

Informative material about ageing in Albania

Ageing

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One of the priorities of the Albanian Government's public policies is to work for the fulfillment of the needs and to improve the life of the third age people.

In addition, the needs of this group of our society are numerous. The measures undertaken by the Government target such category of our population with the aim to establish the right facilities and to improve their life.

Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities supports through its programs the third age people which are considered to be a special category within our society.

One of the measurements taken by the government is drafting the National Strategy for the Third Age which is a very brave step within this field, where one can identify some final moments.

- First of all: A new social bill containing the necessary legal gaps for establishing the services of the public, state, private and non-governmental character as well as other initiatives of the civil society has been drafted. Such law creates and obliges the local government to implement those social services identified for the third age people. At the same time this new bill obliges the local government to implement what is considered to be the core of the law, the decentralization of the social services for the third age.
- Secondly: the national strategy facilitates legally necessary gaps for financing the social services for the third age. This financial support can be performed not only by the state budget but also by the local government, local and foreign donors. In general this social fund established by the central and local government as well as different donors enables the possibility for more social services within the community.
- The services and the benefitions for this social category are provided by different institutions related to social and health insurances in appliance with the national legislation currently in effect.

LEGAL GAPS

According to the current legislation in the Article nr 9355 dated as of 10.03.2005 "About the assistance and the social services" the third age of the population receives and benefits different allowances and services due to their specific social circumstances.

In the Article nr 6 the beneficiaries are defining as “children, young people as far as 25 years old, elderly people, people with limited abilities, women, girls, girls in need as well as all those people in risk of falling under the category of “need”.

According to Article nr 22, elderly people will be received in the free of charge residential centers, in that case when their families prove lack of incomes and that their expenses are covered by the state budget.

In appliance with the national legislation, the government has approved the nr 209 Decision, dated as of 14.04.2006, where one can find the definition of the criteria as well as the necessary documents in order to be taken into consideration the requirements of the ole people to be admitted within the residential institutions whether public or private. Currently 366 old people benefit from the services offered by public institutions of social care.

Current situation Social Services

Currently in Albania there are 5 residential centers offering services for elderly people in cities like Shkodër, Tiranë, Kavajë, Fier and Gjirokastrë together with 2 daily centers offering social services in cities like Tiranë and Sarandë. Such services are financed totally by the state budget.

Recently local and foreign NGO-s has started to provide social services for the elderly people. We can mention here the Foundation “Mother Theresa” which is a non-governmental center.

Despite this fact “third age” category of people has begin to be treated by many non-governmental private centers facilitating the so called social business within the field. Taking into consideration the contribution of the local and foreign NGO-s, the number of beneficiaries has increased as well as new qualitative and “closer to home” models of services have been established.

The entire system of social services provided by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of Albania is going through reformation. Such reform aims at:

1. fulfilling the needs of the elderly people, people with limited abilities, children, labor invalidities as well as other groups of people in need, through the expansion of the social communitarian services
2. the decentralization and transferment of the competencies of social services at the local government
3. de-institutionalization of the social services
4. Full inclusion of the civil society, public and private operator in offering services for the community.

Nevertheless the needs of the elderly people are not fully satisfied with only 5 residential centers and 2 daily centers that currently are administered by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. We consider that third age needs more public services.

Following this judgment and with the support of the World Bank more communitarian daily centers for elderly people are being building. In the frame of the World Bank's project "Distribution of Social Services" multidisciplinary centers are being established where aside from identified groups some other groups benefit from the services provided by those centers within many municipalities around the country.

In order to improve the quality of those services and in the framework of the reforms, a number of legal, structural and organization improvements have been accomplished.

- Different NGO-s that offer services for the third age people are licensing. Such increase of the number of licensed social services providers will have an impact in the improvement of the quality of such services.
- By a decision of the Council of Ministers the following standards have been drafted and approved.
 1. The Standard for Social care within residential centers for elderliness
 2. The Standard for elderliness within daily social care centers
 3. The Inspectorate for Monitoring the Implementation of those Standards has been established and will assure the quality of such services.

The need to program measures for reconstructing the surroundings of the elderies aiming at the implementation of the new social standards within public residential centers, have been identified as the government's goals for 2007 year.

Recommendation relating to the intervention within those fields aiming at the improvement of the current situation

Keeping in mind the fact that the seniority of the population is one of the biggest challenges that the world today is facing with, new policies aiming at the diminishing of any kind of social and economic inequalities targeting the elder is so they can be equal and active members of the society in the process of development, have been identified in full compliance with the universal declaration of the Human Rights and in addition to the fact that the elegies are considered to be a great potential for the society due to the fact that they have quite a lot to give to its respective society.

Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of Albania has programmed for 2008 year drafting the National Strategy and Plan of Action regarding ageing based on the International Plan of Madrid.

In order to draft the National Strategy for ageing it is necessary to undertake a pan-national surveillance with the aim of identifying in deep the problems that this category of our society faces. Such surveillance will serve as a very important foundation to later on draft a national strategy alongside with a plan of actions and measurable and achievable indicators.

Improving the existing conditions within the residential centers. Such intervention will establish the facilities for implementing new social standards for elegies. The improvement of the existing conditions within residential

centers will require also the assistance of the donors (foreign or national ones) for equipments such as televisions, hitting equipments etc.

The establishment of new residential centers. In order to cover the needs of the elderliness within those district where there are no social services centers we propose to build 4 social care centers for this specific category of people and precisely in the districts of Peshkopi, Kukës, Korçë and Vlorë.

The establishment of communitarian social centers for the elderliness.

The experience of the “Balashe” center is another opportunity that complies with the new philosophy for the services closer to the community.

The donors appreciate and support much more this type of services. In such cases the donors take upon their responsibility the initial investigation for the new center, its equipment whereas the support of the activity of the new centers after their establishment is a responsibility of the Albanian Government.

The NGO’s Activities

A number of NGO’s act in the sphere of offering social services with the aim to acknowledge, propaganda, and protect the rights of the elderliness. Despite the great job that the network of NGO’s working for the elderliness still need the support of the Albanian Government regarding the solution of all problems that this category of the population faces. The governmental support may consist in:

- Establishing the coordinating structures regarding the obligations that Albania after endorsing the declaration of the UN and the Madrid one.
- Giving more priority the drafting process or in improving the legal pack edge for the social protection of the elderliness (the Status of the Pensioner). Such process must be conform the Revised European Social Charter and in conformity with the Strategy for Diminishing the Poverty in Albania.
- Receiving more support from the State (central and local government) in order to make the elderliness associations more and more functional and efficient in the circumstances of the lack of infrastructural capacities and human ones.

This support should be oriented in two main directions:

First of all the public administration staff already trained should be appointed to help and assist the elderliness.

Secondly, more public surroundings should be offered for the daily social services centers for elderly.

The process of drafting the list of medicine to be reimbursed should be revised, which means that besides the cost of medicine the state should also monitor the medical effects as well as the social effects of such medicines in the life of elderly. Such monitoring process should be performed with full transparency in order to assure the participation of the elderly which are the most effected group of our population from this process.

The Pensions Policies

All Albanian citizens that have a working history and have payees their contributions are entitle of receiving their pensions and in those cases when they have no income they receive economic help.

The Albanian government is promoting the increase of the pension age for males to be retired at the age of 60 till 65 years old and for women from 55 to 60 years old. Such measurements will go along side with the limitation of the early and flexible retirement. The early retirement, after a working seniority of 30 years is foreseen to be at the age of 57 for women and 60 for men.

The new Democratic Government conform the decision nr 399, dated as of 21.06.2006 starting from 1.07.2006 has achieved an increase of 5% for the city pensions and 20% for countryside pensions. Such increase recuperates immediately the inflation effects in the pension's size. It gives a substation addition to the city pensions above 2.9% and accomplishes the government's electoral programme for the low countryside pensions to be increased with high rhythms during the 4 years to be doubled and until 2012 to compute with the city pensions. The number of people benefiting from such increase of pensions is 360 thousand city pensioners and 157 thousand countryside pensioners.

In the framework of implementing its program, the government has paid quite a special attention to the increase of the minimum incomes of the pensioners. So conform a decision of the council of ministers dated as of 21.06.2006 it has been approved an increase of the minimum incomes of the pensioners in the level of 500 Albanian leke per month.

During 2007 the application of those pensioners receiving minimum pensions will continue to receive full pensions reaching so the level of 10.000 Albanian leke. In up coming July 2007 the estimated amount of Albanian Lek foreseen from the state budget in disposition of the pensions funds are 600 million Albanian leke increasing so the entire pensions that did not benefit from the decisions for income compensation.