

REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING IN LITHUANIA

PART I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The demographic processes (low birth rate that does not ensure natural turnover of residents, big extent of migration of persons of employable age, and longer average expected lifespan), the number of older persons is growing rapidly in Lithuania. This phenomenon urges to search for answers to the questions, how to make use of the emerging opportunities and respond to the arising challenges, more actively. It should be noted that the activities have been carried out in all the areas of the Madrid Plan of Action in the reporting period. There are several examples presented in this report that reflect general developmental tendencies in the country and the innovations with regard to activities for benefit of older persons.

It should be noted that in 2018, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Strategy for the Demographic, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-2030. The main purpose of the strategy was to ensure positive change in the number of residents and proportionate structure in the age of residents. Among the important goals of the strategy is the aim to grant possibility to older persons to get integrated into society. One of the following objectives was determined in the Programme of Development of Social Solidarity for 2021-2030 approved by the Government in 2021 was to solve the problems of older persons related to their poverty and social isolation.

The pensions of social insurance have been increased consistently in consideration to the growing economics, growing wages-fund, and the acquired work experience. It is attempted to secure more adequate link with the former wages. The system of protection of income of single persons of retirement age is being improved.

It should be noted that the funds of the structural support of the European Union were used to implement the projects aiming to increase employment of older persons. Besides, the services for older persons were developed by improving their quality and accessibility. The Action Plan for the Development of Integrated Aid sponsored by the European Social Fund is implemented. Its purpose is to provide qualitative integral aid (nursing and social services) to persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and consultancy aid to the family members taking care about such persons.

The support is provided to non-governmental organisations representing older persons, promoting active and healthy ageing and reinforcing solidarity between the generations. The non-governmental organisations are engaged to provide emotional, psychological and informative aid to

older persons. The cooperation between the national, municipal authorities and non-governmental organisations representing older persons is strengthened through formation and implementation of the policy of social inclusion of older persons. The possibilities for older persons to get integrated into the social, political and cultural work are developed and the positive image of older persons is being improved in society.

The objectives, tasks and strategic complex tools provided in the plan of action of ensuring healthy ageing in Lithuania in 2014-2023 have been implemented in the field of health. Their aim was to improve health care quality and life quality of older persons, to increase their integration into society, their working capacity and physical activity.

In the field of education, it was attempted to strengthen activities of the universities of the third age, hence assuring possibility for every older person to take part in the activities of the universities of the third age, to develop their skills in a qualified manner, and to participate in public life. Besides, the skills of older people in the area of information technologies were improved.

With regard to the new stage of implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, economic, social and cultural engagement of older persons is distinguished as one of the strategical trends of the social policy. It is important in this trend to stress bigger involvement of older residents in the labour market, and improvement of preconditions to live full-fledged social, cultural and personal life, to grow and improve the competences continuously.

Another important trend of the social policy is promotion of solidarity between the generations on the level of the family, community and the state. One of the important tasks in this field would be expansion of health care and social services and increase of their accessibility. Other tasks of this field: strengthening of solidarity between generations, participation in life of society and community, and self-help initiative; development of possibilities to take part in decision-making processes; changes of the society's values, and promotion of culture of positive relations directed towards older persons, through fostering of their positive image in society. In consideration to the changes in the structure of age of residents, the assurance of stability of pension system and economic independence of older persons remains important.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

In order to achieve positive demographic changes, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Strategy for the Demographic, Migration, and Integration Policy for 2018–2030 in 2018. One of the objectives of this strategy is to create opportunities for the elderly people to integrate into the society. For the purpose of achieving this objective, the following tasks have been stipulated:

- to ensure the participation of the elderly people in the social and political life;
- to ensure the participation of the elderly people in the labour market as well as their financial security;
- to ensure the opportunities for lifelong learning;
- to improve the quality and accessibility of health care for the elderly people in order to reduce their morbidity and mortality from major non-infectious diseases and external causes;
- to strengthen intergenerational relations and develop voluntary activities of the elderly.

In order to ensure coordinated and smooth implementation of the objectives and tasks set out in this strategy by selecting measures, appropriations, activities and terms as well as by establishing the criteria for the assessment of the objectives and tasks stipulated in this strategy, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the interinstitutional action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Demographic, Migration, and Integration Policy for 2018–2030 in 2018.

The plan provides for the specific measures to achieve the objectives and tasks set out in the abovementioned strategy, which are implemented using the general appropriations approved in the State budget for those responsible for the implementation of the measures of the Plan as well as other funds received in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation. The Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ministry of Agriculture and the Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania take part in the implementation of this interinstitutional action plan. The implementation of the measures of this plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

NATIONAL AGEING SITUATION

1. Presentation of demographic indicators that could help better understand the country's development regarding the issues discussed

According to the data of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania, in January 2017, there were 2 847 904 residents in Lithuania, while in the beginning of 2021, this number amounted to 2 795 680 residents, i.e., the number of residents decreased by 52.2 thousand or 1.83 percent in 2017-2021. The number of the Lithuanian residents has decreased by approx. 8.4 percent in the last 10 years (Annex A). The size of population is decreasing because of two reasons: negative net international migration and negative natural turnover of residents.

In 2020, crude birth rate (number of births per 1 thousand residents) was 9.0, and the total birth rate was 1.48. In 2020, crude death rate (number of deaths per 1 thousand residents) was 15.6 (14.2 in 2017) (Annex B). According to the data of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania, the migration rates have decreased recently. The net international migration rate in 2020 was 7.1. In 2017, this indicator was negative and amounted to -9.7.

The difference between the average expected lifespan of men and women remains big – in 2019, it was 9.51 years – the expected average lifespan of men was 71.53 years, and 81.04 years – for women.

As the total number of residents is decreasing, the number of older persons is growing (Annexes D, E, G). In the beginning of January 2021, 557.048 thousand, i.e., 19.93 percent of residents were 65 years old and older. In the beginning of 2021, the ratio was 100 children versus 132 older persons (120 in the beginning of 2011). The number of older persons in the country increased by approx. 11.74 thousand or 2.15 percent in the last decade (2011-2021). The demographic ageing is typical for men and even more for women. In the beginning of 2021, 188.5 thousand of men residing in Lithuania were older than 65, while this number for women was 368.5 thousand. In the beginning of 2021, the male demographic old-age indicator (65 years old and older) was 14.35 percent and that of women – 28.32 percent. One of the most essential features of ageing of residents in Lithuania is that majority of older residents are women. Besides, the difference between the average expected lifespan of men and women remains very big, but mainly because of deaths of younger men. The expected average lifespan of women in 2020 was 80.06 years, and it was 9.9 years longer than that of men. The difference in this indicator among men and women over 60 was 5.5 years (Annex C).

According to Eurostat prognoses, the Lithuanian population will continue to decrease. It

is forecasted that in 2030, Lithuania will have 2 million 575.6 thousand residents. If compared to 2020, the population will decrease by 7.8 percent. Besides, the portion of older (65 and more years) residents is going to expand. It is foreseen that the coefficient of older persons to be maintained – number of older (65 and more years) versus 15-64 years old residents will grow from 31 (2020) up to 41 (2030). The median age of residents (average value that divides residents into two equal parts so that half of them is younger than median age and the other – older) is going to grow from 44.2 (2020) up to 46.5 (2030) (Annex F).

2. Presentation of key quantitative social and economic indicators

When Lithuania joined the European Union (hereinafter – EU) in 2004, its economics started to develop quite rapidly. The Lithuanian gross domestic product (hereinafter – GDP) per one resident according to the purchasing power has grown from 50 percent of the EU mean in 2004 up to 87 percent in 2020¹. After the crisis of 2008–2009, the national economics recovered and was close to the economically strong EU countries. According to the Eurostat data, in 2020, the real GDP per one resident in Lithuania amounted to 13 890 euro and compared to 2016, had grown by 20.9 percent (the respective growth of the EU indicator in the same period was 6.0 percent)². The minimal monthly wages increased from January 2022, expected faster pension indexing, and competition for the employees of the needed qualification will induce growth of the income of residents in the near future, as well.

Although the Lithuanian economics was growing, the indicators of poverty (Annexes I, J), social isolation and inequality between income of the residents were improving not so rapidly. Besides, demographic tendencies cause new challenges for social welfare. In 2015, the income of 20 richest residents exceeded income of 20 percent of poorest residents by more than 7.5 times. Since then, the situation has improved significantly – in 2018, the indicator of income distribution amounted to 7.1, in 2020 – 6.1 times, but it was exceeding the EU mean significantly still (the EU mean in 2019 was 5.09). Moreover, the separation of income of the employed residents has been reduced significantly in the last five years – the difference between the persons with the biggest and the lowest earning decreased from 6.8 times to 5 times m (Annex L).

The level of poverty and social isolation is also exceeding the EU mean. In 2019, there were 26.3 percent or 734 thousand persons who were in danger of poverty and social isolation, while

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_10_10/default/table?lang=en.

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_08_10/default/table?lang=en.

the EU mean was 21.4 percent. It should be noted that the indicator of poverty risk and social isolation has been improving in the last years and in 2020, it was reduced down to 24.8 percent. However, poverty and social isolation of certain target groups remains quite a big problem. Persons above 65, single parents and persons with disabilities experience much higher poverty risk and social isolation. In 2020, the highest poverty level was manifested in the group of persons over 65. In 2020, this value was 36 percent, hence, it was bigger by 4.4 percent, when compared to 2019.

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

Older persons and pensions

In 2021, the retirement age for men was 64 years 2 months and for women – 63 years 4 months. According to the data of the Board of the State Social Insurance Fund (hereinafter – Sodra), in December 2021, old-age pension of social insurance (hereinafter – old-age pension) was paid to approx. 612.7 thousand persons, where approx. 540 thousand had the obligatory social security record of social insurance for pensions (hereinafter – obligatory social security record). The average amount of old-age pension was 412,69 euro or 441,02 euro, if the person has the obligatory social security record (the requirement for the obligatory social security record in 2021 was 32 years, and in 2022 – 32.5 years). Since 2018, pensions have been indexed and growing every year: in 2018, the growth was 6.94 percent, in 2019 – 7.63 percent, and in 2020 – 8.11/9.94* percent (*according to the financial capabilities of the State budget, higher indexing coefficient was determined for the general part of pension of social insurance than the indexing coefficient calculated in general procedure), and in 2021 – 9.58 percent, while in 2022, pensions are indexed by 8.47 percent. After the amendments of the Law on Pensions of Social Insurance have entered into effect, additional indexing is applied on the individual part of pension of social insurance, so this part is increased even more – by 4.24 percent (in 2022, the index applied for additional part of pension is 12.71 percent).

Novelties in the pension system from 2022

On 1 January 2022, new amendments of the Law on Pensions entered into effect. The calculation procedure of general part of pension for persons who have minimal experience but not the necessary experience was changed, i.e., general part of pensions in full amount will be paid for all persons, who have at least minimal social insurance record of pensions of social insurance (reduction of general part in proportion to the acquired experience was cancelled). The persons, whose work experience is bigger, will continue to get bigger general part of pension. Besides, the

provision for additional indexing of individual part of pension entered into effect. The individual part of pension is indexed additionally, by adding an additional index to the indexing coefficient (hereinafter – IC) calculated in the established procedure. The additional index is calculated so that the additional funds used in the indexing years to index individual part of pension would not exceed 75 percent of the positive result of cash flow of the planned budget of the National Social Insurance Fund. The individual part of pension is indexed if the level of poverty risk of persons of 65 years old and older announced by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics is higher than 25 percent and/or the ratio of the average old-age pension forecasted for the indexing year versus the net wages forecasted for that year is smaller than 50 percent. It is provided that additional indexing will not be carried out if the calculated IC is below 1.01 and/or the percentage changes in the latest IC in the calculation year and comparative prices of gross domestic product and the wages-fund of IC of the calculation year and/or the subsequent calendar year are negative. In cases when indexing is not performed, the values valid in last December will be applied.

In order to improve the condition of single pensioners, to reduce poverty and to help the groups of society that are in view of the State, a new benefit of single person was introduced in 2020. It is paid from the State budget. On 1 July 2020, the single-person benefit was assigned to the poorest single recipients of relief allowances and pension surcharges, while in 2022, the circle of recipients is getting wider – the benefit is assigned to single persons of retirement age with disabilities (who have lost 55 percent and more of their working capacity). The size of the single-person benefit is equal to the widow pension covered by social insurance – EUR 32 (2022).

Employment of older persons

According to the data (Annex H) of the statistical research of the employment of residents of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, the level of employment and active labour force was growing and unemployment was decreasing in 2017-2020. In 2020, 1 358.1 million residents or 23.2 thousand more (1.7 percent) more residents were employed, when compared with 2015. The employment level of 15-64 years old residents in 2020 reached 71.6 percent and had grown by 4.4 percentage point in five years. During this period, the employment level of 55-64 years old residents increased by 8 percentage points and in 2020, amounted to 68.4 percent. The unemployment level in 2020 was 8.5 percent and it was 0.6 percent smaller than in 2015.

On September 1, 2021, 84.5 thousand unemployed people aged 50+ were registered with the Employment Service. This is 6.5 thousand or 7.1 percent less than a year ago. The registered unemployment rate in the 50+ age group was 15.1 percent, which is 2.9 percentage points higher than

the overall registered unemployment rate in the country (12.2 percent). Unemployed people aged 50 and over make up 40 percent of all unemployed people registered with the Employment Service. Nearly a third of all registered unemployed people aged 50 and over are people aged 60 and over.

Every second person in the 50+ age group is long-term unemployed, 16.6 percent of whom have been registered unemployed for more than 2 years. Almost a third (29.6 percent) of the unemployed aged 50+ have a higher, secondary or higher education. 41.1 percent of the unemployed aged 50+ have graduated from vocational schools and acquired vocational education. Less than a third (29.4 percent) of the unemployed aged 50+ do not have formally acquired qualifications (Annex N), but almost half of those aged 50+ (49.7 percent) registered with the Employment Service are looking for unskilled work. A quarter of unemployed people aged 50+ with college degrees are looking for unskilled work, every tenth unemployed person aged 50+ has limited ability to work due to disability (12.6 percent).

Registered unemployment in the 50+ age group is above the national average by 3 percentage points. This is a long-term phenomenon. The 50+ age group is more likely to have long-term unemployment, as this age group is characterized by lower career expectations (Annex M) .

In order to comprehensively address the urgent problems of employment by concentrating the sectors of business, education and the labor market, as well as involving social partners and municipalities in the formation of employment policy, the Program for Increasing Employment for 2014–2020 has been implemented. The program sets the main goals (stimulating job creation and demand for labor, increasing the compliance of the labor force with the needs of the labor market, integrating and maintaining free labor resources in the labor market) and their achievement.

Services to older persons

According to the data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, there were 621.5 thousand persons of retirement age in the country in 2020 (22.2 percent of the entire population), where 60.7 thousand persons had special needs (9.8 percent). In order to expand availability of services for such persons, recently, the number of care homes for elderly (especially small, with 15-40 places) has been growing (in 2020, their number increased by 8.7 percent) – there were 138 care homes for elderly in the country (where 4 were national, 55 municipal, 79 belonged to public organisations, parishes, and were private care homes) with 6894 places (895 places more than in 2017). Other institutions of social services are not specialised just for older persons. The social services there are provided to persons of retirement age and to persons of working age with

disabilities. In 2020, there were operating 35 homes for independent living (12 more than in 2017), 100 institutions were providing social services at home, and 140 – in day centres.

In 2020, 9.7 thousand elderly persons (65+) received social services in social care homes, 20 thousand – in day centres, and 263 – in homes for independent living. In 2020, 239 persons or retirement age and/or persons with disabilities received support money and took care about social services at home. The number of recipients of this benefit increased twice, if compared with 2019.

The aid at home is especially relevant for elderly persons as it guarantees life of an elderly person in the familiar environment, supports bigger independence, creates an opportunity to live in the community, and helps family members to adjust care about elderly relative with work and personal life. The services at home are provided in all the municipalities in the country – in 2020, they were received by 21.9 thousand persons, the majority of whom were elderly – 15.46 persons (74.4 percent). Although the number of services at home is growing in Lithuania (e.g., in 2020, their number was bigger by 7.8 percent than in 2019, and in 2019 – bigger by 12 percent than in 2017), but there is deficiency of such services. According to the data of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, in the beginning of 2021, 465 elderly persons were waiting in queue for social services receivable at home.

4. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic situation

The pandemic of a new coronavirus (Covid-19 disease) that started in the beginning of 2020 created unexpected and substantial challenges in various areas of the State life – first of all, in the sector of health, also in the economic, social security, educational, cultural, and many other sectors.

In order to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the crisis caused by Covid-19 pandemic, it was necessary to mobilise the State's resources and to increase borrowing. This helped to solve many short-term economic problems, but increased the risks related to stability of the State finances. Maintaining of the State's debt on the level that would not cause groundless risk for the economic growth and stability of the State budget has to become one of the major objectives of the macroeconomic policy of average-term period.

Covid-19 pandemic had negative impact on employment. The employment of 20-64 years old residents decreased by 1.8 percent in a year (in 2020, when compared to 2019). The total unemployment level in 2020 reached 8.5 percent and was 2.2 percent higher than in 2019.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania has taken measures to address the consequences of the extreme situation and quarantine declared by the Government of the Republic of

Lithuania on the threat of the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19). One such measure – wage subsidies during idle time (Article 41 of the Law on Employment). When the idle time was declared in a company due to quarantine and (or) extreme situation declared by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, wage subsidies could be paid. The amount of the wage subsidy was calculated as a percentage of the employee's wage and at the employer's choice could be 70 per cent of the calculated funds, but not more than 1.5 of the minimum monthly salary approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, or 90 per cent of the calculated funds, but not more than the minimum monthly salary approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and when the employed person has reached the age of 60 and older, at the employer's choice could be 70 per cent of the calculated funds, but not more than 1.5 of the minimum monthly salary approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, or 100 per cent of the calculated funds, but not more than the minimum monthly salary approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. This special provision for employees 60 years and older was valid from 12/06/2020 to 31/12/2020.

In implementation of the tool financed by the EU support funds, “Complex Services for Family”, additional financing was assigned to new services for families (persons) in case of quarantine, limited quarantine or extreme situation, when the public health protective measures applied in the whole country, certain territories and/or objects due to Covid-19 (coronavirus infection) outbreak or epidemic restrict ordinary provision of public services and cause unexpected difficulties in daily life to socially vulnerable persons. In order to safeguard the mandatory needs of the families (persons), the following aid was provided: services of purchase and/or delivery of food products, medicaments, hygienic and/or other mandatory means, help in paying taxes to persons, who are in the group of high risk of Covid-19 (coronavirus infection), elderly persons (over 65) and persons with disabilities; services of care about people with disabilities and/or employment persons provided to persons with disabilities under 21 if direct formal education is stopped; and other services that help to safeguard mandatory needs of the family (persons).

It should be also noted that in order to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 in 2020, the decision was made to assign onetime payments of 200 euro to all the recipients of pensions of social insurance. In total, 182 million euro from the State budget were assigned for these benefits.

METHOD

While preparing this report, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour used information submitted by other authorities and non-governmental organisations important for drawing-up this report. Information was submitted by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture,

the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Ministry of the Interior. The Lithuanian Department of Statistics is collecting and announcing data and statistics of residents about various life areas.

Besides, when preparing the report, the reports on performance received by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour were used. The initial data about employment of older persons were received from the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. The information submitted by authorities and non-governmental organisations (hereinafter – NGO) was also used, and the data from municipalities about the rendered social services and other social support were collected. The information received from the conducted research and studies, surveys, publications specially dedicated to ageing questions or discussing ageing questions among some others was also used. It should be also mentioned within this context that in 2020, the Government Strategic Analysis Centre of the Republic of Lithuania (STRATA) prepared the analytical review “Aging Lithuanian Society”, where it discusses the structure of the country’s society and its tendencies to change, health condition of older persons, their social and economic activeness, integration in the labour market, competences and participation in education. Moreover, the content of the Lithuanian legal base and strategic documents on older persons was summarised.

It should also be mentioned that the Lithuanian Social Research Centre that is a national scientific research institute that is carrying out long-term research and development (social, cultural) works important for the state, society, international cooperation or undertakings has conducted the research ordered by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and prepared the White Book of the Lithuanian sociodemographic policy – guidelines for subsequent development of demographic policy. The aspects of ageing of the Lithuanian residents within the context of the European Union Member States were examined in that research, as well as general ageing tendencies in Lithuania and their prognoses, threats of ageing society and policy of their reduction. The Lithuanian Social Research Centre prepared the study in 2018 “Older Persons, Living Alone and Social Isolation”³, where the demographic tendencies of older Lithuanian residents (above 60) are illustrated (dynamics in the number and sociodemographic characteristics), and the issues of social inclusion of this group of residents are discussed.

The insights of the aforementioned guidelines and research are used in this report, as well as the information received through cooperation with non-governmental organisations of older persons working for the benefit of older persons.

³ <https://lsta.lt/download/VIENAS1.pdf>

Besides, the quantitative data received from Eurostat and Active Ageing Index are used. While preparing the report, the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and the EU and the publications of research institutions relevant to ageing problems and passed in 2017-2021 or earlier were analysed. The problems of ageing population were discussed in the meetings when strategic documents in the fields of demography and ageing population were considered.

PART II

20 YEARS OF MIPAA/RIS

1. Main actions and progress in implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals

Recognizing the potential of older persons

The part of older society is growing, thus, its characteristics and predominant moods are going to impact the life of the whole country. Therefore, it is important to endeavour at making older persons feel well, participate actively in the cultural and political life, develop social relations, and be as independent as possible when using new technological solutions, etc. The opportunities of employment, political participation and independent work of older persons are still insufficient. It should be also noted that the experience and competences gained by older persons are not always well appreciated. The Active Ageing Index reflects smaller participation of older Lithuanians in public life, if compared to other Member States of the European Union. According to AAI, Lithuania is in the 27th place among the Member States of the European Union (only 11.1 percent of older persons are participating in public life) 6.0 percent)⁴. It means that the level of participation of older persons in social and political life is quite low.

According to older persons, active participation in public life is prevented by still present negative stereotypes about older persons. Usually, the priority is given to young generations, without taking advantages of older persons into consideration.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_08_10/default/table?lang=en.

Strategic documents

In the last decades, there have been certain political initiatives and strategic documents adopted to increase participation of older persons. The National Strategy for Overcoming Consequences of Ageing Population approved by the Government still in 2004 consolidated the aim to apply the principles of active ageing and to create such conditions as to make it possible for older persons to have full-fledged personal, professional and cultural life now and in the future, to have their experience appreciated and used, and to have them respected and sure about the future. The objectives provided in the strategy were elaborated and itemised in the means on implementation of this strategy approved by the Government. The ageing society was named as one of the challenges reducing need for educational services and increasing need for health care services in the National Progress Programme for 2014–2020. It was suggested to implement the initiatives related to active and healthy ageing and to create conditions to older persons to stay in the labour market.

In 2018, the Seimas approved the Strategy for the Demographic, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-2030. It is one of the most complex strategic documents on ageing society that we have at present. One of the objectives of this strategy is to create opportunities for older persons to get integrated in the society directly, and the tasks used to achieve this cover all the factors safeguarding life quality of older persons: participation in social and political life, labour market, their financial security, possibilities of life-long learning, quality and accessibility of health care, creation of relations, and independent activities of older persons.

The programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania provides intention to promote silver economy. It provides commitment to prepare the tools for labour and civil activeness of older persons, healthy ageing, tourism, entrepreneurship, and learning, to engage higher education institutions and private sector, to expand social innovations, and to endeavour at providing the opportunity to older persons to work and earn until their can, to make work conditions more flexible and responsive to individual needs. It is also planned to prepare a package of silver start-up (training, infrastructure of business incubators, programmes of experience exchange, and the state's guaranteed for business loans) oriented to older persons who want to engage in self-employment. It is also provided in the governmental programme to review the sport system in Lithuania and to create favourable conditions for regular sports to older persons.

The governmental programme gives big attention to strengthening of activities of the universities of the third age. It is planned to introduce senior development baskets that could be used by any pre-retirement or retirement-aged person in order to improve and raise qualification (media

literacy, digital skills, foreign languages, cultural competences, artistic education, etc.). Besides, it is undertaken to promote volunteering in the universities of the third age and to review their financing.

The Government approved the National Progress Plan for 2021-2030 in 2020. One of its strategic goals is to improve social welfare of the residents, to strengthen health and to improve the demographical situation in Lithuania. In implementation of this strategic goal, it is endeavoured at improving welfare of persons with disabilities and their families, elderly person, other vulnerable or socially isolated groups, and to integrate them into society and labour market. In implementation of this strategic goal, the Government approved the Programme of Development of Social Solidarity for 2021-2030 in November 2021. Its aim is to improve welfare of persons with disabilities and their families, elderly person, other vulnerable or socially isolated groups. One of the objectives of this programme is to solve the problems related to poverty and social isolation of older persons, to increase their opportunities to stay in the labour market and to participate actively in social life, by developing the integrated social services in compliance with their needs and reinforcing financial safety of older persons.

Increasing of social inclusion

In order to safeguard efficient cooperation of national and public authorities and institutions with non-governmental organisations representing interests of older persons, and to grant an opportunity to these persons to take part in solving the issues related to them, in 2021, the agreement “On cooperate in formation and implementation of the policy of active ageing and social inclusion of older persons” between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the Lithuanian Association of Municipalities, six non-governmental organisations representing older persons, and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The aim of this agreement is to promote cooperation between older persons, national and municipal authorities in solution of issues relevant to older persons. It was determined to reinforce legal conditions and financial incentives for older persons to get employed, and to take actions to safeguard accessibility to qualitative health care and social services. The commitment is established in the agreement to create conditions for development of older persons, to improve their digital competences, to use cultural values and opportunities provided by information technologies, to induce participation of older persons in formation of national and local policies, life of community ad society, and self-help initiatives.

In order to induce more active participation of older persons in the activities of non-governmental organisations, their cooperation, cultural, national, patriotic, educational and social

activities of older persons, the projects of non-governmental organisations representing older persons are supported. Support is granted to non-governmental organisations that unite and represent older persons and whose goals and main activities represent the interests of older persons the best, while creating an image of positive, active and development-oriented ageing in society. These are the Lithuanian union of pensioners “Bociai”, the Lithuanian Association of Older Persons, the National Association of Universities of the Third Age, the Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees, and the Lithuanian Society of Political Prisoners and Deportees. These organisations unite older persons in all the country and have branches (units) in many Lithuanian cities and regions, the aforementioned non-governmental organisations of older persons were encouraging older persons to join non-governmental organisations more actively, got them involved in active life through cultural events, encouraged their communication and help to each other, healthy life style, and relations between the generations; they endeavoured at participation of representatives of older persons in various consultation councils on the national and municipal levels discussing the projects of national and municipal authorities related to older persons; they were communicating in the units (centres, clubs, etc.), exchanging information with each other and with persons of different generations, who had similar interests; they were satisfying cultural needs of older persons, organising events for such persons, taking care about activeness of older persons and their participation in public life; and they were providing help to lonely persons.

In 2021, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour started implementing the project supported by the European Commission “To create a model of favourable conditions for integration of older persons into social, political, cultural life and their occupation”. The project is implemented in cooperation with the experts from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). When implementing the project, the current situation in Lithuania will be analysed, as well as experience of other Member States of the European Union in this area, and the model will be prepared containing the tools and methods to create favourable opportunities and conditions for integration of older persons into political, social and cultural life and their participation in the labour market. Big attention will be given to promotion of employment of older persons, by creating opportunities for their meaningful participation in the labour market, depending on their individual needs and possibilities, and for creation of environment favourable to their education, learning, active and healthy ageing.

It should be noted that in order to make better use of the potential of older persons and to encourage their active participation, certain measures are implemented that contribute to increase in accessibility of cultural services to older persons. It is established in the legal acts that persons who have reached retirement age (up to 80 years old) may visit permanent expositions in the national and

republican museums, the rights and duties of the owner of which are enjoyed by the Ministry of Culture, with the discount of 50 percent, while the persons over 80 can visit the museums free of charge. The Lithuanian state and national theatres and concert institutions also apply various discounts and organise promotions to older persons. There are premises in the public libraries in the country to develop artistic, creative and physical activities of older persons; educational programmes focused on the needs of this social group are organised, as well as clubs and other activities intended to promote occupation of older persons, their active leisure, purposeful communication, to reduce isolation, insularity and loneliness. The services of home delivery of books are provided to persons, who cannot come to the library.

Training of skills in the field of information technologies

Digital skills help to reduce social isolation, to connect the generations, to keep closer contacts with relatives, to communicate with them more frequently, to find the necessary information, and to use the services. Digital skills of different generations differ a lot. According to the data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, only 46 percent of 65-74 years old residents were using internet in 2020, while almost all 16-24 years old persons were using internet (approx. 99 percent). According to Eurostat data, 21 percent of the Lithuanian residents who do not use internet state lack of the needed skills as the reason. Therefore, the measures are implemented that help to improve competences and skills of older persons in the field of information technologies. Special courses of digital literacy are organised for older persons in public libraries in the entire country, consultations and public electronic services are provided there (e.g., e-health, electronic gates of government, etc.). Joint NGO projects for young and older persons are selected and sponsored by means of competition. They are intended to train skills of older persons in the field of information technologies. The project-based activities are sponsored, where organisation of joint activities for young and older persons for training competences and skills of older persons in the field of information technologies is provided; as well as preparation and consulting of young persons, how to train skills and competences of older persons in the field of information technologies; preparation of teaching material; supply of means necessary for education, etc.

The project promoting gratuitous acquisition of digital literacy skills “Connected Lithuania” was implemented for three years in Lithuania. In the course of the project, more than 103 thousand persons learnt to use the information technologies, and more than 400 thousand persons took part in all the activities of the project. The participants could find the programme for beginners on the project’s website and 11 different programmes for the ones, who already had skills of digital literacy.

The project's courses were conducted in entire Lithuania. The courses were conducted in libraries in ordinary conditions, and during the quarantine – online. All Lithuanian residents over 18, who were not using internet or who had insufficient digital skills could attend the courses.

Participation in policy-making

Older persons are consulted and listened to when various issues related to older persons are solved. The Lithuanian Council for Pensioners' Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is operating on the national level – it is a collegiate organisation operating on the public ground, the purpose of which is to safeguard efficient cooperation of the national and municipal authorities and institutions with non-governmental organisations representing interests of older and retired persons, by creating opportunities for these persons to participate in solution of issues related to them in various national and municipal authorities and institutions, and in consulting councils of national and municipal level. The Council for Pensioners' Affairs consists of representatives of non-governmental organisations representing interests of older persons, and representatives of authorities. The Council is considering the issues of life quality of older persons, provides proposals to various institutions for policy about needs of older persons, analyses the proposed draft legal acts, forms conclusions and recommendations to appropriate institutions for solution of issues relevant to older persons, and about improvement of related legal acts.

The representatives of non-governmental organisations representing older persons are also taking part in activities of various work groups solving ageing-related issues. Individual municipalities of bigger cities have councils of older persons that have the tasks to represent interests of older persons and to make proposal to the municipal and national authorities regarding the policy that would conform to the needs of older persons and increase their social inclusion.

Public consultations with the society on various issues of policy making and implementation, including related to ageing, are provided in the platform e-citizen of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Formation of positive image of older persons

Due to smaller opportunities to participate in public and work activities than available to other age groups, the image of older persons in the society is getting worse and the number of discrimination manifestations is increasing. Therefore, the information was prepared and spread by media (video clips, informative notices, etc.) that would help to change the society's attitude towards

older persons, by presenting them as a valuable part of the society, appreciating their role in society, and meaningful inclusion of older persons into activities, and significance of their participation in society. Besides, the information about safeguarding of the rights of older persons was prepared and distributed. The cycle of radio shows for older persons was created. Its purpose was to reinforce a strong image of older persons in society, to present opportunities or participation of older persons in cultural-social life, activities of non-governmental organisations and communities and to inform older persons about available help and support to them.

The non-governmental organisations representing and uniting older persons contribute significantly to formation of positive image of older persons. The newspaper of the Association of Older Persons “Senjorų zodiis” and the newspaper “Lietuvos Bociai” issued by the Lithuanian Union of Pensioners “Bociai” until 2020 were not only publishing articles on the topics relevant to older persons but were also training the society’s (especially children’s and young persons’) understanding that the input of older persons into the public life is especially important. They introduced the society to positive ageing aspects and showed wisdom and advantages of older persons. The events organised by non-governmental organisations representing older persons, and information available on their websites have contributed significantly to formation of positive image of older persons in society.

Changes in the pension system

Many changes were made in the pension system in 20 years. The most significant ones were the creation of the stage II of pensions and reform of pensions, which purpose was to develop a financially stable system able to generate adequate benefits. Special attention was given to protection of older persons from poverty, so the element of redistribution of the pension system was reinforced.

In 2003, the Law on Advance Payment of Old-Age Pensions of Social Insurance was adopted (valid until 1 July 2004). Its purpose was to support unemployed persons of pre-retirement age by paying advance old-age pensions to them. The persons, who had not more than 5 years left before the retirement age (the retirement age for men determined in 2003 was 57 years and 6 months, and for women – 55 years) and had the experience of pension insurance of 30 years (save for mothers of 5 or more children and nurses of persons with disabilities, to whom the experience of 15 years was sufficient) were eligible for those pensions, provided they were registered as unemployed for 12 months before the application and had not been receiving any other benefits nor had they been engaged in any self-employment. The reduction of 0.4 percentage for each full month before the retirement age was established for advanced pensions, as well as old-age pension was reduced by 0.4 percent for each full month when the advance pension was received. In 2012, the requirement was

set that prior to application for advance pension, the person had to be registered as unemployed for 12 months. In 2021, the amendments of the law entered into effect. The percentage of pension reduction (0.4 percent) was replaced by more actuarial one– 0.32 percent for each full months, and it was determined that the amount of old-age pension may stay unreduced if the person had received the advance pension for less than 3 years, and that the pension record calculated into the advance old-age pension would be of at least 40 years in 2021. This record that results to keeping the old-age pension not reduced for the ones who had been receiving advance pension is extended by 3 months every year starting with 2022 until 2031, when it will reach 42 years and 6 months.

The system of pension saving that allows saving part of social insurance contributions in private pension funds started operating in Lithuania in 2004. The development and legalisation of this system in Lithuania were induced by demographic changes in society – ageing society and decreasing number of employed persons, who pay national social insurance contributions because of growing migration. When the system of pension saving was legalised, referral of part of the social insurance contribution to the pension fund was provided, hence reducing the future obligations of the state to the future pensioners (diversification of sources). The individual part of social insurance pension was decreasing due to the saving. The part of social insurance contributions intended for old-age pensions and saved in the pension funds was 2.5 percent from the insurable income for pension saving in 2004, 3.5 percent in 2005, 4.5 percent in 2006, and 5.5 percent in 2007 and 2008. Because of the difficult economic situation, the saving amounts transferred to the pension funds were reduced temporarily on 1 July 2009. In July 2009, the value of saving contribution was fixed as 2 percent from the person's insurable income, in 2012 it amounted to 1.5 percent, and in 2013 – 2.5 percent. The financing scheme of the pension saving system was changed in 2013, by setting an additional payment from personal funds to the pension fund (1 percent in 2014 and 2 percent in 2016). The additional incentive contribution from the State budget would also be transferred to the pension account on behalf of these persons (1 percent from average domestic wages in 2014 and 2 percent in 2016). The part of state social insurance contribution transferred to the pension funds was fixed as 2 percent of the participant's insurable income.

On 1 January 2019, the new saving formula entered into effect: the persons saving for old age transfer 3 percent from their wages as the transfer of part of social insurance contribution to private pension funds, while the incentive contribution from the State budget makes 1.5 percent from the average domestic wages. The contribution of the persons, who had not been saving before or who had been saving only 2 percent of state social insurance contribution, was increased gradually: from 1.8 percent in 2019 and to 3 percent after five years. If the person had been participating in saving according to model 2+2+2, that person would pay the contribution in full amount (3 percent)

immediately. We would like to note that the saving formula 3+1.5 is indicated according to the new tax system, when the taxes paid by the employer and the employee are joined.

The saving residents had the opportunity in the 1st half of 2019 to withdraw from the pension-saving system temporarily and to choose whether to transfer the total saved amount to the institution administering the State social insurance fund (Sodra) and to restore the rights to not reduced old-age pensions, or to suspend the payment of contributions and to leave the saved amount in the pension fund until the age of retirement.

Another novelty of this reform was automatic inclusion of the employed persons into the pension saving system every 3 years until the age of 40 with the possibility to reduce saving in half a year. The opportunities were created to suspend payment of contributions for 12 months at the most, to transfer additional contributions from the wages for saving participants or their employers, and to use the tax concessions. The funds of life cycle were provided. Their purpose was to take care about better investment results according to the age of the participants.

On 1 July 2020 the centralised fund of pension annuity was established. Its administrator is Sodra. Two types of annuities were determined – deferred and standard, while the compulsory limit of annuity acquisition was reduced to 10 000 euro. This means that the annuity needs to be acquired if at least 10 000 euro are saved. If 5000 or less euro are saved, a onetime benefit is paid to the person. If the saved amount is between 5001 and 10 000, periodical payments shall be paid, and the saved part of pensions exceeding 60 000 euro can be received as a onetime pension payment from the pension saving company.

The amendment of the Law on Pensions entered into effect on 1 July 2007. It is important for all recipients of state social insurance pensions with long work experience. The bonus to the old-age pension and pension of lost working capacity (disability) was assigned for every year of social insurance record exceeding 30 years. The size of this bonus was calculated by multiplying 3 percent of basic pension by the number of full years exceeding social insurance record of 30 years. Prior to this amendment, the main part of pension calculated for persons with the social insurance record of 30 years had not differ at all from the pension with social insurance record of 36 years, for example, so, it was attempted to strengthen the impact of social insurance social insurance record on pension calculation for long-term employees, who had been getting very small wages usually.

The corrections of the Law on State Social Insurance Pensions (hereinafter – Law on Pensions) entered into effect in 2012. They unified the required age of retirement for men and women and started to increase it gradually. 4 months are added to the age of retirement for women and 2 months to men in each calendar years, until this age reaches 65 years in 2026.

Other important changes of the Law on Pensions were made in 2018 when the pension system was rearranged in order to safeguard stability of the pension system. The essential provisions of the new legal regulation were new composition of pensions, introduction of accounting units and indexing. It was determined in the new edition of the law that the pension would consist of general and individual parts of pension. General part of pensions changed the then valid basic part of pension and bonus for the social insurance record, providing that the source of payment of that part would be the State budget, while the individual part of pension replaced the additional one and reflects the part of person's contributions to the social insurance system. The Law introduced the system of accounting units to calculate the individual part of pension that was linked to the amount of contributions made by the person from average wages of certain year. The decision to transfer financing of general part of pension to the State budget was determined by the need to expand the financing base of the pension system by general taxes. When the system of social insurance and pension was rearranged, purification of the system was aimed at – separation of solidarity and social insurance parts in the system of pensions and other social insurance contributions by purification of the national social insurance system and making it more transparent; besides, it was attempted to determine clearer and stronger link between contributions and benefits, by linking the sizes of benefits with the sizes of made contributions and the period, for which social insurance contributions were calculated and paid, in order to encourage persons to participate in the social insurance system. Thus, the new Law on Pensions legalised separation of non-contribution, i.e., general part of pension playing the function of social support from the individual part of pension based on contributions. For that purpose, the rate of income tax of residents and contributions to social insurance pension were redistributed, and separate parts of pension were financed from different budgets, while performing different functions. Only the individual part of pension remained in the social insurance system with the rate of contribution meant to finance that particular part (8.72 percent), while the general part of pension became the non-contribution element financed from the taxes collected in the State budget that plays the function of protection from poverty.

Another important amendment was determination of clear pension indexing rules. Earlier, state social insurance pensions would be increased when the Government would approve new values of basic state social insurance pension and insurable income of current years. It was determined in the new edition of the Law on Pensions that indexing would be carried out according to the changes in wages fund, taking the changes of this index of 7 years into consideration (three last years, a current year and three forecasted years). Linking of indexing with the wages-fund allows taking not only economic indexes (growing rates of wages), but also changes in the number of contribution payers, i.e., insured persons into consideration. It was aimed at the same time to assure that clear pension

indexing rules will not allow to increase pensions exceeding the capacities of Sodra, or to reduce them in case of crisis. The requirement of the obligatory social insurance record to get old-age pension also was changed. It was gradually increased from 30 to 35 years. Such changes were made in consideration that average experience, for which old-age pension was prescribed, used to be 37 years.

2. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work

Inducement of life-long learning

Education should ensure safety of ageing society, possibilities of professional capacities and high life quality that is related not only to the employment and career possibility, but also to good health, mental and spiritual well-being, quality of communication and relations, so, the life-long learning is becoming a necessity in the ageing society. It is planned in the programme of development of informal adult education and continuous learning for 2016-2023 to create and develop the harmonious system of adult education and to adjust the life-long learning with needs of domestic economy and society. It is planned in the pan of action of life-long learning development for 2017-2018 to guarantee the effectiveness of the educational system and to create the system of incentives and equal conditions for life-long learning that would be based on effective aid in self-recognition and choice of career path.

The adult Lithuanian residents (25-64 years old) have been learning more actively recently. They are training their professional and personal skills. According to the data of 2020, Lithuania approached the EU mean: the EU mean in the group of 26-64 years old persons is 9.2 percent, and that in Lithuania – 7.2 percent; the EU mean in the group of 25-74 years old persons is 8.0 percent, and that in Lithuania – 6.3. The group of 25-64 year old persons is more active in the adult educational activities, while the group of persons of 25-74 years old is less active because of decreased motivation (Annexes O, P).

Approx. 70 universities of the third age (hereinafter – UTA) of different sizes are operating in Lithuania. UTA are actually in every municipality. The research revealed that the number of listeners in UTA was growing every year and their activities attracted 16 539 listeners in 2017-2018 academic year, while they had only 1 371 listeners in 2016-2017 academic year. The National Association of Universities of the Third Age (hereinafter – NAUTA) that unites 45 UTA plays an important role. Approx. 13.5 thousand persons take part in its work. The purpose of NAUTA is to achieve social integration of older persons into society that would satisfy the needs of learning and

self-expression of older persons, and that would support and promote full-fledge physical and emotional life of the persons of that age.

The educational and cultural activities are carried out also by other associations, clubs and teams uniting older persons. The Lithuanian Association of Older Persons, the Lithuanian Union of Pensioners “Bociai”, and the Lithuanian branch of the European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG) are operating in Lithuania.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has been implementing project “Development of the adult education system by granting general and basic competences” to the learners financed by the ESF since 2016. The purpose of the project is to promote participation of the adults in the country in the life-long learning activities, by offering them relevant and attractive services of improvement of general and main competences, training of professional skills, and competences and qualification of cultural employees and persons operating in the sector of culture in municipalities, and to use the qualitative training content to reinforce the functionality of informal adult education and continuous learning system. In the course of the project, the adults acquire or strengthen their general and basic competences and improve their professional skills. The project contributes to improvement of quality of social and economic life and reduces the risk of social isolation of some adults. Since the beginning of the project, 3 463 persons have been studying according to the informal education programmes, where 882 persons were 64-92 years old.

The contribution of service providers of municipalities and informal adult education into the development of informal adult education system is being increased. At present, the project of the European Commission, “National Coordinator for Adult Learning Work Plan: Lithuania” is under implementation. The learning needs of adults in 5 municipalities are determined stressing the business needs in the field of improvement of qualification of human resources; the analysis of municipal development is performed, while analysing the aspects of adult education and continuous professional training.

While promoting life-long learning, the Law on Vocational Education of the Republic of Lithuania was renewed essentially. The teaching system, the management and financing procedure of vocational educational institutions are changed, and new qualitative requirements for education are introduced.

The programme of the republican Government provides the aim to grant opportunity and wish to all the Lithuanian citizens to learn the whole life. It should be achieved by creating an actually functioning career planning system and granting more professional and self-expression possibilities for everyone, as well as changing the society’s attitude and forming the culture favourable to earning. The creation of joint systems of adaptive career learning and life-long learning is provided in the plan

of implementation of the provisions of the programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania⁷.

It is provided in the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania that employees who attend informal adult education programmes are granted academic leave (up to five business days per year) for participation in the programmes of informal adult education. If such participation is related to improvement of the employee's qualification and continues up to ten business days in one year of employment, at least half of the average wages is left to the employee. Upon the employee's request and receipt of the employer's consent, the leisure is granted to the employee during the work day to satisfy personal needs of the employee. This time may be used for independent learning, improvement of qualification and competences.

Increasing employment

Given the aging of the population, the shortage of skilled workers and the emigration reducing the country's labor force potential, it is important to mobilize all people of working age, encouraging them to take an active part in the economy, integrate into the labor market and stay in it for as long as possible. To this end, it is important to develop the prevention of structural unemployment and to develop an inclusive labor market, thus removing obstacles to economic development. In this context, projects are being implemented to promote the employment of older people.

Project for the integration of older people „Take the opportunity“. The Project is funded by European Social Fund. The purpose of this project is to assist older people in increasing their employment opportunities and helping them to remain a part of the labour market. The target group of the project: individuals over the age of 55 who were registered as unemployed by The Employment Service. Individuals taking part in the project are being referred to participate in vocational training/non-formal education or supported employment measure - subsidised employment.

Project for the integration of job seekers „Be an Entrepreneur“. The Project is funded by European Social Fund. The purpose of this project is to increase the employment of the unemployed by supporting job creation. One of the target groups of the project is persons over 45 years of age. Project activities - support for the creation of jobs: subsidising of job creation / adaptation, implementation of local employment initiative projects and support for self-employment.

The active labour market policy measures aimed at assisting job seekers in increasing their employment opportunities and helping them to remain part of the labour market are applied. The

unemployed older than 45 years of age are entitled to additional support in the labour market and can participate in the following active labour market policy measures:

- **Supported employment measure - subsidised employment** (the employers that have employed persons referred by the Employment Service shall receive a subsidy for the partial compensation for the employed person's pay for 6 months);
- **Support for job creation measure - support for self-employment** (subsidy will be granted for the creation of new job for the first time in a very small enterprise (the subsidy cannot exceed 31.03 minimum monthly pay (22.651,9 euro) or for the self-employed persons engaged in the registered individual activity who were affected by COVID-19 pandemic and decided to change the type of economic activity (the subsidy cannot exceed 11.05 minimum monthly pay (8.066,5 euro).

The unemployed older than 45 years of age in order to acquire qualifications or to improve the existing qualifications can also participate in the **measures of support for training**:

- **Vocational training** (the Employment service enters into a tripartite or bilateral agreement with the person. The tripartite agreement stipulates that the Employment Service will finance vocational training, the future employer will employ after the training according to the acquired qualification or competence for a period of at least 6 months. The bilateral agreement stipulates that the participant in vocational training will find employment in a job offered or found by the Employment Service or start self-employment according to the acquired qualification or competence and work for at least 6 months);
- **Employment under an apprenticeship employment contract** (the vocational training is provided by an employer who concludes an apprenticeship contract with the person and the theoretical vocational training can be provided by a vocational training provider or employer. Not more than 30 percent of theoretical training and not less than 70 percent of practical training in the workplace);
- **Internship** (an unpaid period of work experience with an employer, during which the individual will upgrade, restore or improve his or her work skills or professional qualifications. An internship may be organized for persons who have the relevant professional qualification or competence acquired through non-formal adult education but have not worked according to it for at least 6 consecutive months. Internship's duration cannot exceed 6 months);
- **Recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education** (validation of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education shall be organized under the terms and conditions stipulated in a bilateral agreement concluded between the Employment Services and the unemployed. The Employment Services shall issue

a document to the unemployed whereby it undertakes to pay a specific amount of money to a legal person having a right to validate the competences acquired through non-formal and informal education for validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal education).

In order to encourage the participation of older people and reduce their social exclusion, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour has approved the Action Plan of Motivation of Older People and Promotion of Voluntary Activities for 2016-2020, which aims to reduce the social exclusion of elderly people, enabling them to remain in the labour market longer; reduce the negative, age-related, stereotypes and a discriminative approach to the elderly people. When implementing the said plan, projects, implemented by non-governmental organisations, are funded from the European Union Structural Funds.

The executors of the projects aim to create favourable conditions to elderly people to actively solve social and civic issues, promote interest in the public life, develop key competences and skills, possibilities to be included into the labour market, form voluntary activities. The participants of the projects, the elderly people, actively participate in the trainings of digital literacy, many of them take part in initiative and entrepreneurship trainings. Educational activities encourage the potential of elderly people of working age and motivate them to take an active part in the social life. The dissemination of project information helps change the approach of employers towards the able-bodied, but undeservedly forgotten elderly people. The inclusion of such people to the labour market, does not only enrich the team with experience, but also the society, that creates a competitive, knowledge-based economy.

In order to develop volunteering in helping older persons, 3 NGO projects were selected and financed in 2020 by a competition. In implementation of them, the material of volunteers' training for work with older persons was prepared; the training of volunteers for work with older persons were organised, they were informed and consulted. The organisation and implementation of volunteer help to older persons was active. The means for volunteering were developed (mobile app, column on the website). The model of volunteers' gathering in cooperation was created and started (volunteering in care institutions and hospitals). The tools intended to promote involvement of older persons in volunteering were implemented, by informing them about volunteering possibilities and organising the events that help to promote volunteering. The volunteers visiting older persons and visited older persons were actively supplied with protection measures against coronavirus (Covid-19).

3. Ensuring ageing with dignity

Expansion of integral help

As the society is ageing and human lifespan is getting longer, the need arises for social services provided in the community that would enable the persons to receive help at home and help the persons taking care of them to stay in the labour market. Therefore, in 2013, the programme of expansion of integral help was started. It is financed by the European Social Fund. It is aimed at qualitative integral help (nursing and social services) for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and consulting help to the persons taking care about them. The pilot project was carried out according to this programme in 21 municipality in 2013-2015. The mobile teams of workers of nursing and social services providing nursing and social services at home were formed in the course of the project, the consulting services were provided to family members, etc.

The recipients of integral help and the municipalities had very positive attitude to this help, so, a new plan of action of expansion of integral help was approved for 2016-2019. According to this plan, the integral help was started in 2016 in all the municipalities (save for Neringa Town). 16.4 million euro of the funds of the European Union were planned for the new plan of action. As the need for this service increased and in order to satisfy the need of the target group and to ensure continuity of the service, additional financing was granted in 2019 to the projects. Having considered the size of additional financing, in total 29.9 million euro from the EU funds were assigned to the projects. From the start of the implementation of the projects, 5938 persons (families) from the target groups have received the services. 186 mobile teams have been providing the services. 2791 family members have been consulted, and 1600 workers of mobile teams and volunteers have taken part in the training.

It is provided to assign funds for integral help in the draft programme of investments of the funds of the European Union for 2021–2027 (the planned number of recipients is 6357, the planned funds amount to 43.9 million euro).

Development of services for older persons

Social services are provided to older persons by creating the conditions to allow him/her to stay at home and in the family as long as possible, to participate in social, economic and other activities, to manage the household independently, to help to ensure safe and healthy environment, help in conformity with human dignity and personal health care, permanent nursing and care (help).

The growing share and number of older persons induce more rapid need for expansion of services for this group, wider and faster adjustment of environment to older persons, conditions and possibilities to integrate into the society, to take part in social and political life, and labour market, to safeguard their financial stability and to strengthen relations between the generations.

The appropriate dwelling environment and housing are the important factors that contribute to social integration of older persons. First of all, for the persons with health problems. Living in favourable environment may mitigate some negative consequences related to loss of social life.

The service of temporary respite was introduced several years ago in the country, when temporary respite was granted for relatives of persons with disabilities in need of continuous care, and elderly persons taken care at home, for certain period, while the person in care would be granted social services at home, in day centre or another social care institution. Such service is scarce yet, but it is possible to say that they are expanded in the municipalities.

In 2014–2020, when the plan of action of modernisation and expansion of the infrastructure of institutions of social services was implemented, the EU support funds were used to improve accessibility of social services, to develop infrastructure of social services in the community for elderly persons, socially vulnerable persons and their families. The municipal and non-governmental organisations could apply for financing. Approx. 30 institutions used the possibility to modernise, to expand the present and to create new social care homes or homes for independent living for elderly persons.

It is planned in 2021-2027 to use the EU structural funds to finance expansion and modernisation of the infrastructure for elderly persons in community (development of infrastructure in homes for independent living and care homes; adjustment of environment of care homes and community services to persons with Alzheimer, senile dementia, or disabilities). It is expected to reduce waiting lists and to ensure comfortable living conditions adjusted to older persons and ensuring life with dignity.

In order to solve the problems of isolation, loneliness and lack of communication of elderly persons, the project “Silver Line” of non-governmental organisation was selected in the mode of competition and is sponsored. It is related to emotional, psychological and informative help to older persons by phone. In implementation of this project, emotional aid is rendered to older persons in relation to the challenges and emotional difficulties that they encounter. Besides, psychological help in case of crises and mental disorders is provided. The relevant information about coronavirus (Covid-19) prevention and recommendations for emergency situation and/or quarantine is provided, as well as information about other help (social, medical, legal, employment, etc.) with regard to the

needs of older persons. The friendly conversations are organised to maintain social relations and provide emotional support to older persons. Thus, the older persons are helped to overcome the difficulties, their sense of security is strengthened, mental health is improved, and they are helped to create a relation of friendship, closeness and communication.

Social support measures

Older age is considered to be among risk factors of economic and social isolation in the field of Lithuanian social security. Various measures are provided in the legal acts regarding lost or reduced work income or worsening health. For example, the basic compensations of drugs, medical aids and treatment are provided for the persons of retirement age in the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania; it is determined in the Law on Transport Concessions of the Republic of Lithuania that persons over 80 have the right to buy a single or time-limited nominal ticket for long-distance, local (urban and local) regular transportation by buses and trolley buses, passenger trains, regular transportation by ships and ferries with the discount of 80 percent, while the discount of 50 percent is granted to 70-80 years old persons.

The provisions of the legal base governing the employment field are intended to help older persons to stay in the labour market longer. The Labour Code defends the rights of older employees, to whom less than three years are left until the retirement age, by granting them priority to remain employed if part of employees is laid off. Longer notification period is applied for employees, who have 2-5 years left until retirement, regarding termination of the employment contract on the employer's initiative without fault of employee. These terms are doubled for employees, to whom less than 5 years are left until retirement age, and tripled to employees, to whom less than 2 years are left until the retirement age. The Labour Code provides opportunities to develop flexible employment forms, right to free unpaid time for family needs, partial work time, online work, flexible and individual work regime, variety of employment contracts, for example, an employment contract of shared workplace. It is also provided in the Labour Code that the employer has to satisfy the employee's application for annual leave if such employees are nursing their family members. It is also determined that upon the employee's request and the employer's consent, free time may be granted during the work day (shift) to satisfy the personal needs of the employee. The parties may agree about transfer of the work to another work day (shift) without prejudice to the requirements of maximum work time and minimal rest time.

It is provided in the Law on Equal Opportunities that in implementation of equal approach, the employer has to apply the equal attitude in work place or civil service, regardless of the

sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, beliefs or creed, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnical origin or religion. In implementation of equal approach, the employer has to apply the same selection criteria and conditions, regardless of the applicant's sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, beliefs or creed, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnical origin or religion. The ombudsman for equal opportunities may initiate administrative proceedings in case of discrimination.

The tool of educational activities of employers about discrimination was provided in the plan of action of non-discrimination for 2017-2020. At least 100 representatives of various employers were participating in the educational activities conducted by the Employment Service every year.

The older persons with low income are receiving social support under the Law on Cash Social Assistance to Low-Income Families (Single Persons). The biggest group of recipients of compensation for housing heating expenses and water expenses is pensioners, whose main income is old-age pension. In order to mitigate the social consequences of Covid-19 pandemic, to create more favourable conditions for poor residents to receive cash social assistance and to safeguard its reception, and to increase the scope and adequacy of cash social assistance, the amendment of the Law on Cash Social Assistance to Low-Income Residents of the Republic of Lithuania was passed in 2020. The temporary provision was included that the property of the persons living together or single person shall not be assessed after the aforementioned law enters into effect and for 6 months after cancellation of declared emergency situation and quarantine, when the right to the cash social assistance is determined.

In order to guarantee adjustment of the environment to older persons with special needs, the adjustment of environment and housing to persons with disabilities (of various ages) is understood as a special need according to the Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Lithuania. Therefore, the programme of housing adjustment to persons with disabilities approved by the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour is implemented in Lithuania. The housing adjustment shall mean rearrangement of person's housing and dwelling environment using special elements, changing the premises not adjusted to persons with disabilities, and performing running repairs or construction works related to housing adjustment directly. The persons are also supplied with the movement aids (e.g., wheelchairs, sticks, walkers, functional beds, etc.). The persons may purchase certain movement aids themselves and get compensation for them.

Geriatric services

In accordance with the Description of provision of geriatric day inpatient services and payment of their expenses and the Description of provision of geriatric outpatient personal health services, the geriatrician or general practitioner, or the specialising doctor may issue referral to the day inpatient facility or inpatient facility of geriatrics according to the diagnosis “dementia”. The integrated medical, psychological and social care is provided in the geriatric centres; the patients are examined thoroughly, specific geriatric syndromes and flares-up of chronic diseases are diagnosed and treated, it is endeavoured at improving functional condition, life quality of the patients, and the recommendations for follow-up are given.

The specialised aid is provided in the geriatric inpatient units, the appropriate attitude towards an old person is fostered, and the aimed goals are achieved faster and more effectively because of the complex help and team work (medical psychologist and nurse, social worker, geriatrician, speech therapist, family members).

The geriatric day inpatient services are provided to patients, who do not need or refuse hospitalisation. Many senile problems may be solved in half a day or a day: movement problems, correction of malnutrition, assessment of falling risk, enuresis, assessment of disorders of cognitive functions, etc.

While implementing the plan of action to reduce long-term negative consequences of Covid-19 pandemic for mental health of persons and society for 2021-2022, the tool “To organise mutual support groups to older persons with dementia and their relatives” was planned. With regard to this tool, the online meetings of mutual support groups were conducted in 2021. The gups were supervised by specialists with education in medical psychology.

PART III

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE AGEING IN SUSTAINABLE WORLD

1. Contribution of ageing-related policies to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals

One of the tasks of the Strategy for the Demographic, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-2030 is to improve quality and accessibility to personal health care to older persons (Annex Q) in order to reduce their morbidity and mortality from main non-infectious diseases and external reasons. In implementation of this task, additional ambulance teams were organised in order to

reinforce servicing capacities of patients who suffer stroke or infarction; the network of personal health care services (disease clusters) was expanded; the restrictions for suppliers, who want to provide nursing and supportive treatment services were reduced and their establishment was promoted by increasing rates of nursing services; physical health of older persons was improved and supported in the preventive manner using the health promoting physical activity means.

The Minister of Health approved the plan of action of ensuring healthy ageing in Lithuania in 2014-2023, which purpose is to provide and describe the tasks, objectives and strategic complex measures (executors of measures and resources), the implementation of which would create conditions to improve quality and accessibility to health care to older persons, to reduce their morbidity and mortality from main non-infectious diseases and external reasons, and thus, to improve health and life quality of older persons, to increase their integration to society, working capacity and physical activeness.

The main objectives of this plan of action are to improve health of older persons, to give bigger attention to prevention of diseases, early diagnostics of diseases, health preservation and strengthening, and health restoration; to improve accessibility and quality of complex health care services to older and elderly persons, and to expand these services.

In order to achieve the objectives of the plan of action, the following implementation directions of the plan of action are established: expansion of healthy life style and other preventive health care services, prevention of falling, improvement of mental health, promotion of creation of conditions favourable to health at work, organisation of the network of complex nursing and geriatric health care services, and prevention of inflammatory and degenerative rheumatic disorders and resulting disability. The following tools are applied to implement this plan:

Approved “Description of the direction of expansion of healthy life style and other preventive health care services”, the implementation of which provides the following: to organise health training events in the communities for older persons on the topics of healthy life style and prevention of diseases and falls. Besides, it was planned to organise practical courses of physical activity for persons over 60, thus, increasing their motivation to be physical active and to keep normal body weight.

Approved “Description of the direction of prevention of falling”, the implementation of which provides the following: to spread the information based on scientific evidence about benefit of physical activity for older persons. The implementation of this tool is coordinated with the tool provided in the Description of the direction of expansion of healthy life style and other preventive health care services. Besides, it was planned to organise theoretical and practical training for persons

over 60 on the topic of prevention of falling on the national level according to the prepared methodology.

Approved “Description of the direction of improvement of mental health”, the implementation of which provides the following: to organise events for strengthening of mental health on the municipal level (courses, seminars) for people over 65, as well as educational events for caretakers and relatives of such persons, and to issue informative publications. Besides, it was planned to get the mental health specialists of different levels (university level, primary mental health care) into the activities of the universities of the third age and activities of organisations and communities of various levels (municipal, national, etc.), by spreading information about peculiarities of mental health in older age and possibility of healthy ageing, and to implement the cooperation initiatives.

In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the programme of development of health preservation and strengthening for 2022-2030 that focuses on health preservation and strengthening. Besides, it is planned to strengthen psychological welfare of older persons, to solve the problems of their loneliness and social isolation. The programme also addresses such issues as reinforcement of low participation of older persons in the public life and community’s activities, reduction of ageism, distrust and discrimination attitudes in society, and development of life-long learning, in order to train the skills, especially in the fields of information and communication technologies, personal health care and personal finances.

Tools to educate and train older persons in the field of health protection

In implementation of the tool “Promotion of healthy life style on the regional level” of the plan of action of ensuring healthy ageing in Lithuania in 2014-2023 approved by the order of the Minister of Health, one of the supported activities is to improve health of older persons, by drawing bigger attention to prophylaxis of diseases, early diagnostics of diseases, health preservation and strengthening. The projects according to this tool are carried out by 59 public health offices in 60 municipalities in the country. The aim of the tool is to increase the health literacy level of target groups and to form positive changes in their health-related behaviour.

In implementation of the health education measures in the regions for the target groups, the information and/or educational events, courses, seminars, competitions, etc. are organised. Their purpose is to inform directly and to educate the persons in target groups about topics of health preservation and strengthening, prevention and control of diseases, to form their healthy life style values, skills of health literacy, to spread good experience, etc. Moreover, the educational events and training on prevention of traumas and accidents, as well as events in the fields of mental health and

other health promotion fields are organised. The search for attractive topics and forms is performed. Such events and projects are popular in the community, so, the persons are willing to participate in them.

The variety of opportunities for physical activity creates conditions for bigger promotion of physical activities and improvement of public health. It is expected that knowledge of persons of various age groups about health strengthening and prevention of diseases will improve during the projects and afterwards. The communities gathered by the projects definitely act more effectively, while joint activities are beneficial for person and society. The concentrated and strong communities develop the ability to create emotionally safer and friendlier space for every member. The projects not only help to gather the community members closer but also induce their self-confidence, grant abilities to solve the problems and to overcome challenges in own environment.

2. Lessons learnt from managing the consequences and impacts for older people in emergency situations: the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic and tight quarantine requirements to protect the health of older people highlighted their vulnerability. Between May and June 2020, the Lithuanian Social Research Centre, in cooperation with the Lithuanian Red Cross, carried out a study "Single living older people: survival in the context of the coronavirus epidemic and quarantine". According to the study, the pandemic caused by Covid-19 disease had a negative impact on the psychological state of the study participants (50.9 percent), physical health (43.6 percent), the ability to maintain daily regimens, i. e. to provide food and medicine themselves (51.9 percent and 45.4 percent, respectively), contact with relatives (64.8 percent), and neighbours (71.3 percent). The majority (81 percent) felt a lack of people's proximity, and their subjective mental well-being scored 35.77 percent. The study revealed the need to mobilize forces and provide effective care not only for the preservation of the physical health of older people living alone, but also for meeting the needs of their social participation, and it is necessary to expand and strengthen psychological and information support.

Since September 2020, the Public Health Bureaus that are set across all the country started to provide mental health support and psychological wellbeing services for residents of municipalities habitants including older people. People can get up to 5 individual consultations (there is no need for doctor referral, consultations can be anonymous) or participate in numerous group trainings about stress management, dealing with emotions, conflict management, self-help groups, group psychological counseling or other practical trainings to strengthen mental health and emotional well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected both physical and mental health of seniors. Declared quarantine and emergency had an impact on the availability of services and the restriction of social and cultural life. The health system need time to adapt to the new challenges in the post-COVID-19 period for the creation and development of remote, mobile services.

Older persons and chronically ill persons, who are under higher risk to get infected with Covid-19 are experiencing big stress during the Covid-19 pandemic. Majority of older persons are always following the news related to Covid-19 pandemic and thus, are worrying about own health and finances and those of the people close to them – continuous news about the coronavirus infection keep reminding about potential threat. According to the data of the “Silver Line” providing emotional help to older persons, the number of conversations increased by 68 percent in 202, while the number of regular friendship conversations increased by 77 percent, when compared to 2019.

As older persons are among the most vulnerable groups of Covid-19 pandemic, the plan of action to reduce long-term negative consequences of Covid-19 pandemic for mental health of persons and society for 2021-2022 was updated in 2021. It has the objective to improve mental health of older persons and the task to promote occupation of older persons and communication with the implementing activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Like in other EU countries, the share of older persons has been growing in Lithuania. Yet if we compare the change of the share of older persons during 20 years, Lithuania evidently stands out by a very rapid ageing pace. This intensive ageing pace is certainly related to both low birth rates and intensive migration flows. Lithuania has been increasingly approaching the situation of demographically oldest European countries. Lithuania's general ageing index has almost doubled since 2001: from 71 to 132. Forecasts also point to further fairly intense aging trends.

Since the juncture of the 20th and 21st centuries, when the old age indicator reached such a level that the number of older persons exceeded the number of children, Lithuania has been experiencing the most intensive wave of population ageing yet and it is not an even one. The analysis of ageing tendencies by sociodemographic groups reveals various disparities. The comparison of age structures between women and men demonstrates that in Lithuania top-down ageing is mainly determined by the increasing number of the oldest people, particularly women, which is related to the specific features of mortality of Lithuanian men. The indicators of the average life expectancy of men remain low, whereas the difference of the average life expectancy

between women and men remains high compared to other European Union countries. The comparison of the average age also reveals a similar tendency. The average age of the female population exceeds the average age of the male population.

The highest values of the demographic aging coefficient are typical for the regions of the northeast and south of Lithuania, while the lowest values are for the regions of the capital and suburbs. In 2021, the difference in this coefficient ranged from 94 (in Vilnius City Municipality) to 250 (in Anykščiai District Municipality).

The aging of the population in Lithuania is taken into account when shaping social security, employment, health care, education and other policy areas. The UN Active Aging Index identifies problem areas related to an aging population that can be addressed through adequate social policies. According to the general comparison of the active ageing index in the context of EU countries, Lithuania is attributed to the group of countries that have the lowest index value. This means that the quality of life of older persons is not sufficiently guaranteed.

The results of analysis of active ageing index help to identify the most relevant problems that are taken into consideration when the tools to overcome ageing consequences are formed and implemented. The social insurance pensions are increased consistently with regard to growing economics and wages fund, as well as with regard to acquired experience and relief allowances. The measures are undertaken to encourage employment of older persons. Their opportunities to learn are developed, favourable work conditions are formed and thus, the employment relations are modified accordingly, eliminating discrimination because of age. The sector of social services is expanded consistently, especially in case of outpatient services, in order to safeguard accessible social and health services of good quality, and to help older persons to live full-fledged life as long as possible in the environment usual for them. The health preventive programmes oriented to risk groups of older persons are carried out. The actions that form a positive image of older persons and encourage their participation in making decisions important for them and communication of generations are intensified.

The ageing problem is understood quite well in the country; the appropriate policies are formed and implemented, and the respective legal basis is present. However, although rapid economic development allows increasing financing of pensions and social security, the GDP share attributed to social security is much lower than average value in the EU. The positive attitude of employers to older employee is difficult to form, while older persons themselves do not trust their capacities to stay full-fledged participants of the labour market. The infrastructure of services for older persons is not developed enough, and such services are difficult to access for rural residents. The possibilities of employment of older persons, their participation in political, social and cultural life and volunteering

are not used enough. It should be noted that the experience and competencies of older persons are not always appreciated enough; the frequent obstacles are created by still present negative stereotypes about older persons. In order to overcome the weaknesses listed above, it is intended to continue acting in the following directions:

To develop the actions in order to guarantee stable income of older persons necessary to satisfy their most important needs and allowing to lead full-ledged life without humiliating their dignity.

To improve legal conditions and to reinforce financial incentives for older persons to aim at employment and for employers to employ them and keep at work; to reduce obstacles for participation of these persons in the labour market.

To develop the actions in order to safeguard accessibility of qualitative health care and social services to older persons, with regard to their needs, so that they could stay healthier, more independent, and active community members.

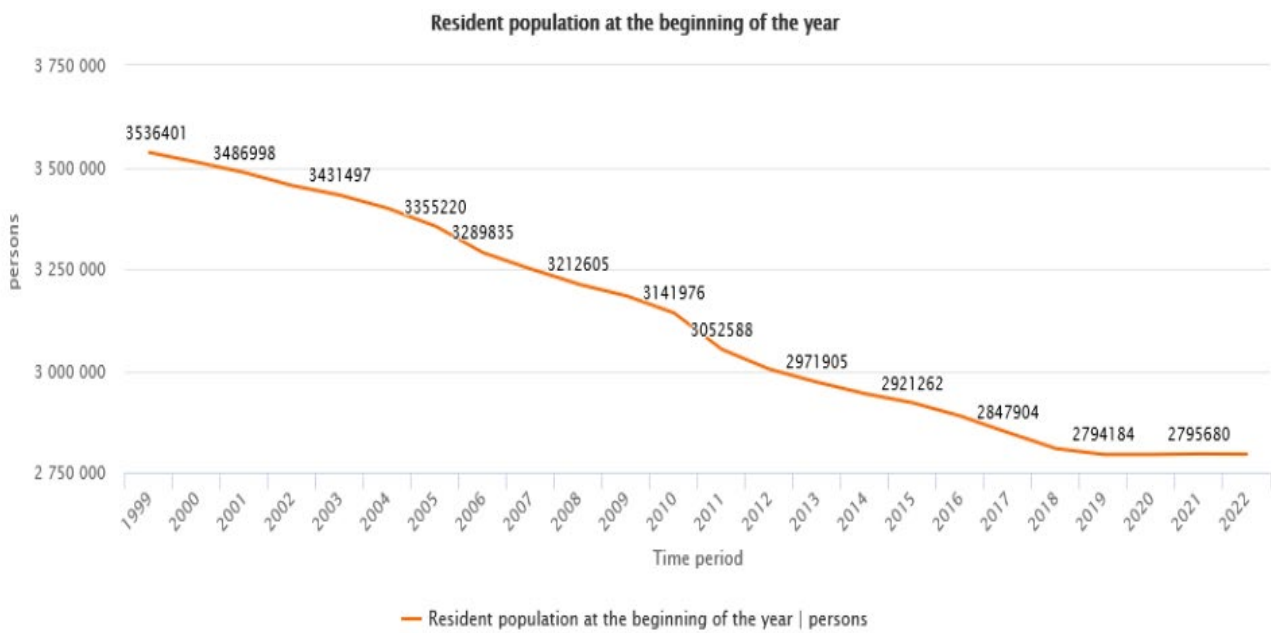
To increase opportunities and to improve possibilities for older persons to lead full-ledged social, cultural and personal life, to develop continuously, or to improve the competences (including digital competence), to use cultural values and possibilities provided by information technologies.

To encourage participation of older persons in making decisions related to them on the national and local levels, when socioeconomic policy is formed, as well as their participation in the life of society and community, self-help initiatives, to strengthen solidarity and communication of generations, and to develop volunteering.

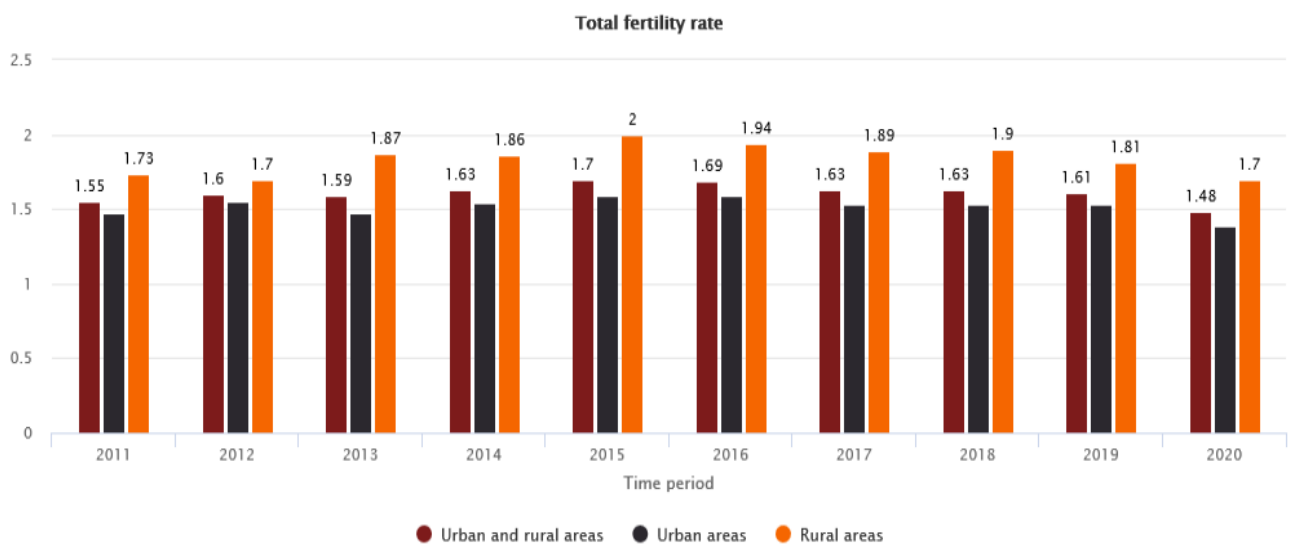
To promote changes in the society's values and culture of positive relations oriented to older persons, by fostering their positive image, taking their different needs, possibilities and priorities into consideration, in order to create an inclusive society friendly for all age groups.

Annex: Tables and figures referred to in main report

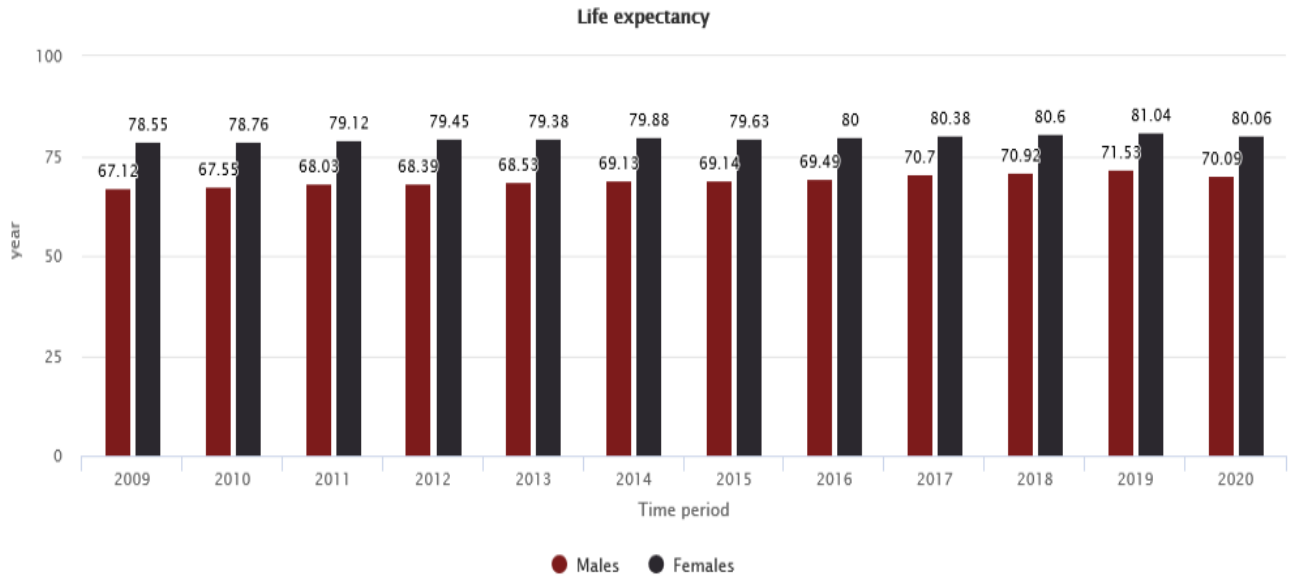
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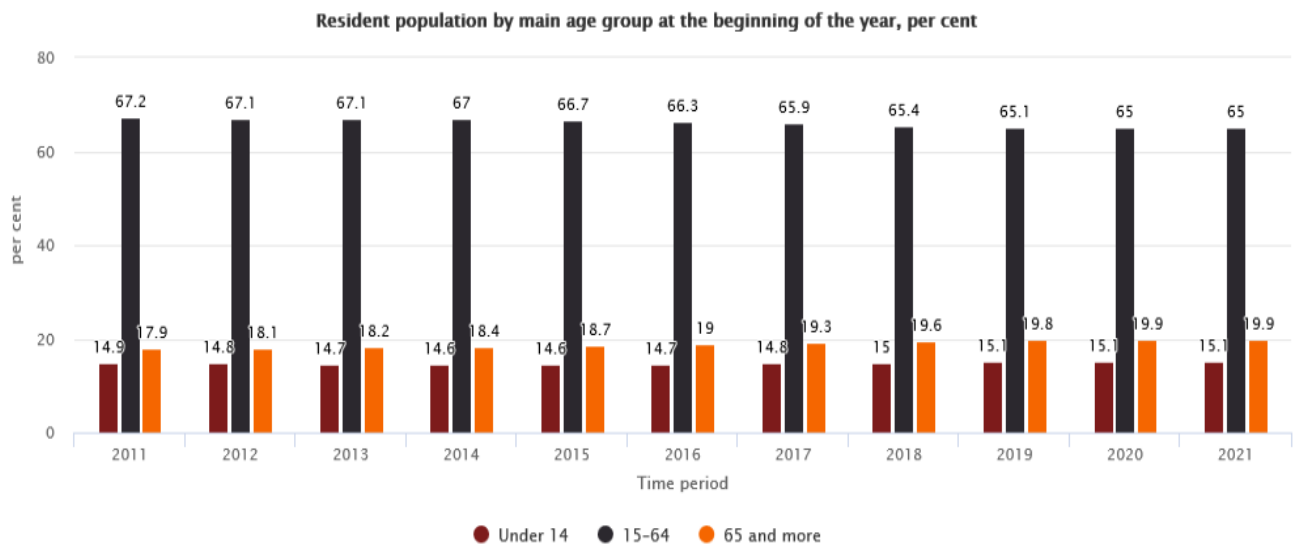
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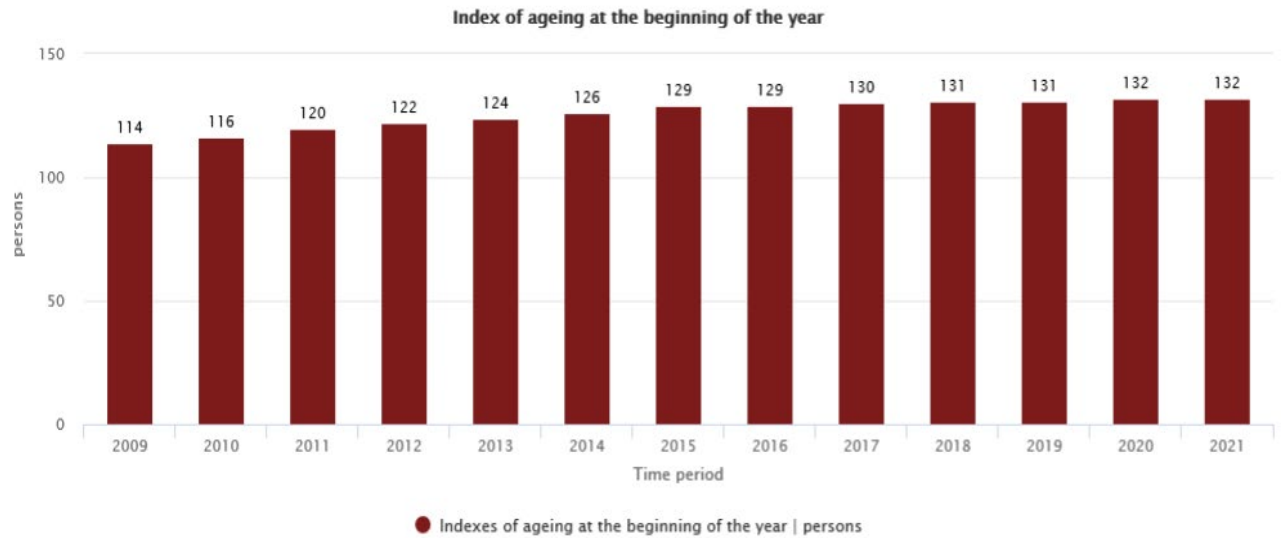
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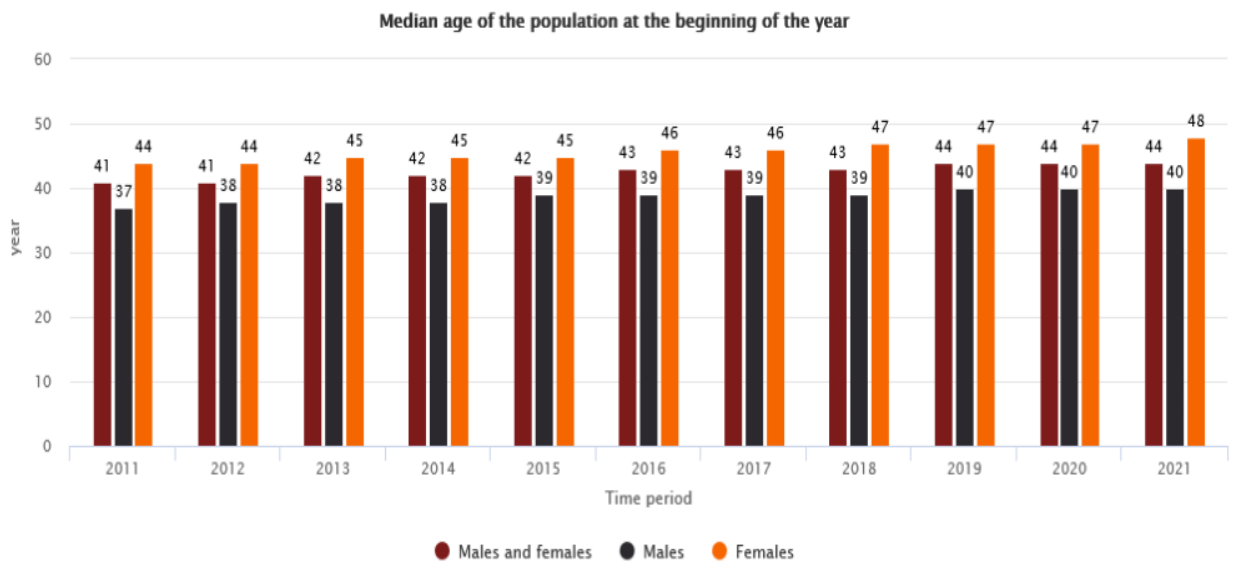
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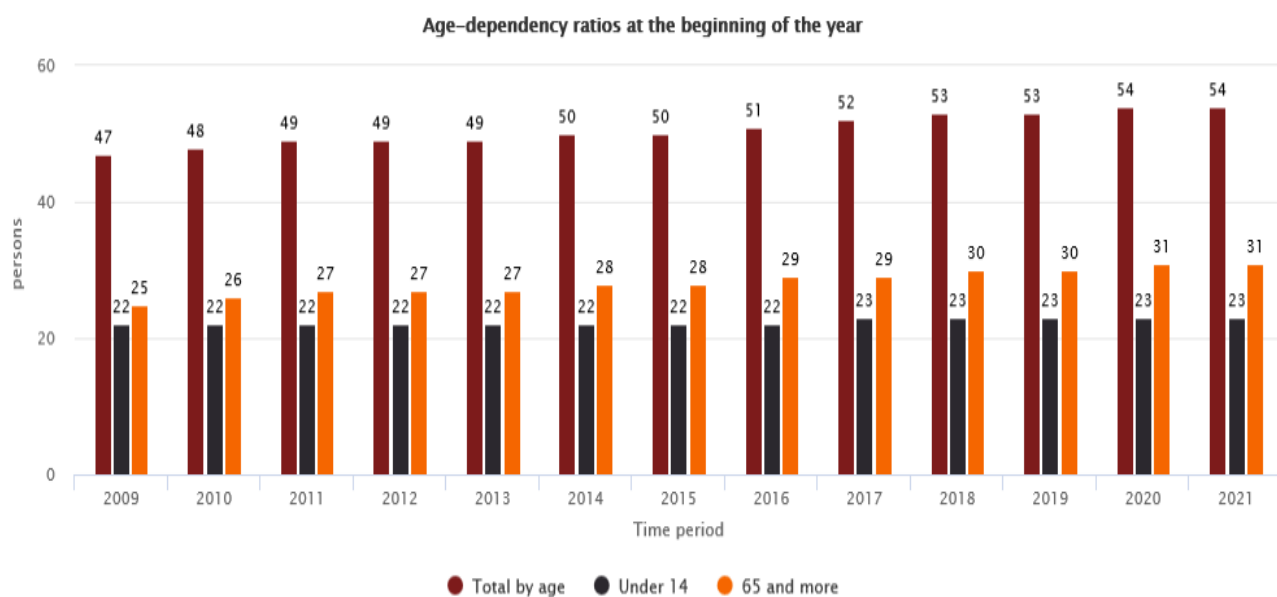
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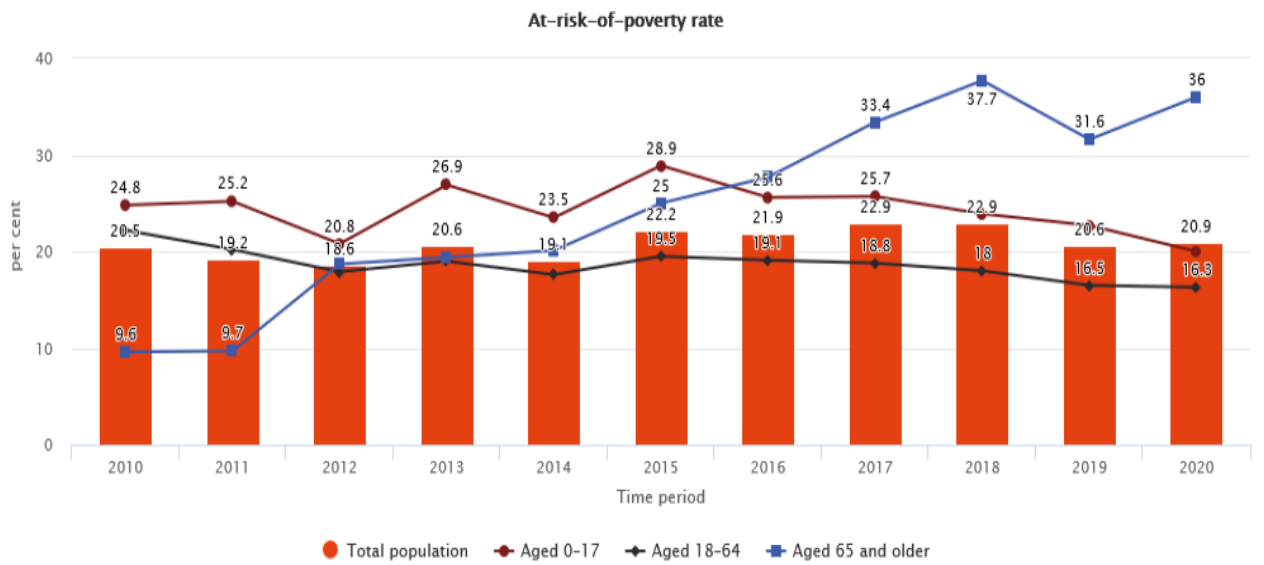
Resident population aged 0–15, of working and retirement age by sex at the beginning of the year

(number of persons)

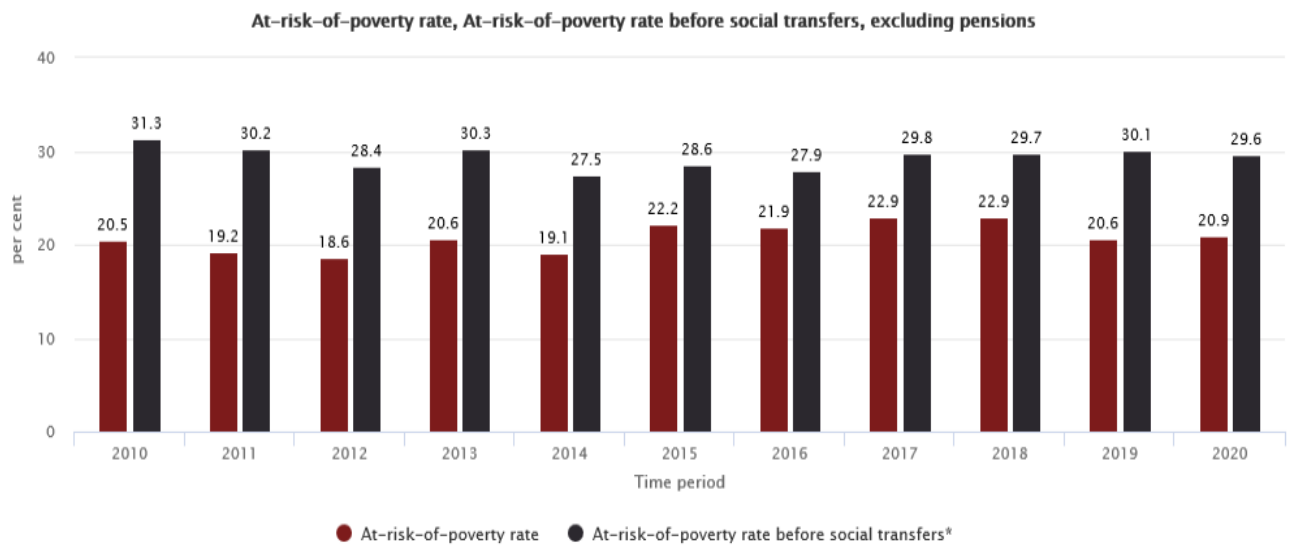
Total by age			Population (0–15 years)			Working-age population			Pension age population		
Males and females	Males	Females	Males and females	Males	Females	Males and females	Males	Females	Males and females	Males	Females
2795680	1313598	1482082	447596	229573	218023	1733717	880627	853090	614367	203398	410969

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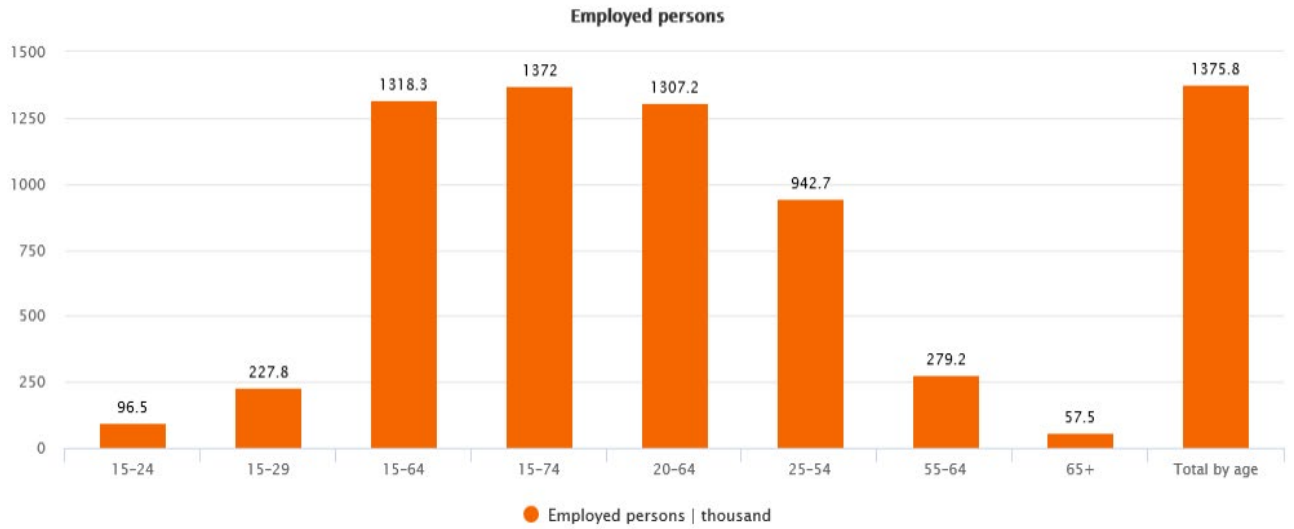


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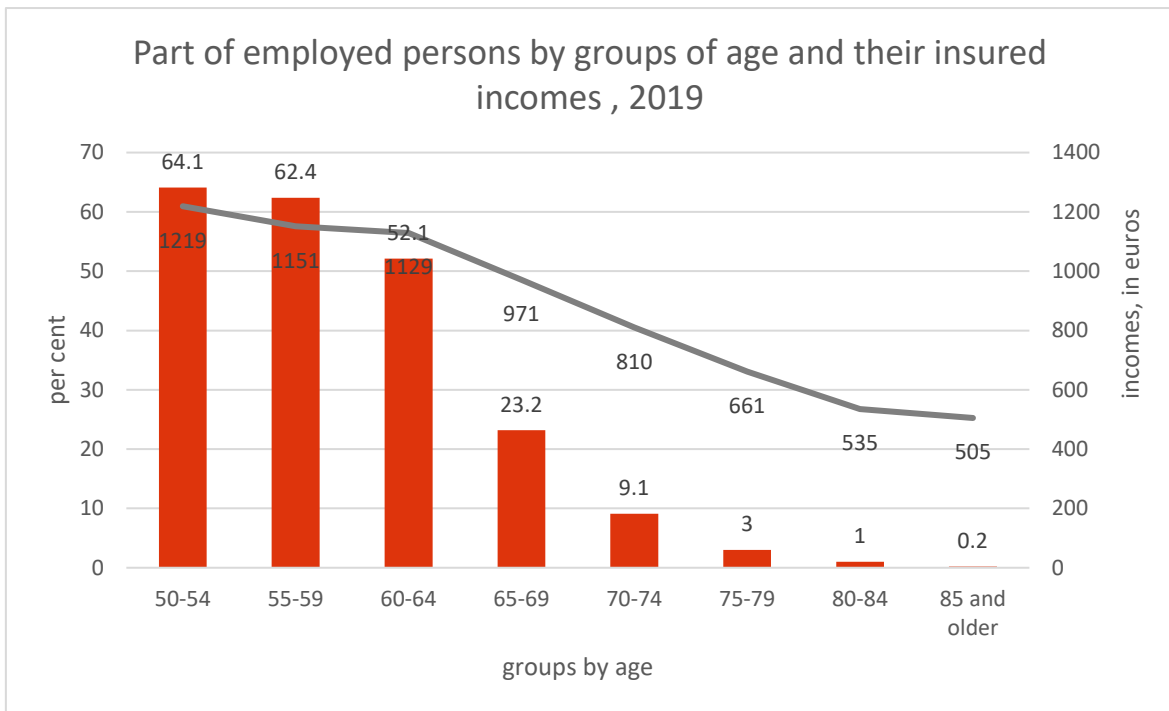
* Income including old-age and survivors' benefits but excluding other social transfers.

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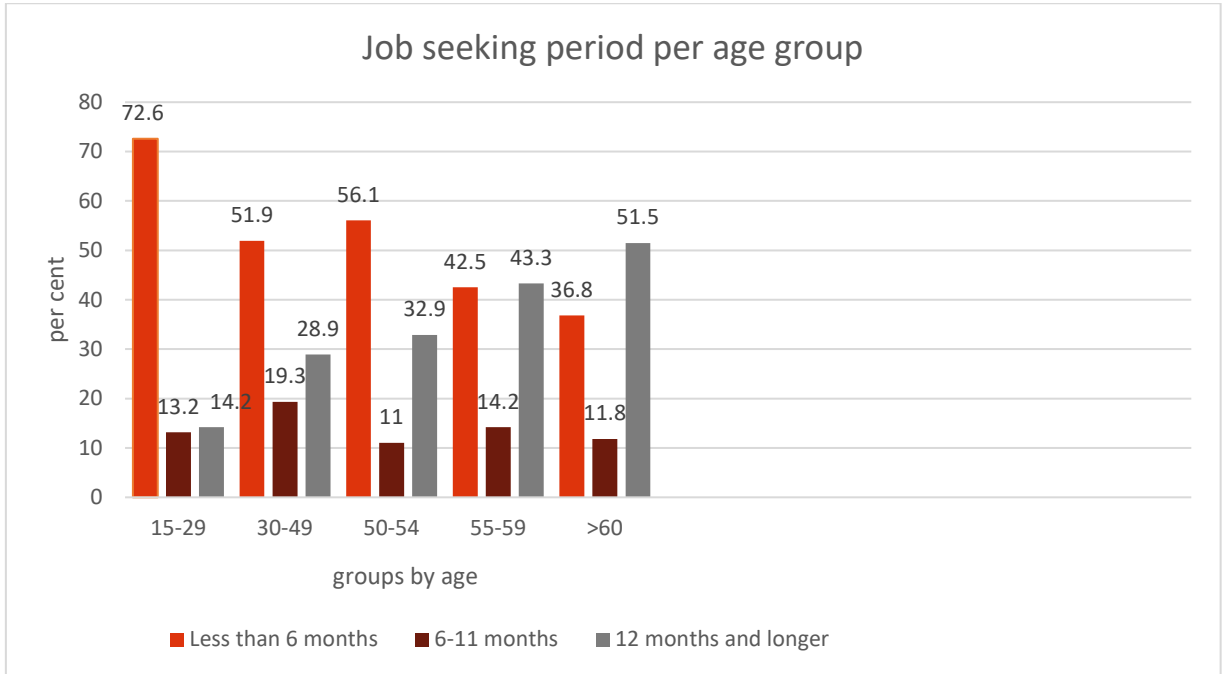


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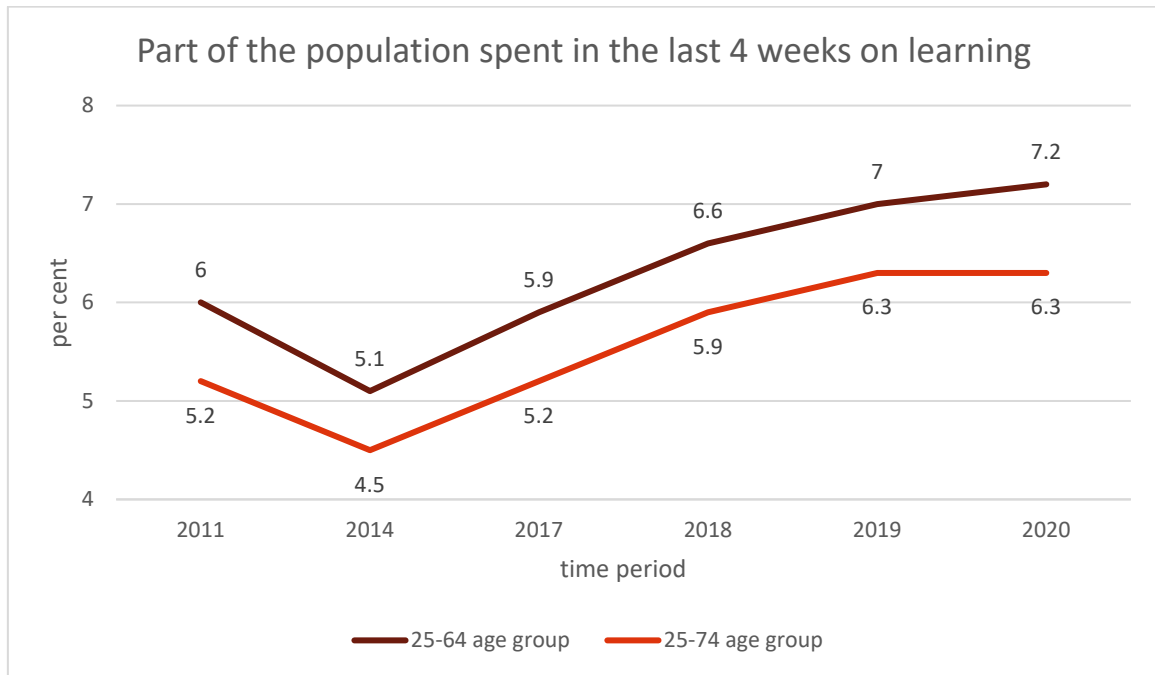
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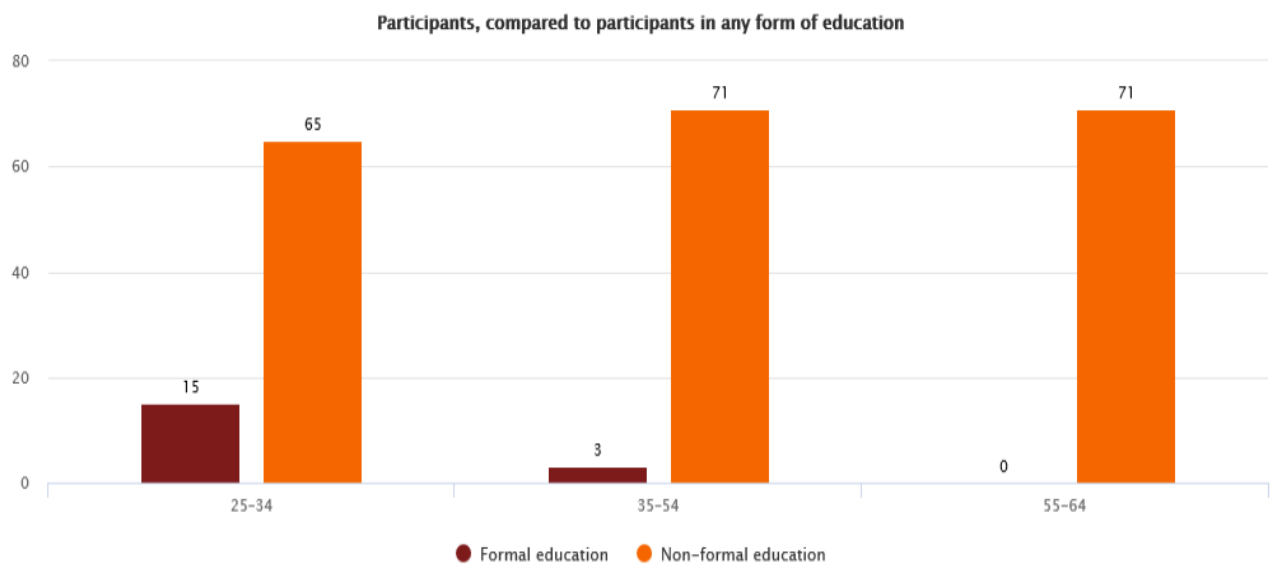


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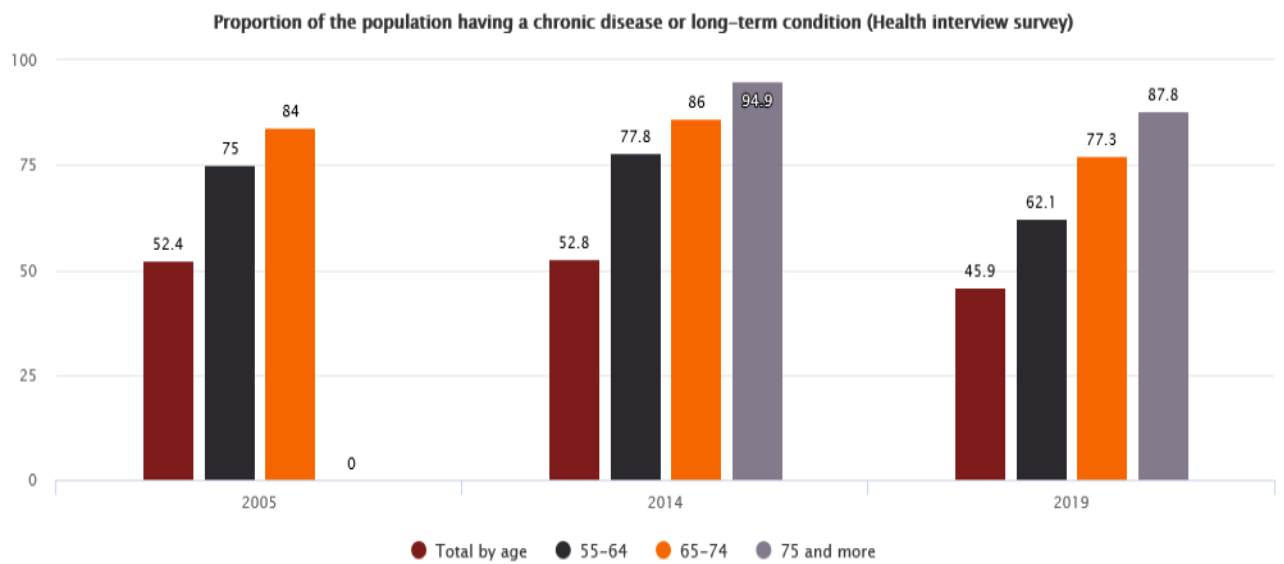
Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

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Source: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize/>

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