



Európsky rok **aktívneho starnutia**  
a **solidarity medzi generáciami 2012**



## **National Work Programme for the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012**

*Opening speech from Rudolf Chmel,*

*Deputy Prime Minister of the Government SR for human rights and national minorities*

*Dear Commissioner,*

*Dear Commission,*

*the theme of European 'years' under the auspices of the European Union provides society with the space to emphasis or present particular themes resonating in European Union states more than other themes in this period. It is therefore natural that important issues such as the protection of human rights and basic freedom have been at the centre of attention of European leaders many times. The necessity to increase protection of disadvantaged groups is the duty of every developed, democratic country. The necessity to increase protection for people with disabilities or to eliminate violence against women was addressed. The Government Office SR, in its position as national coordinator, is assisting in meeting the challenges formulated after successful completion of the National Programme of the European Year 2007.*

*In 2012, the main theme will be active ageing and the support of solidarity between generations. Within this spirit, it is important to enforce and apply anti-discrimination legislation in everyday life. Within the context of ensuring basic rights and freedom, it is important to apply the same approach to older people and other disadvantaged groups in terms of employment, goods, services, education, housing and social and health care, taking into consideration their special needs and barriers which limit them.*

*After the elections in 2010, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a programme declaration for the 2010 - 2014 period. Part 3.1 of the programme declaration addresses the protection and support of human rights. The document states that the Government will strengthen existing or will adopt new government programmes and institutional mechanisms focusing upon comprehensive protection of the human rights of disadvantaged group. In creating, implementing and evaluating Government policy and its impact, they will enforce measures for eliminating gender discrimination. The concept of human dignity includes not only protection against inadmissible and unnecessary interference by the State in the lives of people, but also the need for their mental development and adequate social-economic background. The right to education, decent housing, and a healthy*

*environment are rights which require active contribution by the state in the form of the establishment of basic frameworks and conditions for their fulfilment.*

*A healthier lifestyle and other factors were also reflected in national and European statistical research which confirms that continuous improvement in the quality of healthcare lengthens the average age of the Slovak population. However, demographic indexes also indicate a decrease in natality in society. These trends are therefore related to the proportion of significantly older people over 85 years. On one hand, I am proud of the increase in the average age of citizens and the progress achieved; on the other hand, changing society-wide priorities and needs must early and effectively be reflected and implemented in public policies and their tools.*

*A suitable reaction to the stated demographic changes is the concept of active ageing, which provides a balanced and complex view of the needs and options of older people and their participation and mobilisation of their own potential. The support of active ageing mainly means creating better opportunities in the employment market for older women and men, as well as combating poverty and social exclusion, mainly by women. The support of dignified ageing lies in creating systems of lifelong education, appropriate social security, strengthening volunteering and active inclusion into family life and society. A fully valued and dignified life for all generations may only be achieved by including all age groups in this process, together with enforcing the principle of solidarity.*

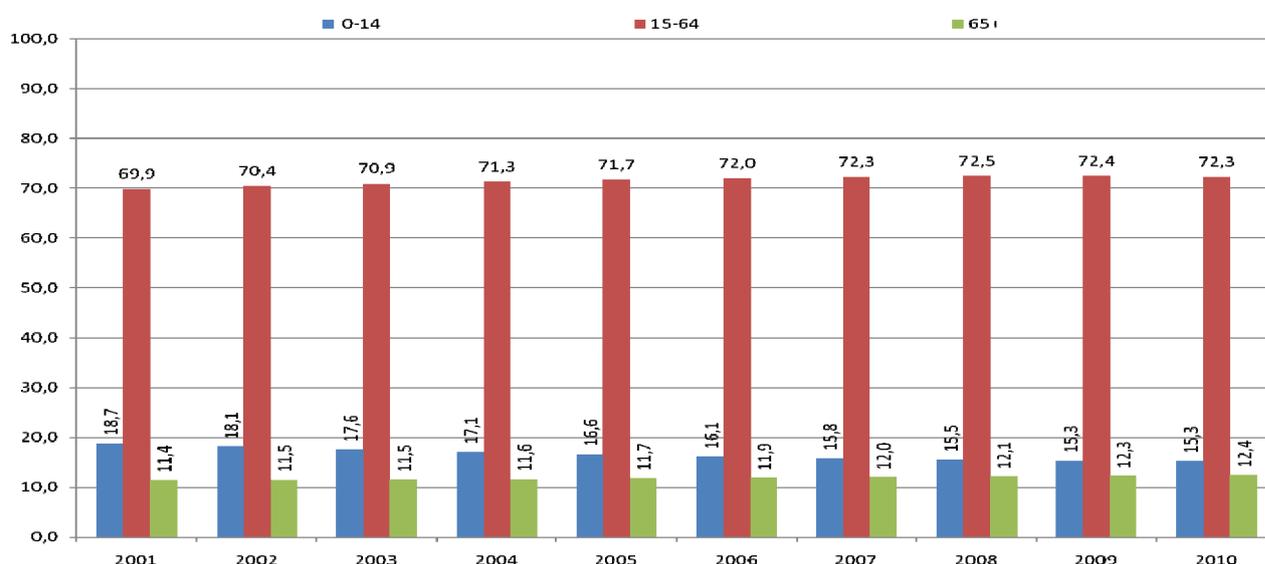
*Within the context of demographic trends in society as well as the main theme of the European Year for 2012, the Government of the Slovak Republic considers the support of active ageing as one of its priorities and main themes. Active ageing policy should not only be covered by expert discussion in society and supported and considered when preparing legislation and non-legislative measures, but it is also necessary to thoroughly supervise its implementation and enforcement.*

## 1. Demography and active ageing

### 1.1 Priorities, challenges and options

Demographic data from the Statistical Office SR shows a population increase in the number of people over 65 years in Slovakia. In the last ten years, the proportion of 65 year olds and older has increased by approximately 1%; on the other hand, the proportion of children under 14 years has decreased by more than 3% (Graph No. 1). By looking more closely at the age structures of inhabitants over 65 years, it possible to discover that their number has increased by 3.5 times over the past 50 years and according to the prognosis, this trend will accelerate (Graph No. 2). One reason for the ageing population is increasing life expectancy; the average length of life at birth in 2010 reached 71.6 years for men and 78.8 years for women. Compared to the past, an increase in life expectancy has been recorded; however, in comparison with Western Europe, Slovakia still lags behind in this index.

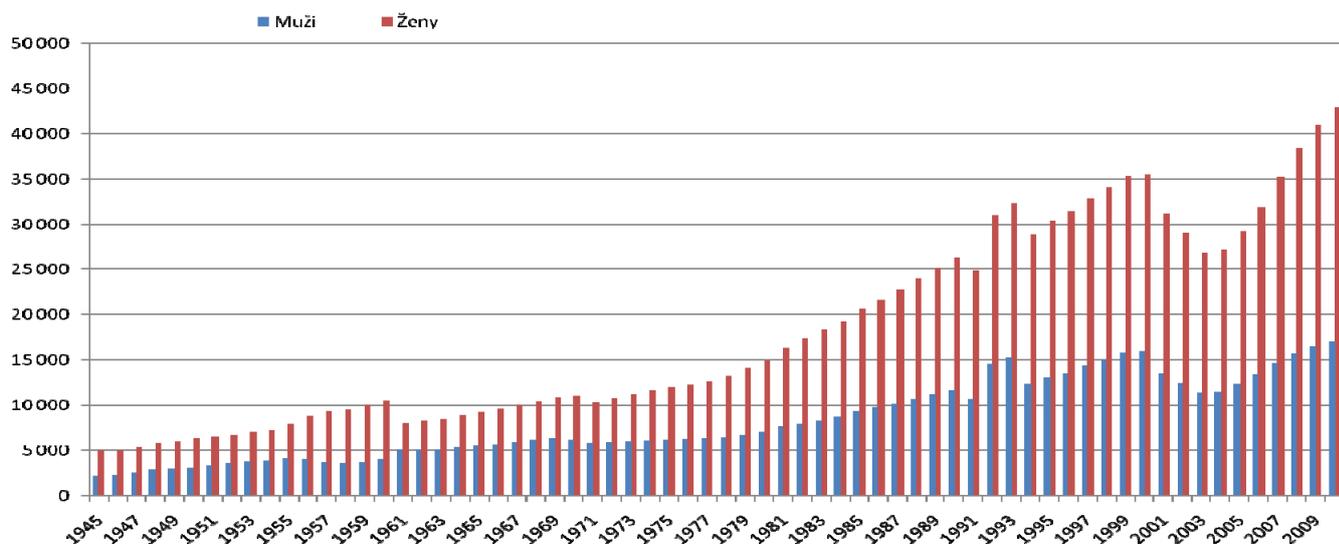
Graph No. 1 Development of basic age groups of SR populations from 2001 - 2010 (in %)



Source: SLOVSTAT, SO SR, 2011

Although a comparison of individual statistical indexes (not only predicted life expectancy but also average age) indicates that ageing of the Slovak population is occurring later than in Western European countries, or than in some of our neighbouring countries, demographic development is resulting in more significant changes in the SR population structure (overall and productive) with a significant trend towards feminisation of the elderly (see below).

Graph No. 2: Development of the number of women and men aged 85 and over (1945 - 2010, absolute numbers)



Men - women Source: SLOVSTAT, SO SR, 2011

The necessity and requirement to support active ageing, break stereotypes related to older people, give positive information about the contribution and importance of the elderly for the economy and the family, and improve the public image of the elderly has also been confirmed by research focusing upon the view of discrimination. In 2009, a third special Eurobarometer, *Discrimination in the European Union*, was published, bringing information regarding the opinion and view of the public in relation to discrimination, diversity and equal opportunities in the European Union and its member states. Representative research also focused upon age discrimination in various areas, as well as upon the opinion and view of citizens on this theme, and the proportion by which the economic crisis can negatively influence the implementation of anti-discrimination policy was also examined. In 2009, the most widespread form of discrimination in Slovakia was considered to be age discrimination (stated by 64% of the adult population), following by ethnic discrimination (49%) and discrimination against the disabled (44%). According to research findings from 2008, discrimination based on age together with race or ethnic origin was also amongst the most frequent (almost 50%), followed by discrimination based on disability (30%).

The stated findings were also confirmed by a survey by the Institute for Public Issues of May 2008, addressing personal experience of discrimination<sup>1</sup>; the results also showed that not every respondent correctly understands which action or behaviour shows discrimination. Research data showed that the elderly felt most frequently discriminated against (25% of those questioned aged 55+), while the area where people most frequently experienced age discrimination was in the employment market (84%) and healthcare (44%). Research carried out by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in 2006 also states that throughout their lives, SR inhabitants most frequently experienced age discrimination and more than two thirds of the Slovak population<sup>2</sup> reported personal or second hand experience.

<sup>1</sup> Insitute for Public Issues: *Na ceste k rovnosti. Občan a demokracia* (The route to equality. A citizen and democracy), Bratislava, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Gurán et al.: Field research with a selected categories of inhabitants to ascertain compliance with the principle of equal treatment when starting and ending an employment-legal relationship. Final report. Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava, 2006.

According to the Europe wide research, Eurobarometer, of 2009 regarding poverty and social exclusion, carried out during the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010, more than half of Europeans (56%) were certain that the greatest risk of poverty threatened the unemployed. At the same time, 41% of respondents expressed the opinion that the most vulnerable were the elderly and 31% considered the group most at risk to be people with a low level of education, specialist training or skills.

The older generation (mainly women) face several disadvantages in the employment market and in education, which often result in forced early retirement, low employment, more frequently working below their level of qualifications and under a worse employment contract, including salary. According to Eurostat, employment in the 55-64 years age group in Slovakia in 2010 was below 40% and has ranked amongst lowest in the EU for a long time. On the other hand, the level of unemployment in older people is amongst the highest in the 50-64 age group and in 2008 it reached a level of 7.8%; in the following years it increased significantly - to as much as 11.2% in 2010. In the 50 - 64 age group, the average level of unemployment in 2010 was 10.6% for men and 12.1% for women; the gender difference in the level of unemployment between men and women in this age group was 1.5%<sup>3</sup>

However, employment is exhibiting considerably greater gender differences, particularly in older age groups. Whilst the level of employment in people between 50 - 64 was 53.5% in 2010, for men it was 63.3% and for women it was 44.7%<sup>4</sup>. Women over 45 years more frequently work part time at the employer's request (they are under-employed), since they are not able to find full time employment<sup>5</sup>. The level of employment in women aged 55 - 64 is still well under the EU-27 average although since 2005, this level has slightly increased with a gradual levelling out of the retirement age. In 2010, it was only 26.1% in Slovakia, which is 28.8% less than for men in the same age category (it was 54.9% for men). The gender difference in the employment level of older women and men increased in previous years and only recently has there been a slight decrease<sup>6</sup>.

The gender difference in salaries between women and men in Slovakia has been amongst the highest for a long time (women earn an average of one quarter less) and this difference remains over the age of 45 years. More women than men frequently earn under 600 EUR (52% of women and 36% of men<sup>7</sup>); similarly, research by the Institute for Public Issues carried out in 2006 found that more than four fifths of women over 45 receive a salary lower than 500 EUR<sup>8</sup>. As a consequence, older women are more threatened by poverty (according to EU-SILC 2010, as much as 14.8% of women compared to 4.5% of men aged 65 and over)<sup>9</sup>, which leads to a process of feminisation of poverty and old age<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Annual report on horizontal priority to ensure equal opportunities 2009, MLSAF, 2010, Slovstat, SO SR, Bratislava, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Statistical Office SR, Infostat database: Level of unemployment depending upon age group and gender in %, 2009 ([http://www.statistics.sk/pls/elisw/objekt.send?uic=2556&m\\_sso=2&m\\_so=15&ic=39](http://www.statistics.sk/pls/elisw/objekt.send?uic=2556&m_sso=2&m_so=15&ic=39)); Slovstat, SO SR, Bratislava, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Bútorová, Z. et al: She and He in Slovakia. Focusing upon gender and age. Institute for Public Issues. Bratislava, 2008. Page 165. [http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus\\_pre\\_zeny\\_45/Ona\\_a\\_on.pdf](http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus_pre_zeny_45/Ona_a_on.pdf). Bútorová Z. (ed.). Here and Now: Probes into the Lives of Women 45+ Institute for Public Issues, Bratislava, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Annual report on horizontal priority in equality of opportunity for 2009, MLSAF, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> *Wage structure in SR 2010*. Bratislava, Statistical Office SR, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Bútorová, Z. et al: She and He in Slovakia. Focused upon gender and age. Institute for Public Issues. Bratislava, 2008. Page. 165. [http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus\\_pre\\_zeny\\_45/Ona\\_a\\_on.pdf](http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus_pre_zeny_45/Ona_a_on.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat, EU-27: SILC 2007, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=685&langId=sk&intPageId=163>.

<sup>10</sup> In 2010, the average pension for men was 400 EUR and 315 for women, which represented only 78.7% of the pension for men. In: Filadelfiová, J. – Bútorová, Z.: *Equality of women and men* (Kollár – Mesežnikov – Bútorová, eds.: Slovakia 2010. Report on the status of society and democracy and trends for 2011. Bratislava, IVO, 2011).

## **1.2 Supporting active ageing by the Government SR, the area of equality of opportunity and gender equality**

The Government SR is addressing the issue of active ageing and solidarity between generations. They are aware that dignity, independence, respect, self-fulfilment and active participation form an important basis for contentment and a positive attitude to oneself as well as towards others. The elderly are a source of great personal and professional experience and wisdom, and they have the potential to use this experience in developing the economy, the community and family life.

Under the authority of the Deputy Prime Minister SR for Human Rights and National Minorities, in order to strengthen participatory mechanisms in managing all areas related to the application of basic rights and freedom, the Government Council SR for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality (Government Council) was established as the permanent, specialist, advisory, coordinating and consultative body of the Government for the protection of basic human rights and freedom (provision of the Government SR No. 158/2011). Point F.3 of the provision to the material, a Committee for Seniors was established under the Government Council, the activities of which focus upon the compliance with, support and protection of seniors' rights. Within their actual authority, the Committee may issue fundamental statements binding for the Government Council SR, who shall submit proposals related to the protection or compliance with seniors' rights to the Government of the Slovak Republic.

In their session in September 2011, the Committee for Seniors adopted a provision regarding a draft amendment to the currently valid National Programme for the Protection of Older People, approved by the provision of the Government SR No. 681 of 11 August 1999. The provision also includes approval of a change of name to the National Programme for Active Ageing. Representatives from non-government organisations (NGOs) from the senior citizen support field, non-public and public providers of social services, self-governing regions, social partners, independent experts and others are cooperating in its preparation. Experts from the supervisory committee of European Year 2012 were also invited to cooperate.

Based on the statute of the Government Council and the provision of Article 4 para. 2 of the Decision of the European Parliament and Council No. 940/2011/EU of 14 September 2011 regarding the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012), in June 2011, a Supervisory Committee for European Year 2012 was established as a working group of the Government Council. The Supervisory Committee connects representatives from state institutions, regional and local authorities, social partners, public society and business associations in order to support active ageing and mobilise the potential of the fast growing number of inhabitants over 50 years; they are aware of the importance of solidarity and cooperation between generations, taking into consideration the diversity of gender equality. Members of the Supervisory Committee may be changed depending up needs and proposals; representatives from public broadcasting and SR Television shall be invited to the next session.

On 16 November 2011, in provision No. 717/2011, the Slovak Government approved the Draft for preparation of national strategy for the protection and support of human rights in the Slovak Republic, prepared in cooperation with relevant departments, Government Council SR committees for human rights, national minorities and gender equality and with other relevant subjects. The main scope of activities for the mentioned strategy include:

- Apply a cross-sectional approach in the implementation of human rights standards and adopt human rights principles within the activities of state administration and public

legal institutions, and provide space for active participation in the creation of policy by society, experts in the given area and by affected groups.

- Establish concrete priorities for individual areas of human rights and vulnerable groups of citizens.

The Government SR is paying special attention to disadvantaged Roma communities. To improve their situation, the Government SR has prepared various strategies and measures for all areas of life - housing, including utilities networks, employment, education, health, social support and culture. Based upon an EU request to increase efforts in the social inclusion of Roma communities, the Government SR is currently finalising complex material - Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma in SR by 2020. The mentioned strategy should serve as a basis for action plans and legal standards at all levels of state administration for the period 2012 - 2020. It identifies disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated quarters in Slovakia and the necessity for the creation of a suitable mechanism for collecting ethnic data in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of adopted policies and measures, including evaluation of indirect discrimination.

Within the gender equality agenda, the Government SR is focusing upon the issue of feminisation of poverty. In the employment market, they are focusing upon older women. It based on relevant research by the Institute for Public Issues which, for example in the "Plus for Women 45+" project, financed from the European Social Fund, published "She and He in Slovakia. Focused upon gender and age".<sup>5</sup>

There are activities prepared within the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2010 - 2013 (NAP RR) for supporting active ageing. NAP RR activities emphasis implementation of international documents from the UN, EU and Council of Europe. They are mainly based upon the UN Committee's final findings and recommendations for eliminating discrimination against women, given in 2008, to which the entire document paid particular attention. The activities of operational objective No. 1 - To achieve a balanced position and representation of women and men in decision making and powerful positions - are being formulated to ensure that decisions will be systematically adopted in order to achieve equal representation by women and men at all levels in decision making and powerful positions. It also focuses upon identifying gender stereotyping and weakening it, on increasing the awareness and educational potential of all players to prevent strengthening of gender stereotyping and a stereotypical image of "femininity" and "masculinity" being created and spread via the media. Material also includes activities for supporting temporary equalisation measures focusing upon eliminating discrimination against women, carrying out employment inspections, tools for eliminating horizontal and vertical gender segregation and gender differences in remuneration for the same work and work of the same value, and other activities. NAP RR will be updated in 2012 and will be implemented via a national project "Institute of Gender Equality" from the Employment and Social Inclusion operational programme. The Government SR annually discusses the Summary Report on the status of Gender Equality in Slovakia and submits this to the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

The Measures for Harmonisation of Family and Working Life document will be re-evaluated in the "Package of Pro-Family Measures" in order to implement proposals resulting from demographic development of the population and from the employment market situation,

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<sup>5</sup> Bútorová, Z. et al: Ona a on na Slovensku (She and He in Slovakia) Focused upon gender and age. Institute for Public Issues. Bratislava, 2008 Page 165. [http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus\\_pre\\_zeny\\_45/Ona\\_a\\_on.pdf](http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/Plus_pre_zeny_45/Ona_a_on.pdf). Bútorová Z. (ed.). Here and Now: Probes into the Lives of Women aged 45+ Institute for Public Issues, Bratislava, 2007.

covering all groups (including the elderly) requiring special attention due to their family duties and responsibility for the family, including seniors.

Revision of the National Action Plan for the prevention and elimination of violence against women for 2009 - 2012 (NAP) was carried out in 2011 with the participation of female experts from the non-government and research sectors, The Office for Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and Departments of Social Affairs from municipalities. Finances for revised NAP tasks will be allocated via the national project, the Employment and Social Inclusion operational programme, "Prevention and elimination of violence against women" in order to provide concrete assistance in the field via the coordinated work of crisis intervention centres, intervention teams and social workers from the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and self-governing regions, as well as to provide accessible and quality social services of European standard.

### **1.3 Cooperation and supporting relevant partners**

Municipalities play an important role in providing a friendly and supportive environment for the elderly. Villages and towns are adopting measures to improve accessibility of housing, transport, health and social care, services, free time activities and other conditions for a healthy, dignified, independent and safe life for older people. They are creating social intergenerational bonds and supporting active community life.

In order to provide effective social and health care, or a combination of both services in the form of long term care, it is necessary to consider changes in approaches and priorities. Addressing the consequences of demographic change cannot only lie in simply extending or maintaining existing capacities of institutional services for the elderly, but in qualitative new and coordinated approaches based upon the principles of dignity, equality, quality, choice, complexity and flexibility between formal and informal care, and between domestic and institutional care.

Adapted housing corresponding to their state of health allows older people to remain in a natural environment with which they are familiar and feel comfortable. Barrier free housing improves quality of life and safety when mobility and orientation are limited, and provides the possibility to adapt the interior of the home to include compensatory aids. A positive aspect of life in a natural, multigenerational environment is also the maintenance of social contact with the nearby surroundings, acquaintances, neighbours and family.

Elderly people in the town and countryside make more use of public transport. Barrier free and accessible public transport is important for the elderly when travelling for healthcare, shopping, some public services, the family and friends. Mobility of the elderly supports and is conditional in active ageing and allows their participation in cultural, sports or voluntary activities in the community in which they live and actively participate.

For the fulfilment and application of active ageing policy and the solidarity principle, cooperation between state administration and local municipalities is necessary, as well as with non-government organisations, churches, scientific and educational institutions, the specialist public, social partners and other subjects in society. Intensive dialogue between state administration and municipalities is necessary for the interconnection of state policy and positive measures in the area of active ageing at regional and local level. The Committee for Seniors, under the Government Council, represents a significant tool for coordination and cooperation between the players named in supporting active ageing and with the inclusion of all generations in this process.

Of particular importance is work with the media in objective and positive reporting about the significance and contribution of older people to the economy, the community and the family. The media form relationships and attitudes, mainly of the younger generation, and they assist in overcoming stereotypes and prejudices related to old age which affect the dignity, integrity and equality of the elderly. Apart from television, children and young people are significantly influenced by social networks which may contribute in the exchange of opinions, the approach and understanding of ageing by various generations and in improving public opinion.

Social inclusion of the elderly, the approach of seniors to goods and services, and the support of their active, dignified and fully valued life are significant elements of the current programme period of the Slovak Republic, 2007 - 2013, and the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 - 2013 document. The given objectives related to the ageing group of the population, assistance in active ageing and mobilisation of their potential is directly or marginally implemented via operational programmes (OP) and invitations by responsible ministries - e.g. OP Employment and Social Inclusion (MLSAF SR), Regional OP (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development SR), OP Healthcare (Ministry of Health SR), OP Education (Ministry of Science, Research and Sport SR). Appendix 1 states the list of projects currently being implemented within the Regional OP related to active ageing.

The Government SR annually announces an invitation for the submission of projects for the grant programme, Support and Protection of Human Rights and Freedom, which includes the enforcement, support and protection of basic rights and freedom and the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other expressions of intolerance ([www.vlada.gov.sk](http://www.vlada.gov.sk) - Grants). Since 2000, the grant programme has supported various activities for the elderly, film festivals with a human rights and minority theme, or supported organisations enforcing the rights of seniors.

## **2. Employment of older persons**

### **2.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

From the data stated in part 1.1, it has been shown that demographic challenges related to population ageing are leading to a social need for increased participation by older people in the employment market. A common EU target was to achieve 50% employment of older people by 2010. The unemployment level of older people (55-64) in Slovakia since 2001 has grown continuously and in 2010, it increased despite an overall decrease in unemployment. Despite temporary improvements, employment of seniors is still below the average EU 27 level. Although it has almost tripled within the past 10 years, the low level of employment in older women has resulted in older women becoming an especially vulnerable group exposed to a greater risk of poverty. Simultaneously, the living situation of older women can become even more difficult when combined with other disadvantages such as disability or belonging to an ethnic group. Statistical data which could record the multiple disadvantages of the elderly unemployed has not been gathered.

The high unemployment level amongst older people may also be resolved using diversity management (in relation to creating to multigenerational teams) by public and non-public employers.<sup>11</sup> Anti-discrimination programmes and diversity programmes support social cohesion of society as a whole. From this viewpoint, social cohesion may also be understood

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<sup>11</sup> Košta, J. et al.: "The advantages of diversity and implementation of non-discriminatory mechanisms in employment". Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava, 2010.

to be a sort of social capital in which investment should be made. Building social cohesion harmonises social, group and individual aims whilst supporting stability of the country and its economic performance.

The results of research carried out by the Institute of Economic Research SAS focusing upon the advantages of diversity in the employment field, for example, showed that employers must deal with a lack of theoretical and practical experience when creating a diverse environment. Approximately 59% of private companies and 65.7% of public organisations form part of the group without practical experience related to diversity initiatives. Research has also shown that new diversity initiatives should mainly focus upon the battle against discrimination based on age, race and ethnic origin. Respondents also consider initiatives against gender discrimination to be important. Those companies and sectors more demanding in terms of the quality of their workforce are likely to profit most from diversity of manpower as they are more progressive from a macroeconomic viewpoint and therefore, such a diverse system has a greater chance of adapting to changing conditions and crisis situations.

According to research, the implementation of diversity programmes has mainly brought benefits related to company reputation, company image or good relationships within the business community and in the workplace, higher creativity and innovation, greater motivation for employees and their efficiency at work, as well as compliance with legal regulations. Social responsibility of companies should be supported at business sector level.

Research by a Swedish company (Vattenfall AB) has shown that adopting measures for improving employment requires a differentiated approach.<sup>12</sup> The older age group has massive potential for employment and active participation in social life, but there are many barriers preventing its full application (of a structural nature as well as personal obstacles). It is necessary to change employers' attitudes and the approach of the whole of society and older people themselves; it is not enough to raise the pension age: it is necessary to create suitable conditions and methods for organising work for older workers. Recommendations state the necessity to adopt a clear obligation by the government regarding the support of age diversity at national level as well as employer organisational level, to support and enforce the concept of active ageing, to focus upon the working ability of women and men of mature age and, in case of raising the retirement age, it is also necessary to create adequate, adapted and appropriate working conditions for older women and men.

## **2.2 Support of active ageing by the Government SR**

Increasing participation in the employment market by older people in the SR is one of the main factors influencing fulfilment of a national aim of the SR in the area of employment within the implementation of Europe 2020 strategy (to achieve a 72% level of employment by people aged 20-64 years by 2020).

Act No. 5/2004 coll. regarding employment services as amended (Employment Services Act) defines citizens over 50 years as one of the disadvantaged groups of jobseekers. Support and assistance in the inclusion of older people is being implemented using tools of active policy in the employment market, as stated in the mentioned Act.

Tools for supporting older persons in the employment market include, for example:

- Specialist advisory services,

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<sup>12</sup> Skoglund, B. – Skoglund, C.: Age Management: Face the problems now. Boden, AMSAB, 2007.

- Education and preparation for the employment market,
- An allowance towards independent enterprising activities,
- An allowance for training disadvantaged jobseekers,
- An allowance for supporting employers of disadvantaged jobseekers,
- An allowance for activities in the form of minor community services for villages or in the form of minor services for self-governing regions,
- An allowance for activating voluntary services,
- An allowance for establishing protected workshops and protected workplaces, and for their maintenance.

One factor which is a disadvantage for unemployed people over 50 years is hidden age discrimination and low attractiveness to employers. The Employment Services Act sets out a non-discriminatory method, in accordance with which an employer must not publish an offer of employment which displays any limitations and discrimination, including marital status, family status, skin colour, language, national or social origin, age, disability, gender or any other position.

Following the recommendations of the EU Council, to increase participation by older people in the employment market, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR (MLSAF SR) started to prepare a national project - "Active Ageing Strategy". Its main objective is to prepare draft strategy for increasing and improving employment of older people in SR aged 50 years and over, and especially those in the 55-64 age group. The project consists of four activities:

- Analysis of SR demographic development and the prognosis of employment availability by 2020,
- Analysis of the legal position of starting, keeping and staying in employment by older people in the Slovak Republic,
- Analysis of factors influencing participation by the elderly in the Slovak employment market,
- Creation of strategy for increasing the participation of older people in the Slovak employment market using examples of best practice in the SR and abroad.

Preparation is currently under way for a public procurement process for implementing individual activities within this project. We can therefore assume that part of the activities will be implemented in 2012, and part in 2013.

The Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is a partner in the international project "Central European Knowledge Platform for an Ageing Society". The project is being implemented within the period 1.1.2011 to 31.12.2013 and includes the cooperation of 13 organisations from 8 countries in Central Europe. The aim of the project is:

- To contribute towards minimising the negative effects and influences upon the demographic trend toward an ageing society and economy,
- Improve framework conditions (e.g. programmes, rules) by adapting policy, government processes and mechanisms to suit demographic changes,
- To reduce regional differences as well as local isolation of target groups by creating a platform for exchanging experience between rural and city parts, between national, regional and international levels,
- To improve the use of existing internal potential of diverse and ageing manpower by increasing awareness of demographic changes, creating ageing strategy as well as using the latest training concepts,

- To promote proposals for new services and improve the skills and education of target groups so they can adapt to the requirements of medium and small companies, as well as contribute towards sustainable change by creating joint strategy.

In June 2011, the Government SR approved the document: Revised National Action Plan - Decades of Inclusion of the Roma Population 2005 - 2015 for 2011, whose aim is to monitor the level of employment in disadvantaged Roma communities, taking into consideration gender aspects and regional distribution.

### **2.3 Mobilisation of the relevant partners**

Within implementation of the national project "Active Ageing Strategy", the MLSAF SR shall cooperate with relevant partners from regional municipalities, employer's associations, non-government organisations and other selected experts. Within the grant programme for supporting social inclusion of disadvantaged groups or socially excluded persons, they issued invitations for the submission of projects designed for local municipalities and organisations established by them, non-government organisations, physical entities, social partners and other authorised subject.

The 11th annual competition, Employer supporting the family, gender equality and equality of opportunity, will be judged in February 2012 and will also evaluate activities focused upon increasing the employment of older people. In 2012, these issues shall be addressed by one of the panels at the accompanying conference.

## **3. The area of social care of older people**

### **3.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

Within the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR, the issue of active ageing is closely interconnected and linked to the existence of a complex system of effective social protection of older people against the risk of poverty or their social exclusion. Generally, older people are in one of the groups most threatened by poverty (mainly material deprivation) and social exclusion since older people usually live alone or some older people receive lower pensions. Demographic changes and the economic crisis has exacerbated this situation even more. A basic tool the prevention and elimination of poverty in older people is mainly ensuring long term sustainability of the pension system and the existence of effective care systems for the elderly.

The issue of effective social protection has currently become one of the main directions of social policy which is also included within the European strategy: Europe 2020 - Strategy for ensuring smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The European Commission included the battle against poverty in the centre of its programme and its aim is, at EU level, to alleviate at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty or social exclusion within the next decade. It is a very challenging obligation due to the ongoing economic crisis.

Following the aims of Europe 2020 strategy in the area of reducing poverty, the Slovak Republic has defined a particular objective within national strategy in combating poverty and social exclusion, which is: "To alleviate at least 170,000 people from the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020". Measures prepared for achieving this aim form part of the National Programme of Reforms for 2011 - 2014. Despite the fact that the proposed measures within the given reforms programme are not exclusively and directly focused upon issues related to older people, active ageing or intergenerational solidarity, their implementation will

also greatly affect those issues and older people are an important target group within those proposed measures.

In relation to demographic ageing, the growing number of older people requiring long term care and taking into account globalisation resulting in changes in family structure and decreasing family participation in informal care, policy in this area will require amendment in the near future. Long term care or, generally, social services focusing upon vulnerable groups in society are an essential and integral part of publicly provided services and adequate political and financial support is also necessary to ensure a balance between the needs of other social protection systems. Within social services, the Slovak Republic is aware that it is necessary to create a systematic solution for their financing. Accessibility and sustainability of social services is a challenge for Slovakia as well as for many other European countries and a lack of finances also caused by the financial and economic crisis cannot be a reason for not addressing this challenge. At the same time, one of the EU 2020 targets is to ensure economic, social and local cohesion via helping the poor and socially excluded groups, and ensuring that they are able to actively participate in society. A significant tool for achieving this target is also increasing the quality, sustainability and accessibility of social services and providing a long term care system as a response to the still growing needs of people dependent upon the help of another person and, in relation to the ageing European population, it is one way of expressing intergenerational solidarity and the support of an independent life by the elderly in the community.

### **3.2 How the Government SR is supporting active ageing, policy and initiatives**

One form of social aid for older people in an unfavourable social situation in the SR is social services provided in compliance with Act No. 448/2008 coll. regarding social services. Social services mainly focus upon preventing the creation of, resolving or alleviating an unfavourable social situation of a physical person, a family or community, maintaining, renewing or developing the ability of a physical person to lead an independent life and upon supporting the inclusion of such persons in society, preventing social exclusion, and resolving crisis social situations of a physical person or family.

In order to ensure continuity and effectiveness of provided social services and, at the same time, make every effort to ensure that those reliant on assistance (including the elderly) can remain in their natural family environment and live independent lives in the community, the MLSAF SR is currently planning to commence a process of deinstitutionalisation of social services and alternate care in Slovakia. Since the success of such a process also depends upon the creation of adequate community social services, including supporting a client remaining at home with the use of information technology, the support of field and ambulatory social services is also one of the National Priorities for the Development of Social Services in SR. The material "Strategy for deinstitutionalisation of the social services and an alternate care system in the Slovak Republic" has been submitted to the Government SR for approval, and includes basic measures for the deinstitutionalisation of social services in SR, which include:

- Creating legal conditions for supporting deinstitutionalisation in social services,
- The preparation of a "National Action Plan for conversion of institutional to community care in the social services system for 2011 - 2015",
- The preparation of a "National Project for supporting the deinstitutionalisation of care services".

Deinstitutionalisation of social services, which should be implemented from 2012 to 2015 within the "National Project for supporting deinstitutionalisation of care services", should primarily be financed from structural funds - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) (synergy between the ERDF and ESF will be maintained), the SR state budget and the budgets of municipalities and local self-governments.

A newly prepared initiative in this area is the preparation of the national project "Increasing accessibility to care services via vouchers" (overall project costs of €49,300,000, period for implementation is 1.1.2012 - 31. 12. 2014). Care services in the SR are mainly used by older people and they allow them to remain in their natural family environment for as long as possible and allow them to lead an independent life in the community. Apart from increasing employment, the aim of this project shall also be to develop this social service and increase its accessibility. Within this National Project, it is assumed that a town which has the authority to provide care services shall be able to purchase a set number of vouchers from the emitent at a price of €3.90, whereas the voucher value will be €6.90 per 1 hour of care services. Subsequently, the town shall provide vouchers for inhabitants reliant upon care services, and who meet project conditions, for the price of a maximum €1.40 (or less). A citizen shall use their voucher for paying a provider who meets the conditions stated in the project. The voucher emitent shall then pay the social services provider the sum of €6.90 and the emitent shall seek a refund from the ESF.

The Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development SR joined the European Initiative, CALYPSO, focusing upon social tourism. Its aim was to allow people over 65 years to travel to European holiday destinations and, at the same time, help local economies to overcome quiet, low season periods. Within the project, completed prior to (2009 - 2010), monitoring of the social tourism situation in SR was carried out with examples of best practice and a suitable implementation mechanism for tourist exchanges between individual EU states (the study is available on the EC website).

### **3.3 Mobilisation of relevant partners**

When implementing the national project "Increasing accessibility of care services via vouchers", the MLSAF SR shall cooperate with relevant partners from local municipalities. Within the grant programme for supporting social inclusion of disadvantaged groups or socially excluded persons, they issued invitations for the submission of projects designed for local municipalities and organisations established by them, non-government organisations, physical entities, social partners and other authorised subject.

## **4. Healthy ageing**

### **4.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

Due to the growing number of elderly people, the Government SR is supporting healthy ageing, a healthy lifestyle and preventative programmes for early diagnostics and the prevention of diseases mainly suffered by those in their middle age and old age. Attention is also being paid to improving health, increasing life expectancy and improving the quality of life of the whole population via supporting health and various forms of medical intervention. In the Slovak Republic, 12.09% of inhabitants are over 65 years and the average age of inhabitants is 38.3%. The average life expectancy of inhabitants has an increasing average (see part 1.2). It can be stated that the current health of seniors is not good and in terms of

mortality and morbidity of seniors, the leading positions are still held by heart disease, malignant tumours and diabetes.

#### **4.2 How the Government SR is supporting active ageing, policy and initiatives**

State healthcare for the Slovak population is addressed in Act No. 355/2007 coll. regarding the protection, support and development of health as amended.

Within the National Programme for the prevention of cardiac and arterial diseases, the Ministry of Health SR (MH SR) is addressing priority tasks which will contribute towards improving the quality of life in old age:

- Reduction of standardised mortality by ischemic heart disease by a minimum of 5% in people under 75 years.
- Reduction in the level of smoking in the whole population by 5% and in high risk groups who have survived a heart attack, stroke, transient ischemic attack or who have diabetes or lower extremity peripheral vascular disease by 40%,
- Improvement in the detection of hypertension and decrease the number of people with hypertension by 20% against 2003 (CINDI, MONKIA projects) and simultaneous improvement in hypertension treatment.

The MH SR is preparing a National Oncology Programme whose aims are mainly implemented by population screening plans focusing upon breast cancer, bowel and rectal cancer and cervical cancer, and which will contribute in supporting the active ageing programme. They actively and continuously participate in joint activities focusing upon supporting mental health in the EU. In 2011, they planned on participating in the preparation of projects "Joint action mental health and wellbeing/DG SANCO" focused upon supporting active ageing of the Slovak population in order to improve the level of early diagnosis (detection, examination) and coordinated treatment of primary degenerative dementia.

Together with the mentioned invitation for "Joint action mental health and well-being", the Ministry of Health SR, within the National Programme for Mental Health for 2012-2013, is also planning to create space for implementation of:

Research projects focusing upon:

- Screening for psychological diseases in seniors in social care facilities,
- Screening for organic disorders in general practitioners' surgeries.

Educational activities determined for:

- General practitioners addressing psychological health issues in seniors (seminars and lectures, e.g. at regional level),
- Psychiatrists and neurologists addressing issues of early detection and differentiation diagnostics of dementia (lectures and seminars),
- Employees in social care facilities for seniors addressing mental health.

Further education for experts by:

- Active and passive participation in domestic and foreign specialist conferences with subsequent application of knowledge in the abovementioned activities.

Creating or supporting a specialised workplace in the University Hospital Bratislava, where a laboratory and instrumental diagnostics would be concentrated.

From an MH SR viewpoint, this activity is also covered by the tasks of the Public Health Authority SR within Act No. 355/2007 coll. Attention is also being paid to improving health, increasing life expectancy and improving the quality of life of the whole population via supporting health, the prevention of disease and other forms of medical intervention.

The Public Health Authority SR and regional public healthcare authorities are implementing society-wide prevention via advisory activities in advice centres for the protection and support of health, established in all 36 regional public health authorities in the Slovak Republic and via educational activities by employees in health support departments.

In terms of health, our aim is to increase older people's awareness of how to prevent diseases related to old age, how to increase their quality of life and health awareness, and to propose possible solutions for health problems. On this basis, the Public Health Authority SR is currently establishing a work group whose activities will focus upon supporting the health of senior citizens. Members of the work group will be nominated representatives of regional public healthcare authorities in the Slovak Republic, representatives from the European Year coordination department, the Alzheimer's Society, the Union of Pensioners in Slovakia and the Forum for Help the Aged.

Within European Year 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development SR is providing:

- Direction to foodstuff producers, via professional unions in which individual producers are included, towards the need to produce products nutritionally suitable for older people,
- Organisation of specialist lectures and media discussions in the electronic media with an accent upon rational nutrition for the elderly population,
- Publication of articles addressing issues about correct nutrition for older persons via appropriate columns in the daily press as well as using specialist magazines,
- Publication of information about catering rights and consumer protection rights, mainly focusing upon older citizens.

#### **4.3 Mobilisation of relevant partners**

Within European Year 2012, the Public Health Authority SR and regional departments of public healthcare in SR are planning to intensify cooperation with the Slovak Alzheimer's Society during Brain Awareness Week and with the Union of Pensioners of Slovakia on the occasion of the International Day of the Elderly. A specialist seminar (lectures) and printed leaflets focusing upon the motion activity of seniors are being planned in cooperation with the Government Office. Also prepared are updating a methodology-specialist guide for educating senior about a healthy lifestyle, called "I'm 65+ and I'm glad that I live healthily" and, via organisers of the SENIORI project, distribute dental hygiene educational materials - a leaflet called "Healthy and attractive teeth" - within the Slovak Republic.

The mentioned activities focus upon increasing general awareness of significantly active ageing, of increasing quality of life, health awareness and upon supporting the health of older people.

## **5. Lifelong learning**

### **5.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

Active ageing is part of Europe 2020 strategy and the Innovation Union initiative which Slovakia has welcomed. The possibility to use the life experience of seniors and keeping them active is a significant contribution to society's general development as well as to long term maintenance of their physical and mental health. For the mentioned reasons, it is therefore necessary to support and strengthen solidarity, mutual cooperation and cohesion between generations. One of the measures within SR innovation strategy and SR innovation policy is the area of life long education. The stated area is under the authority of the MESRS SR based on Government SR provision No. 382/2007 addressing proposed strategy for life long education and life long access to advice.

## **5.2 How the Government SR is supporting active ageing, policy and initiatives**

Education is one of the most significant activities in the life of every individual. In senior age, education is more a matter of personal interest and available means. Educational activities have several functions at this stage. Education does not only mean obtaining new knowledge but also obtaining new contacts, discovering new friendships, a feeling of satisfaction and self-fulfilment. One method of active fulfilment at this stage of life is also to study at universities and academies of the third age. These forms of education are part of life long education and give seniors a possibility for self-fulfilment and also a new addition to life after leaving an active working life. Older people have the possibility to study at 13 universities of the third age in 11 towns in Slovakia, whilst the orientation of study programmes corresponds to the profile of the university where the senior's education takes place.

Planned initiatives of the MESRS SR include an educational campaign for elderly citizens within the Week of Digital Competence 2012, initiated by the European Commission. They are preparing activities for pupils, focusing upon active ageing. Activities for pupils will focus upon cooperation with their parents and grandparents, aiming to introduce the use of information technology (mobile and internet) for communication. Activities are planned for January - April 2012.

## **5.3 Mobilisation of partners**

Since the number of older people is increasing, it is also necessary to pay attention to their secondary needs which include: the need for education, communication, social contact, the creation of new social ties as well as the feeling of social usefulness, that they are needed and self-fulfilled. In the current period, MESRS SR is preparing a draft invitation for the European Year of active ageing and solidarity between generations 2012, which shall focus directly upon seniors as the target group. Within this invitation, authorised applicants for financial subsidies from the ESF will be able to submit grant applications within the operational programme Education (priority axis 2 Further education as a tool for human resources development). The invitation will focus upon widening knowledge and skills, increasing the independence and the quality of life of older persons. At the same time, the focus should support the efforts of regional and local authorities, social partners and society to focus upon supporting active ageing and making more effort to mobilise the potential of the growing number of citizens over 50 years old.

## **6. The area of housing with local support**

### **6.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

The accessibility of citizens to decent housing, financially accessible housing and quality housing form part of the role of the state and other public subjects via legislative and economic mechanisms. State support for socially disadvantaged groups of citizens in terms of housing is addressed by adopting and applying state housing policy and is enforced in close cooperation with local municipality authorities (contributions for housing form part of social support, part 3).

## **6.2 How the Government SR is supporting active ageing, policy and initiatives**

For building public rental flats corresponding to the functional and health condition of its users, it is possible to use public resources from grants and a loan from the State Fund for Housing Development provided by the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development SR. Grants are provided to villages and municipalities in accordance with Act no. 443/2010 coll. regarding grants for housing development and social housing. Social housing is addressed in § 21 of the mentioned Act as housing procured using public resources and designed for those who cannot purchase housing themselves to have adequate and dignified accommodation. The most important activity within the Housing Development Programme is the construction of rental flats with regulated rent, designed for citizens with an income up to 3-times the minimum living wage. Municipalities may use resources for the construction of public rental housing for older persons if such construction is part of the programme for the development of municipality housing including the Housing Restoration Fund or another programme for economic and social development of the municipality. Grant applications for social housing can be submitted from 15 January to 28 February annually, to the appropriate regional building authorities in the region in which the construction of public rental housing or its reconstruction and barrier removal shall be implemented ([www.mindop.sk](http://www.mindop.sk)).

## **7. The area of culture**

### **7.1 Priorities, challenges and options**

Art and culture, which open space for creativity and a reasonable way of spending free time, significantly contribute towards a more active life for seniors. Awareness of the issues of active ageing and the inclusion of younger generations in the support of active ageing will assist with tolerance and understanding of the phenomenon of old age, and will also help to create a cohesive society functioning with generational solidarity without human individuals being threatened by poverty and loneliness.

The European Year represents a challenge for the whole area of culture and informal education within culture. An organisation acting under the authority of the Ministry of Culture SR - The National Culture Centre (NCC) focuses their attention upon education, directing and implementation of activities for active and reasonable use of free time, and senior represent a significant target group for the prepared cultural-educational activities.

Options mainly include focusing the public's attention upon the problems related to old age as well as education and preparation for senior age. NCC activities shall focus upon increasing awareness of the significance of active ageing, its survival and increasing the quality of life in senior age, as well as improving the quality of intergenerational relationships.

### **7.2 How the Government SR supports active ageing, policy and initiatives**

Within its grant programme, The Culture of Disadvantaged Groups of Inhabitants for 2012, the Ministry of Culture SR has announced cultural activities for disabled or otherwise disadvantaged groups of inhabitants. An invitation for the submission of applications focuses upon supporting the cultural activities of disabled persons or other disadvantaged groups of inhabitants, supporting equal treatment and equality of opportunities in culture as well as facilitating access by disadvantaged groups to culture, in order to conform with the cultural rights of those threatened by poverty and social inclusion, and also to support their integration into society, to support cultural activities focusing upon the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence, discrimination and xenophobia, to support tolerance and acceptance of those who are different, to strengthen social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, as well as to strengthen gender equality policy, to support the adoption of temporary equalisation measures in the area of culture and to support cultural events within the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.

This means supporting projects focusing upon supporting a living culture, publishing periodicals which contribute in creating equal opportunities in culture and which carry information about the life and culture of those with disabilities, or otherwise disadvantaged groups, as well as publishing non-periodicals - art literature, original and translated literature, specialist literature, publishing of electronic media and partial websites developing the culture of disabled persons or otherwise disadvantaged groups (see. [www.culture.gov.sk](http://www.culture.gov.sk) - Grants 2012). Grant applications may be submitted until the end of December 2012.

The NCC shall prepare methodology material for cultural-educational facilities focusing upon The European Year and the NCC website shall establish a thematically-focused column. The proportion of older people in artistic activities shall be emphasised in national competitions and exhibitions and in the some areas a 50+ category shall be introduced. The NCC will continuously report on the issues of active ageing and intergenerational solidarity in the specialist magazines, *Národná osveta* (National Education) and *Javisko* (The Stage).

### **7.3 Mobilisation of relevant partners**

The MC SR will report on the possibilities to support activities related to the European Year 2012 from the grant programme, Culture of Disadvantaged Groups of Inhabitants cooperating under the auspices of public associations developing the culture of disadvantaged groups.

The NCC shall intensify cooperation with the Union of Pensioners of Slovakia, Universities of the Third Age, Slovak Broadcast and Television, and public associations for seniors. Via methodological-advisory and educational activities, the NEC shall initiate cultural-educational activities related the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

## **8. Volunteering**

### **8.1 How the Government SR supports volunteering and intergenerational solidarity**

Within the ongoing European Year of Volunteering 2011, Act No. 406/2011 coll. regarding volunteering as amended was published on 22 November 2011 with effectiveness from 1 December 2011. The submitted draft of the Act addresses the legal position of a volunteer and legal relationships when providing services and volunteer activities by a volunteer. The Act defines a volunteer as a physical person who, of their free will, in their free time and without claiming remuneration, provides a voluntary service to another person.

At the same time, the draft Act closely limits what are not considered to be voluntary activities. It addresses the legal position of distributing organisations and their duties in relation to the volunteer. The draft Act establishes the receiver of volunteer activity who selects, usually records and prepares volunteers for the performance of volunteering activities and closes a contract with them, unless the volunteer closes a contract with the distributing organisation. A contract regarding volunteering activities may be in the form of a verbal agreement or in written form, whilst the draft Act states the duty to close a contract in written form if the volunteer is a person under 18 years or if the volunteering activities are provided abroad.

The methodology material, Volunteering in the area of Culture, was prepared within the European Year of Volunteering 2011 and its aim is to instruct employees in town and regional culture regarding cooperating with volunteers, extending the education of such employees by including new themes. ([www.nocka.sk](http://www.nocka.sk)). It states the basic characteristic of volunteering as a social phenomenon, it establishes key terms and presents methods and particular approaches for including volunteers in the activities of organisations and subjects acting in the area of culture, with aim of supporting their efforts to use the potential of volunteer activities more widely. It also includes a list of literature related to volunteering, a database of cultural non-profit making organisations who use volunteer services, and organisations dealing with recruiting, training and educating volunteers.

## **8.2 Planned initiatives and mobilisation of partners**

The European Year 2012 will follow on from the results of the European Year 2011, developing cooperation with partners who also participated in the activities of European Year 2011. Two short films, stories of volunteering which illustrate to the public how young people help the older generation will also be used during the activities of the European Year 2012 (one story will be broadcast by Slovak Television on 24 December 2011).

Appendices:

1. List of projects related to active ageing which are currently being implemented within the Regional Operational Programme
2. Activities and initiatives within the National Work Programme for the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012
3. Activities and initiatives within the National Work Programme for the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012