

Guiding questions for the twelfth session of the General Assembly open-ended working group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Regarding the issues related to sustainable development in relation to the population of seniors aged 65+, the Czech Republic is in the pre-implementation phase and it is adopting and implementing a number of necessary steps and measures. Their implementation (see, for example, the MLSA Action Plan of the Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025) will create the necessary conditions and socially favorable atmosphere for a more intensive involvement of seniors in issues of sustainable development in their entire complex.

Focus area 1: Contribution of older persons to sustainable development

The Scope:

Older persons have the right to contribute to sustainable development. The right to participate in, and contribute to, development is affirmed in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right to participate in public affairs. Effective and meaningful participation enables the advancement of all human rights. On the other hand, when older persons are denied the ability or opportunity to contribute, or when their contribution is unrecognized or devalued, their dignity is denied. Understanding the contribution of older persons to sustainable development as a right enables States to identify steps that can be taken to uphold their dignity.

Substantive guiding questions:

National Legal and Policy Framework

1. What are the legal provisions, policy frameworks in your country that recognize older persons' right to participate in and contribute to sustainable development? This could include, but is not limited to:

- a) ensuring that relevant human rights (in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right of access to information, and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association) are protected and implemented;

Anchored in the CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS as a part of the constitutional order of the Czech Republic.

- b) protecting and enhancing civic space and collaboration with civil society that represents the voices of older persons in sustainable development;

The state cooperates with regions and municipalities, the Union of Towns and Municipalities, the Union of Local Authorities and the non-profit sector on events aimed at sustainable development in order to increase awareness of their activities. An active role is currently being taken over by companies implementing the policy of Corporate

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Social Responsibility, eventually Creating Shared Values, which closely collaborate with local NGOs and non-profit organizations.

- c) good practices to ensure older persons' participation in, and contribution to sustainable development.

Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 – Lifelong learning for all - par. 141 – ensuring participation of seniors 65+ reads as follows: “Supporting life-long learning across the entire population is also important, both civic and professional, including the involvement of age groups 55+ (including 65+) in education and competence improvement related to functioning in the changing world.” Through lifelong learning people 65+ learn about all aspects of sustainability (sustainable development, sustainable entrepreneurship, etc.).

In this context, it is also necessary to mention the Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025, which was approved by a government resolution No. 786/21 on September 13, 2021. In the material, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs formulates Ten Areas for preparing for the Aging Society. The individual measures will then be developed in the form of specific performance indicators in the follow-up Action Plan. Comprehensively conceived strategic material Ten Areas for preparing for Aging Society includes the measures related to Lifelong Learning, the Labor Market and Active Aging. The aim will be, for example, to support the competencies needed for future employment in the labor market even in old age; introduction and development of flexible forms of work, age-management measures; prepare measures to specifically support the sustainability of employment of older people in the form of new ALMP tools. The implementation of the Action Plan will create the preconditions for a much more active involvement of seniors in the field of sustainable development.

2. What are the challenges faced by older persons for the realization of their right to contribute to sustainable development at national and international levels?

The Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025 (the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) draws attention, for example, to the need for more affordable and barrier-free housing for the elderly (measure: Prepare a new subsidy title focused on barrier-free adaptations of existing flats); Safe living of seniors, fight against discrimination (measures: Carry out an analysis of age discrimination and its obstacles); Barrier-free public spaces (measure: Gradual creation of barrier-free public transport).

At the national level, lack of awareness is the fundamental reason why older persons are rather passive in sustainable development matters. One of a few visible contributions to sustainable development is an active approach to waste separation across generations. Older people embrace it with great respect to clean planet which they want to leave to their grandchildren. Two nation-wide magazines for seniors published in the Czech

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Republic (Doba seniorů; Age Management) play an active part in the improvement of awareness of the issues related to sustainable development.

At the international level, the language barrier is the fundamental problem. As a rule, older people in the Czech Republic can speak English at the basic level and, generally, they haven't developed the habit to read relevant materials in English, even if they are freely available on the Internet. To overcome this barrier, many language courses are offered to senior citizens and The University of 3rd Age has become a very popular educational institution among seniors.

3. What data, statistics and research are available regarding older persons' contribution to sustainable development?

Data and statistics to contribution to sustainable development: No information of this character is published by the Czech Statistical Office.

Research in social sciences is usually published in English (i.e., again the language barrier), and it is available among the scientists and academicians only, not the general public.

Within the project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs entitled "Implementation of aging policy at the regional level 2017-2022" (financed by the European Social Fund), for example was prepared the analysis "Comparative analysis of public administration approach in selected EU countries to senior participation in public decision-making".

Equality and non-discrimination

4. What measures are being taken to eliminate ageism, ageist stereotypes, prejudices and behaviors that devalue older persons' contribution to sustainable development?

The Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025 (the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) draws attention, for example, to the need for Lifelong learning, the labor market and active aging (measures: change target group 55+ to 60+, legislative anchoring of gradual reduction of working time fund accounts paid by the employer); Awareness and media coverage of the topic of aging (measures: implementation of awareness and media campaigns, preparation of teachers for teaching this topic).

As part of the project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs "Implementation of aging policy at the regional level", a series of round tables on the topic of age management at the central level and in individual regions (Age Management: age discrimination not only in the labor market; Age Management in practice).

Charles University in Prague organizes international events dealing with ageism, ageist stereotypes and prejudices. Seniors 65+ receive a good medical and social care, which is free, homes for the elderly play and active role trying to eliminate these problems. More employers could contribute to the solution of this problem, e.g., by offering part-time jobs for physically and mentally fit seniors who could work as consultants, helping younger employees to draw on seniors' experience, knowledge and skills. A nation-wide

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discussion on this topic should be nudged. Also, financial support for such employers would be the right motivation.

Remedies and Redress

5. What mechanisms are necessary, or already in place, for older persons to lodge complaints and seek redress for denial of their right to participate in and contribute to sustainable development?

The mechanisms are the same as those for the whole society, disregarding the age. No special mechanisms are in place for older people.

The Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025 (MLSA) draws attention, for example, to the need for measures as Safe life of seniors, anti-discrimination (measure: Analyze age discrimination and related barriers; Support crime prevention services aimed at the elderly population and intergenerational coexistence; Raise the awareness of seniors about their human and consumer rights; Strengthen their resilience to unfair sales practices; Analyze the possibilities of effective solutions to physical and psychological violence against the elderly).

As part of the project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs "Implementation of aging policy at the regional level 2017-2022", for example, the research "Analysis of the impact of anti-discrimination law on protection against age discrimination, legal framework of care and undignified treatment, abuse, neglect or abuse of seniors" was prepared. Raising general awareness of all these aspects among seniors will help them to better orientate themselves in matters of potential complaints about any discrimination.

Focus area 2: Economic security

National legal and policy framework

1. What are the legal provisions and policy frameworks in your country that guarantees the minimum essential level of the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to an adequate standard of living?

There is the institute of a minimum wage and a wide portfolio of various social benefits (e.g., housing costs benefits). New dose adjustments associated with high energy prices are currently being introduced. In addition, seniors have 65+ financial discounts on public transport and intercity public transport.

2. How is poverty defined in the national policy framework?

The Czech Republic ranks in the peloton of EU countries as the country with the lowest level of exposure to income poverty. Income poverty affected 8.1 percent of the population in 2021, which is about 901 200 people. A household is considered to be at the income poverty line if it does not have 60 per cent of the median net income, which is determined by the number of occupants and is based on the previous year's income.

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E.g., for an independent person the income poverty line was 14 055 crowns per month in 2021. Social transfers have helped socially vulnerable groups, e.g., seniors qualify for different social benefits. For example, the number of seniors over 65 living independently who would be classified as poor by this measure has fallen by a quarter in 2021.

3. What are challenges faced by older persons living in poverty, including the impact of intersectional discrimination and inequality based on age, gender and other grounds?

The term "older people living in poverty" and the corresponding reality represent a social phenomenon that is little experienced in the Czech Republic. However, when we talk about gender discrimination, the consequences of unequal pay, which later manifests itself in unequal pensions, are felt at the level of middle management and senior management roles. Through the dissemination of the results of their research, some social science studies seek to influence the behavior of responsible people in the corporate sector in order to eliminate these unfair practices.

At present, the most pressing problem is energy poverty and the issue of affordable or barrier-free housing for the elderly. The current political representation is intensively addressing these issues and preparing a number of proposals for negotiations with partners.

4. What data, statistics and research are available regarding older persons living in poverty?

The Czech Statistical Office carries out longitudinal research and publishes its results both in the Statistical Yearbook and in the media. Generally, it can be said, that media always pay relatively high attention to information on income poverty.

Progressive realization and the use of maximum available resources

5. What steps have been taken to address economic insecurity and poverty in older age and to ensure the right to an adequate standard of living for older persons?

Currently, the most burning problem is the energy poverty which struck the Czech "out of the blue", leaving almost 900 000 people without their affordable energy supplier (the company Bohemia Energy went bankrupt). The state is trying to address this problem by measures on individual basis. There is real danger not only for older persons with lower incomes, however, also the middle class is exposed to economic insecurity. No clear policy has been adopted so far.

6. What is the impact of macroeconomic policies on economic insecurity and poverty among older persons and vice versa? What policy options are available and/or implemented in order to expand fiscal space and maximize available resources to ensure economic security and the right to an adequate standard of living for older persons?

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The most important measure in this respect is the automatic indexation of pensions. It is anchored in the law. The previous government, with the pensions indexation, went beyond the level given by the law and increased pensions more trying to cover the costs of the rising inflation.

7. What good practices are available in terms of ensuring older persons' economic security, including through a life-course approach?

There is a supplementary pension insurance which is widely used by the citizens of the CR. The state contributes to the system. However, the pension reform has been discussed by politicians for more than a decade with now tangible result.

Equality and non-discrimination

8. What measures are being taken to eliminate ageism and discrimination based on age that prevent older persons to access economic and other productive resources, including financial services, land, adequate housing and the right to inheritance?

In the above points, there is no official discrimination against older people in the Czech Republic, or it occurs only very sporadically. The relevant state authorities do not underestimate this issue and therefore are already preparing for a possible worsening of the situation (impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, high inflation, etc.).

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As part of the project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs "Implementation of aging policy at the regional level", a series of round tables on the topic of age management at the central level and in individual regions (Age Management: age discrimination not only in the labor market; Age Management in practice). The research "Analysis of the Impact of the Anti-Discrimination Act on Protection against Age Discrimination, the Legal Framework of Care and Dignified Treatment, Abuse, Neglect or Abuse of the Elderly" was also carried out.

Remedies and redress

9. What mechanisms are necessary, or already in place, for older persons to lodge complaints and seek redress for denial of their economic security and enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living?

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The same high quality rules and mechanisms apply for people of any age. There is not discrimination of older persons in this respect. Just on the contrary: measures are taken to help citizens of older age with limited IT skills to deal with the agenda which has been already digitalized for the citizens in the Czech Republic.

The Strategic Framework for the Preparation for societal aging 2021-2025 (MLSA) draws attention, for example, to the need for enlightenment and media coverage of the topic of aging (measures: implementation of awareness-raising and media campaigns, preparation of teachers for teaching this topic); Lifelong learning, labor market and active aging (measures: change target group 55+ to 60+, legislative anchoring of the gradual reduction of the working time fund for seniors, introduction of a shared job, educational account paid by the employer) and the like.