**GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS AREAS OF THE X SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING:**

**Social protection and social security (including social protection floors)**

**National legal framework**

1. What are the legal provisions in your country that recognizes the right to social security and social protection, including non-contributory and contributory old-age benefits? Do they have a constitutional, legislative or executive foundation?

*In Bulgaria there is a modern, well developed and effective legislation in the field of equal opportunities, the recognition of the right to social security and social protection, including old-age and non-discrimination benefits as well as non-discrimination. The Bulgarian Constitution prohibits discrimination on all grounds and guarantees the equality of citizens. The Protection against Discrimination Act regulates the protection of all individuals in Bulgaria against all forms of discrimination, while at the same time assisting in its prevention and affirming measures for equal opportunities. In Bulgaria, the principle of equal opportunities, protection against discrimination, social security and social protection is regulated in: Labor Code, Civil Code, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Social Security Code, Employment Promotion Act, Social Assistance, the Law on National Education, the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc.. Special protection is ensured through: The Law on the Integration of People with Disabilities, the Law for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, etc. The aim of creating such legislation is to provide conditions for non-discriminatory treatment of all, equal treatment and equal access to rights, goods, goods and services, access to: education, health, labor market, income, social protection and social care, social security, insurance for various types of risk, transport and mobility, housing and household services, etc.*

**Availability**

2. What steps have been taken to guarantee universal coverage, ensuring that every older person has access to social security and social protection schemes including non- contributory, contributory and survivor old-age pensions, to ensure an adequate, standard of living in older age?

*The condition of ensuring equality in the labor market regardless of age is of utmost importance. Quality of employment and career opportunities determine the level of income earned throughout life. Employment also has a significant impact on the quality and frequency of social contacts, on the opportunities for access to quality services, including access to social security and social protection schemes, including old-age pensions. In Bulgaria, the following general types of pensions were adopted in accordance with the current legislation and the subordinate acts such as the Regulation on Pensions and Social Security Practices and Retirement Pensions:* ***General Disability Pension****; Pensions not related to employment;* ***Pension for military disability; Pension for civil disability; Social old age pension, etc..***

3. What steps have been taken to ensure that every older person has access to social security and social protection schemes which guarantee them access to adequate and affordable health and care and support services for independent living in older age?

*The condition of ensuring equality in the labor market regardless of age is of utmost importance. Quality of employment and career opportunities determine the level of income earned throughout life. Employment also has a significant impact on the quality and frequency of social contacts, on the opportunities for access to quality services, including access to social security and social protection schemes. Ensuring a real contribution from the elderly to social and economic life and full realization of their human rights and freedoms is related to achieving a society for all ages. The efforts of the health system should focus on a holistic approach to improving the health status of older people, in which they are not only consumers, but also active participants, aware of their contribution and their responsibility for their healthy aging. The main factor in the field of health care, which determines the possibilities for active aging, is the existence of a system of health prevention.*

**Adequacy**

4. What steps have been taken to ensure the levels of social security and social protection payments are adequate for older persons to have access to an adequate standard of living, including adequate access to health care and social assistance?

*Elderly people are an important and valuable resource of Bulgaria. They have the right to a dignified existence and a full and productive life inextricably linked to society, good health, development of their knowledge, skills and abilities, equal treatment and protection of their basic human rights. Longer retention of the labor market and the economically active behavior of older people should be accompanied by adaptation of the training and qualification system to the requirements of this category of people, providing adequate incentives, including financial, creating conditions for overcoming age discrimination and taking into account the importance of the experience of adults. At the same time, action needs to be taken to ensure healthy aging, to develop preventive measures, diseases and disabilities, and to promote healthy lifestyles, to develop services for the elderly, and to re-interpret the positive social role of this a category of people as full-fledged active citizens.*

**Accessibility**

5. What steps have been taken to ensure older persons have adequate and accessible information on available social security and social protection schemes and how to claim their entitlements?

*Bulgarian citizens enjoy all the rights and freedoms proclaimed by the Bulgarian Constitution, the laws of the state and the international treaties on human rights to which Bulgaria is a party. Effective equality is achieved by the application of the relevant norms of law, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, origin, language, religion, education, belief, political affiliation, property status, personal or social status. The policy to support active aging is part of the demographic policy and part of the overall policy for sustainable cultural, economic and social development.*

6. The design and implementation of normative and political framework related to social security and social protection benefits included an effective and meaningful participation of older persons?

*Active lifestyles of older people have characteristics that go beyond the economic context. Active human existence must be understood and related not only to the sphere of employment, although it is key to the quality of life of the people. Along with employment, making independent personal choices is one of the most important conditions for the exercise of individual rights and freedoms of the elderly. Active aging is linked to key concepts of social order such as participation in social life related to social security and social protection benefits, voluntary activity involving effective and meaningful participation of the elderly, good health status, labor and social mobility, financial security, lifelong learning, sustainable and flexible employment, gradual transition to retirement, flexible retirement, retirement employment, health prevention with emphasis on prevention disability, accessible long-term care, free and independent type of activity, even in old age.*

**Equality and non-discrimination**

7. Which are the measures adopted to ensure equitable access by older persons to social security and social protection, paying special attention to groups in vulnerable situation?

*In terms of discrimination, there is evidence of discrimination of the elderly in almost all spheres of social life. In the labor market, elderly people are under severe pressure to drop out of the labor force. There is evidence, on the one hand, of neglecting training and of neglecting the physical and mental needs of adults. Outside the labor market, there is a false and inaccurate understanding of the elderly and aging as a whole. Unlike young people who, in economic, cultural and political terms, relate to concepts of dynamics and innovation, elderly people and aging are unreasonably associated with conservatism and stagnation.*

*In addition to providing appropriate employment conditions, actions should be health-oriented, with emphasis on the prevention of socially significant diseases and preventative care, as well as the imposition of a positive image of the elderly in the public sphere.*

**Accountability**

8. What mechanisms are in place to ensure social security and social protection schemes are effective and accountable?

*The National Concept of Active Aging helps to create conditions for their active and decent life by providing equal opportunities for their full participation in the economic and social life of society. Ensuring a real contribution from the elderly to social and economic life and full realization of their human rights and freedoms is related to achieving a society for all ages. Efforts of the health system should focus on a holistic approach to improving the health status of older people, in which they are not only consumers, but also active participants aware of their contribution and responsibility for their healthy aging. The main factor in the field of health care, which determines the possibilities for active aging, is the existence of a system of health prevention. This would result in a higher quality of life for adults and preservation of their autonomy from the point of view of the health status. In the modern world, characterized by dynamism and globalization, there are common and similar processes and phenomena. Individuals should be informed that population aging, labor market dynamics, evolving innovation and technology are things that happen everywhere and at all. A broader view is needed of modern processes, especially of older people, who need to realize that the changes and need for longer work experience can only be positively influenced by maintaining and improving the level of professional training and qualification.*

9. What judicial and non-judicial mechanisms are in place for older persons to complain and seek redress for denial of their right to social security and social protection?

*The general aging of the population leads to the fact that the working population is aging, with the proportion of older workers increasing. The economic effects of an aging population on the labor market and its functioning are multidimensional. In recent years, in times of economic crisis, economic activity and employment have declined and unemployment is rising. These processes have a negative impact on disadvantaged groups on the labor market and risk being discriminated against by formalities.*

*In Bulgaria, the bodies of the judiciary, the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Association of Pensioners and the Elderly, the National Social Security Institute and all state institutions provide elderly people with effective access to judicial and extrajudicial justice mechanisms equally with all others, including by providing procedural and age-appropriate support measures.*