

Belarus

**Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons
and how best to address them**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Identification of gaps

In the Republic of Belarus there are no gaps in the regulatory framework and practical implementation of the rights of older citizens.

a) Equality and non-discrimination

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus enshrines the equality of all citizens before the law, the right to equal protection of their rights and legitimate interests.

The right to social security based on age, special care of the state for war and labour veterans, elderly people and disabled people are enshrined in the updated Constitution of the Republic of Belarus (Article 47).

National legislation does not contain discriminatory provisions against older citizens.

The state makes the necessary efforts to eliminate any discriminatory approaches towards older people in practice.

b) Violence, neglect and abuse

In order to prevent domestic violence, including against older citizens, the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated January 4, 2014 No. 122-Z “On the Fundamentals of Crime Prevention Activities” provides for the necessary legal and organizational measures.

Republican campaigns and events are regularly held to attract public attention to the problems of domestic violence and increase the legal and information literacy of citizens for an objective response to such situations.

The social service system provides assistance to older citizens who may have experienced from domestic violence, neglect or abuse.

In order to provide assistance to people who find themselves in a crisis situation, crisis rooms have been organized in the territorial centers of social services for the population.

c) Long-term care and palliative care

The priority in social services for the population is to create conditions for the maximum possible extension of the stay of older citizens in familiar home conditions. To this end, territorial centers of social services operate a social assistance service at home, develop day care services, introduce new forms and expand the list of social services.

The draft Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Amendments to the Legislation on Social Services” provides for the formation of a system of long-term (comprehensive) care.

The provision of palliative medical care to elderly citizens in need is organized in hospices, palliative care departments, mobile palliative care teams, as well as in nursing hospitals.

d) Autonomy and independence

Inpatient replacement forms of residence for older citizens have been introduced – homes for shared (independent) living, foster families, care based on annuity contracts.

As part of ongoing deinstitutionalization efforts, day care services have been introduced for older people with cognitive impairment and dementia.

e) Social security and protection (including minimum levels of social protection)

In the Republic of Belarus, a system of social protection for disabled citizens has been formed and is dynamically developing, the main components of which are social services, state targeted social assistance, social support, and the creation of an accessible environment.

The state guarantees the right to receive a pension for old age, disability, and in case of the loss of a breadwinner.

The state (solidarity) pension is the main guarantee of an acceptable level of income for older citizens. The country is taking the necessary measures on a systematic basis for the stable and efficient functioning of the pension system.

Today, almost every elderly disabled resident of the republic is covered by state pension provision.

f) Education, training, lifelong learning and capacity-building

Additional education for adults (vocational training, retraining, advanced training) is carried out by educational institutions of the republic.

Obtaining additional education for older citizens is also possible through non-formal education and training.

“Silver/gold institutes” are being created at the territorial centers of social services, where senior citizens study foreign languages, acquire computer and digital literacy, etc.

g) Right to work and access to the labour market

Labour legislation guarantees the right to work regardless of age and does not contain any restrictions on the ability of workers who have reached retirement age to carry out labour activities.

One of the priority areas of state policy in the field of employment is to increase the efficiency of using labour potential. In this regard, the country is taking measures aimed at involving citizens who have reached retirement age in labour activities.

h) Access to justice

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, everyone is guaranteed the protection of their rights and freedoms by a competent, independent and impartial court in the manner and within the time limits determined by law.

i) Contribution of Older Persons to Sustainable Development

In 2020, the Government of the Republic of Belarus adopted the National Strategy of the Republic of Belarus “Active Longevity - 2030”, which is built on the principle “Leave no one behind” and is aimed at strengthening the contribution of older people to sustainable development.

j) Economic security

To improve the quality of life of older citizens, conditions for long-term work have been created.

The legislation provides for the protection of the rights of workers of pre-retirement age; there are no restrictions on continuing to work after reaching retirement age.

The state guarantees the right to receive a pension for old age, disability, and in case of the loss of a breadwinner.

Almost every elderly disabled resident of the republic is covered by state pension provision.

k) Right to health and access to health services

In the healthcare system of the Republic of Belarus, the priority is to ensure universal access to medical care, as well as to safe, effective, high-quality medicines and vaccines.

In the republic, medical care is provided free of charge without age restrictions.

Preferential provision of certain categories of citizens with medicines and technical means of social rehabilitation is provided.

The Republican Gerontological Center (active aging) and seven regional geriatric centers have been created.

The educational model “Schools of Active Longevity” has been introduced in healthcare institutions, within the framework of which older citizens are taught how to preserve and strengthen their health.

l) Social inclusion

Social integration of older people is ensured through their participation in the volunteer movement, the activities of public associations and councils of senior citizens.

Thus, in order to fully participate in the life of society, older citizens unite in public associations. The most numerous is the Belarusian Public Association of Veterans.

Senior citizens are also active participants in trade union activities.

In order to involve older people in decision-making processes, increase the level of their representation, and ensure that their needs and preferences are taken into account, councils of older citizens have been created and are successfully functioning at local executive and administrative bodies.

Conditions for realizing the potential of older citizens are created in the day care departments of the territorial centers of social services.

m) Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)

To create an accessible environment and infrastructure that provides the opportunity to lead an active life, since 2007, the country has been gradually implementing state programs (subprograms) to create an accessible living environment for people with disabilities and elderly citizens.

The measures of these state programs (subprograms) are aimed at ensuring the organization of the surrounding space, in which any person can have unhindered access to information, objects, and move freely along the chosen route.

At this stage, within the framework of the subprogram “Accessible living environment for people with disabilities and physically weakened persons” of the State program “Social Protection” for 2021 – 2025, measures are being implemented to ensure the accessibility of social and transport infrastructure, the road network, taking into account an integrated approach and the unhindered access to necessary services.

n) Participation in the public life and in decision-making processes

Citizens of the Republic of Belarus have the right to participate in solving state problems, in discussing issues of state and public life, as well as, on their own initiative, to create and join existing public organizations and associations.

According to the National Strategy of the Republic of Belarus “Active Longevity - 2030”, the main goal of which is the maximum inclusion of older people in the life of society and the creation of conditions for realizing their potential, councils of senior citizens (permanent consultative and advisory bodies) have been created and are functioning in the country.

Options on how best to address the gaps

The state social policy of the Republic of Belarus in relation to older people is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other UN documents.

The Republic of Belarus has joined the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (2002), the Regional Strategy for its Implementation (2002), the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration “Sustainable societies for all ages: realizing the potential of living longer” (2017) and is implementing policies regarding older people, including in accordance with these fundamental documents in the field of population aging.

In June 2023, **the Information Strategy for Active Longevity (IS 65+) for 2023–2025** was signed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus and the United Nations Population Fund in the Republic of Belarus (UNFPA).

IS 65+ was developed with the aim of **developing an information space that effectively influences the formation of an active life position of older people and changes in society’s attitude towards them.**

IS 65+ contributes to the implementation of the National Strategy “Active Longevity – 2030”. This document is aimed at comprehensively taking into account the aspects of aging in social policy through the needs of older citizens.

The goal of IS 65+ is to develop by 2026 an information space that effectively influences the formation of the image of older people as equal participants in the social, cultural and economic spheres of society.

The Information Strategy for Active Longevity 65+ is based on the principles:

- of the United Nations, aimed at improving the quality of life of older people, protecting their interests and promoting the rights to an active and dignified longevity (access of older people to appropriate educational programs, the opportunity to remain integrated into society, to actively participate in the development and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being, to share their knowledge and skills with the younger generation, to take advantage of opportunities to realize their full potential);

- corporate social responsibility;

- forming partnerships at all levels in order to create a single information space that ensures the dissemination of the image of people 65+ leading an active lifestyle;

- non-discrimination;

- harmonized standards;

- effectiveness of information impact;

- promoting sustainable development;

- taking into account sex, age, ethnocultural characteristics of society as well as target groups when carrying out information impacts;

- use and dissemination of national and international practices that have proven their effectiveness.