

INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The Republic of Armenia (abbreviated as RA) is declared a sovereign, democratic and social state governed by rule of law under its Constitution (Article 1 of Chapter 1 “Foundations of Constitutional Order”).

Article 37 (of Chapter 2 “Fundamental Human and Civil Rights and Freedoms”) states that “Everyone shall have the right to social security during old age, disability, loss of bread-winner, unemployment and other cases prescribed by law”. Furthermore, Article 48 specifies the basic tasks of the state in the social sphere:

- to protect and patronage family, motherhood and childhood;
- to contribute to employment of the population and improvement of working conditions;
- to carry out a policy of preventive care, treatment and integration of persons with disability;
- to ensure decent living standard for old persons.

The Constitution of RA has a superior legal force than other legal acts and its norms apply in principle directly. The laws and other executing legal acts of RA are accepted on the basis of the Constitution; they should not contradict the Constitution of RA.

In Armenia the general social security policy is based upon the following main principles.

- **Social assistance programs**, including family benefits, targeted at poor families focusing in particular on families with children; childbirth (lump sum) and child care benefits (for employed mothers until the child reaches two years of age);
- **Pensions (1. Labor:** 1) old age, 2) privileged, 3) long service, 4) disability, 5) survivor’s, 6) partial. **2. Social:** 1) old age, 2) disability, 3) survivor’s) and temporary incapacity benefits: paid maternity leave; temporary sick leave compensation; and funeral allowances.
- **Employment programs**, including among others unemployment benefits, training and practice of the unemployed, persons with disabilities and for other groups facing problems of integration, in the labor market.
- **Social protection programs** for the disabled, veterans and children, in particular socio-medical rehabilitation programs for the disabled, social programs for providing services to children without parental care, the elderly and the disabled and for other vulnerable groups at home and in specialized institutions,
- A **system of allowances** for separate targeted groups of the population helping them to remain integrated into society.

All social security programs in Armenia are financed from the RA Government budget and administered either by or in close cooperation with the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Issues. Until 2008 the social protection programs were financed from the RA Government budget (such as family benefits, social pensions, social care services, etc.) as well as from the State social insurance fund of RA (labour pension, temporary sickness benefits, etc.). Since January 2008, however, the compulsory social insurances have been replaced by compulsory social security payments provided by the central budget. Consequently the social security fund has been integrated into the services of the general state budget which bears the full responsibility for the collection of the finances.

Primary medical assistance in clinics is free of charge for all citizens. Persons with disability have the right for free of charge medical treatment. Persons of the first and second groups of disability receive free of charge medicine, and persons of the third group of disability pay only 50 percent of medicine cost.

The RA law "About Social Assistance" establishes types of pecuniary support, particularly state benefits, and timeframes of decision making on providing social assistance within the state programs, as well as the order of appealing against them. Accordingly, a citizen can challenge decisions (or the absence of a decision) which relate to social services to the head of the territorial body (first instance), then apply to the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues of RA and then to the Court.

Right of challenging the Decisions on Pension-Related Matters is guaranteed by the RA law "About State Pensions", according to which the decisions taken by the unit concerning pensions may be challenged in the order of hierarchy or judicial order in the same way as social assistance.