governments and donor funds. The funds shall be raised on the basis of programmes and projects developed and adopted under this Strategy. The funds for the implementation of the measures and activities listed in this Strategy will be determined in the Action Plans for the implementation of the Strategy—the first one will cover the period between 2024 and 2026, the second one will cover the period 2027-2030.

The funds required for the implementation of the measures and activities listed in the action plans shall not affect public expenditure and revenues in the medium and long term. The funds from the budget of the Republic of Serbia required for the implementation of the activities planned for 2024, 2025 and 2026 are expected to be within the limits set by the Ministry of Finance for all budget beneficiaries.

The implementation of measures presented in this Strategy and the first biannual Action Plan shall bear no impact on the international financial obligations of the Republic of Serbia, as no loans are planned.

## IX. ABOUT THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Prior to the development of the Strategy, members of the working group described in paragraph 2 of this Strategy met with the consultants appointed by the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography in collaboration with UNFPA to draft the text of the Strategy proposal. The working group held four meetings and its members discussed different versions of the proposal, each time taking into account the conclusions of the previous meeting. This coordinated work led to the following conclusions, among others: to use the latest data from the Republic Statistical Office from the 2022 census; to streamline the Strategy to 5 objectives with appropriately adjusted indicators; to take into consideration the Law on Healthcare and the Green Paper on Ageing; and to use the terms “persons over 65” and “older people” in a consistent manner.

Previously, the Ministry’s ex-ante analysis of the situation of persons over 65 in the Republic of Serbia was prepared and presented to the public on the Ministry's website for a period of 20 days.<sup>52</sup> The public consultations consisted of online contributions based on the ex-ante analysis—more precisely, the ex-ante analysis of the impact of public policies on ageing. The discussion and analysis took place in the meetings of the above-mentioned working group, which was composed of representatives of line ministries, civil society organisations and academia. During the public consultations, the proposal to base the Strategy on the concept of healthy and active ageing was adopted. This includes measures to implement this principle, as United Nations member states have adopted the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which provide for healthy and active living for persons over 65 and people approaching that age. These proposals were made by the representatives of

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<sup>52</sup> The ex-ante analysis of the situation of persons over 65 in the Republic of Serbia is available at: <https://www.test-minbpd.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Ex-ante-analiza-buduce-strategije-za-unapreenje-polozaja-starijih-lica.pdf>

UNFPA, the Social Welfare Institute of the Republic of Serbia and the Institute of Social Sciences, while the representative of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities stressed the importance of involving local self-governments in achieving the goals and objectives of the Strategy.

Finally, in August 2023, the Council on Old Age and Ageing of the Government of the Republic of Serbia gave its opinion on the Strategy as a future strategic document of the Government aimed at promoting the concept of healthy and active ageing, before the Strategy was submitted to the line ministries for comments in accordance with the Government's Rules of Procedure (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 61/06 – consolidated text, 69/08, 88/09, 33/10, 69/10, 20/11, 37/11, 30/13, 76/14 and 8/19 – state regulation), so that a decision can be taken at the first upcoming session of the Government.

## X. ACTION PLAN

The first Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, covering a period of three years, shall be adopted within 90 days upon the adoption of the Strategy.

The second Action Plan shall cover the period of four years (2027-2030).

## XI. FINAL REMARKS

This Strategy shall be published on the Government website, the website of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography and the e-Government portal within seven working days upon the adoption of the Strategy.

This Strategy shall be published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*.

05 Number: 56-8363/2023  
Belgrade, September 28<sup>th</sup> 2023

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

PRIME MINISTER

Ana Brnabić