

**SECRETARIAT GENERAL**

**DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DROITS DE L'HOMME ET ETAT DE DROIT**

*SERVICE DE LA CHARTE SOCIALE EUROPÉENNE*

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

PECS(2017)7A

## **Appendix 2 – Answers to the questions on New Trends and Challenges**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>ALBANIA:</b> .....         | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>ARMENIA</b> .....          | <b>12</b> |
| <b>BELGIUM-FLANDERS</b> ..... | <b>15</b> |
| <b>BULGARIA</b> .....         | <b>19</b> |
| <b>CROATIA</b> .....          | <b>28</b> |
| <b>HUNGARY</b> .....          | <b>54</b> |
| <b>ITALY</b> .....            | <b>61</b> |
| <b>LITHUANIA</b> .....        | <b>64</b> |
| <b>MALTA</b> .....            | <b>65</b> |
| <b>PORTUGAL</b> .....         | <b>76</b> |
| <b>SWITZERLAND</b> .....      | <b>87</b> |
| <b>TURKEY</b> .....           | <b>88</b> |

## ALBANIA:

### Question 1

- 1.1. What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the targeted groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

Currently, **migratory movements** in the Republic of Albania are characterized by regular migration that is due to family reunion, study, and labour and irregular migration flows such as asylum seekers. Return migration is another type of Albanian migration. Return migration includes the group of migrants who voluntarily return and the group of migrants who have a forced return such as asylum seekers or irregular migrants returning.

For the abovementioned groups, migration policies have aimed to safeguard their social rights. There has been an increase in the number of bilateral agreements for social security that our country has signed with the countries receiving Albanian emigrants. Also, we have been developing and implementing policies related to facilitating the reintegration of the Albanian emigrants returning to the country voluntarily or with forced return.

In terms of prevention and reduction of **gender-based violence and domestic violence**, while there has been a considerable improvement of the legal framework, Albania still has to undertake a series of steps to comply with the requirements of the ratified international conventions, and to make sure there is no tolerance of violence. The positive experiences with the effective cooperation of the cross-institutional mechanisms are not reflected with the same level of effectiveness on all the municipalities, where such mechanisms are established. Lack of knowledge about the legal framework and national standards among service providers adds difficulties to the management of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Not all the service providers offer free services or translation in many languages at the national level or adopted to the specific needs of various groups – such standards must be taken into consideration both when investing to improve and further expand the existing services, and when introducing new pilot services.

The Government of Albania has continued its efforts to address gender stereotypes by combatting harmful traditions and practices that violate the rights of women and girls. Coordinated public awareness raising campaigns are organized every year involving state institutions at the central and local level, civil society organizations and international organizations. Engaging men and boys as partners and allies of women and girls in the efforts against gender-based violence and domestic violence is becoming a priority.

Continuous measures are also being taken for improving services and their standards for the victims/survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence. The positive experience with coordination among many agencies/organizations (Referral Mechanism) now applied in 29 municipalities in the country, must be further replicated, taking also into consideration and addressing the effectiveness of such mechanisms. Accommodation services are also listed as a priority: in addition to the shelters established by NGO service providers, a national state shelter is opened, but EU standards regarding the number of beds available are not yet reached. Similarly, accommodation services remain still not accessible for some women, especially women with disabilities, women with mental health problems, women addicted to various substances, elderly women, LBT women, etc., both due to infrastructural reasons, and lack of qualified staff needed for treating such women in the existing centres, etc. There is a need for establishing shelters for cases of emergencies (crisis centres), where again, the needs for all groups of women, need to be taken into consideration.

Compared to other European countries, Albania remains a young country on average, **with 24% of the population belonging to the 15-29 years age group**, with youth comprising the largest active force group in society and the largest group capable to work.

A main challenge in Albania continues to be the high unemployment rate among **youth**. Other challenges this sector include: (1) the need to reduce unemployment levels and informal employment through better labour market policies; (2) the requirement for more comprehensive packages of services and programs for the expansion of employment services and vocational training to rural areas; (3) the need to re-orient education and vocational training to meet the real needs of the labour market, combining theoretical teaching with practical work; (4) reactivation of the National Labour Council as a key tool in developing policies associated with employment salaries and social benefits; and (5) the need to remove barriers to business formation in order to reduce informality.

1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the targeted groups?

**Migration policies** of our country regarding migrants and refugees aim at:

- Maximizing benefits from regular migration;
- Guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and rights of migrants;
- The fight against illegal migration;
- Promoting voluntary return;
- Supporting the link between migration and the country's development;
- Managing immigration flows.
- Integration policies.

Some of the policy actions taken by our country to address the challenges and increase social cohesion for **the migrant group** are:

- Signing bilateral agreements on social security;
- Signing bilateral cooperation agreements with the countries hosting Albanian asylum seekers to prevent irregular migration.
- Implementing joint projects to promote regular migration.
- Strengthening structures that provide reintegration services to Albanian returners.

In term of **gender equality** we have a new strategy approved by DCM 733, date 20.10 2016 "On the adoption of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Action Plan 2016-2020"

The **vision** of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 is:

“A society which holds gender equality as prerequisite for sustainable development and aims zero tolerance towards gender-based violence and domestic violence”.

#### **Strategic goals:**

- 1: Economic empowerment of women and men.
- 2: Guaranteeing factual and equal participation of women in the politic and public decision-making.
- 3: Reduction of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- 4: Empowerment of the coordination and monitoring role of the National Gender Equality Mechanism, as well as awareness-raising of the society on gender equality advancing.

Some of the actions taken **LGBTI** rights in Albania

One of the areas of work of Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is the coordination of anti-discrimination policies for LGBTI persons. In this framework, the National Action Plan for LGBTI Persons in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 was drafted and adopted with DCM No.390, dated 25.05.2016," For an addition to DCM No. 87, dated 3.02.2016 "On the Approval of the Social Inclusion Document".

This plan is a political document of the Albanian government, in line with the objectives of the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020. It addresses key issues and major problems affecting rights of LGBTI people. The Action Plan sets out key directions in the areas of legislation and policy, safety and right protection and access to services. The drafting of the Action Plan was coordinated through an inclusive process by the MSWY with line ministries, civil society organizations and support of the Council of Europe.

**Vision:** A society that fights against all forms of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity and that guarantees equal rights, by increasing access to education, employment, healthcare, housing and full integration of LGBTI people in the society.

***Strategic goals:***

- 1.To improve the legal and institutional framework and raise awareness on non-discrimination and protection of the rights of LGBTI people in compliance with the international standards.
- 2.To eliminate all forms of discrimination against LGBTI community
- 3.To improve access to employment, education, healthcare, housing and sports services for LGBTI people by ensuring equal opportunities and rights.

The main goal of the **National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020** is: to develop and coordinate cross-sectorial youth policies in education, employment, health, culture and youth participation enhancement in social life and decision making processes.

- Pursuant to Law No. 93/2014 “Accessibility of **persons with disabilities**” dated 24.07.2014, have been approved:
  - DCM No. 48, dated 21.01.2015 "On approval of rules for the functioning of the National Council on Disability"; DCM No. 708, dated 26.8.2015 on “On categories, periodicity and reporting of statistical data for disability from state authorities in central and local level.
  - DCM no. 1074, dated 23.12.2015 “On measures for elimination of barriers in communication and infrastructure in provision of public services for Persons with Disabilities” has also been approved, paving the way to planning for accessibility.
  - Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth has newly appointed contact points for disability in the municipalities. In March 2016, in the Institute for Deaf Students and MSWY and UNDP.
  - National Action Plan for Persons with Disability 2016-2020 has been officially approved by Albanian government with DCM no. 483, dated 29.06.2016. The action plan addresses objectives, targets and measures and a monitoring framework for monitoring on a yearly basis.
  - DCM no. 248, dated 30.04.2014 "On the employment promotion program for persons with disabilities", which will be implemented in the whole country for 2016

- 1.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the targeted groups?

Some of the measures we recommend regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the migrant group are:

- Promoting bilateral cooperation agreements between the countries of origin of emigrants and their host countries with the aim of preventing irregular migration of labour;
- Fostering employment and bilateral projects to promote employment of Albanian citizens in Albania.
- Cooperation with the receiving countries on the implementation of reintegration programs (labor, education, trade, agriculture) for the emigrants returning forcibly.
- Cooperation with the receiving countries on the implementation of reintegration programs (labour, education, trade, agriculture) for the emigrants returning forcibly.
- Strengthening cooperation in the field of social integration of migrants of both countries (exchange of experiences and knowledge on policies and legislation in this area).
- Strengthening the cooperation in the field of the preservation of social rights of migrants.

## **Question 2**

2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?

- Lack of knowledge about the legal framework and national standards among service providers adds difficulties to the management of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Return migration includes the group of migrants who voluntarily return and the group of migrants who have a forced return such as asylum seekers or irregular migrants returning
- Not all the service providers for violent woman offer free services or translation in many languages at the national level or adopted to the specific needs of various groups – such standards must be taken into consideration both when investing to improve and further expand the existing services, and when introducing new pilot services
- Higher informality
- Higher number of unemployed person related to vulnerable groups

Challenges:

- Reintegration of return migrants are mainly related to finding a decent job, their re-qualification, and better working conditions. For potential migrants having more options and the legal ways for regular work migration.
- Engaging men and boys as partners and allies of women and girls in the efforts against gender-based violence and domestic violence is becoming a priority
- Establishing shelters for cases of emergencies (crisis centres), where again, the needs for all groups of women, need to be taken into consideration.
- Support the targeted groups in need for the integration in the labour market, which will bring their social integration.

2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the targeted groups?

The 2014-2020 Strategy for Employment is being implemented. The action plan of the employment strategy implements measures related to regular migration and reintegration of returnees. An action plan for preventing Albanian asylum seekers was drafted, which will include information measures to prevent irregular migration, measures against irregular migration of minors and measures for their reintegration after return.

Employment promotion programs, which are implemented, are as follows:

- Employment promotion for vulnerable groups
- On-the-job training
- Employment promotion of young graduates (bachelor or master) to 30 years old.
- Employment promotion of women heads of households with dependent children and young mothers
- Employment promotion of persons with disabilities
- Internship for young graduates
- Employment promotion for orphans• Internship for graduated.

Already operates a unique model of service delivery with three levels:

- Self-service and information on the labour market,
- Employment services,
- Employment counselling.

DCM no.64, dated 27.1.2016 "For the Youth Employment Promotion Program That Have Obtained Orphan's Status" The program aims to support the category of young people under the age of 30 who have the status of orphan and are registered as unemployed jobseekers, offering a program that combines the formation through work with the subsidies of wages and social and health insurance

In cooperation with UNHCR and line institutions, work has been done to draft the document on the Asylum System in Albania. The comments and recommendations given are in line with the discussions held in the meeting on "International Standards on the Economic and Social Rights of Persons Under International Protection and the Legal Framework Implemented in the

Country", held on March 6, 2017. This meeting was discussed the implementation of legislation in the field of integration of persons under international protection.

## **Regarding policies in gender equality & LGBTI issues refer to question 1.2**

**The Strategy for Social Protection 2015-2020**, already approved, brings forward three major reforms undertaken recently by Albanian Government; step forward in reforming Social Protection Program through the transformation of Economic Aid in an Active Scheme of Social Reintegration; revision of disability assessment system; protection and reintegration of people in need, by paying a special attention to the provision of integrated services by social work professionals.

## **Set clear objectives to establish the foundations for a consolidated and inclusive social protection system in Albania.**

The Strategy for Social Protection establishes a clear vision for how central government and local government units should work together in the field of social integrated services, by establishing social service structures and the minimal service package for every person in need, aiming to provide for individuals, when needed, and as closer to the community as possible.

The reformed **scheme of economic aid** will aim at reducing poverty (in particular extreme poverty), by ensuring benefits/payments for the persons in needs, and to the extent possible it will support individuals to come out of poverty, while providing the terrain for finding social and economic re-integration opportunities. The product for the poverty reduction policy is the transformation of the economic aid scheme, in order to target only those households stricken by poverty, and by supporting them better, to face the risks, through social protection measures, and by ensuring better living opportunities. Increasing effectiveness and transparency of the economic aid scheme, as one of the mechanisms for poverty alleviation through broader social inclusion and better targeting of households in need, and focusing on the children.

The economic aid scheme will be subject to reform and transformation through the Social Re-integration Program. A regulatory package will be introduced aiming at the transformation of the Social Assistance Program into a Program for Social Re-integration. Inclusion of economic aid beneficiaries in territorial development policies, such as: rural development, infrastructure development or utilization of forests and pastures are analysed from the point of view of generation of new employment, which in many cases require elementary skills, or short-term training. The scammers are taken out the economic aid delivery and the monthly cash assistance is increased compared to 2013, also the procedure of application is simplified and made more transparent.

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?



Some recommendations are:

- Improve the measures for the reintegration of Albanian citizens returning relating to the exercise of their rights for social and health protection.
- Bilateral agreement on social and health protection.

### **Question 3**

3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the targeted groups?

Some of the challenges that **Roma and Egyptian communities** are facing:

- The lack of the total number of Roma and Egyptian in Albania. The data from the Census of 2011 were contested from the civil society.
- The challenge that Albanian state is facing with the Roma and Egyptian communities is the identification of these two communities and makes it difficult for them to benefit from programs that are specific for these communities.
- The lack of information on the existence of different programs from Roma and Egyptian community.
- Roma and Egyptian are performing informal work such as the collection of recyclable waste.
- Poverty and living conditions affect directly the opportunities of Roma and Egyptian children to be educated because they interrupt the school to work in informal work.

### **Child rights**

- The child protection, although present as a concern for over a decade, has not been structured as a system and has not been addressed at least as a multi-sectorial programming field. The current system model, although it contains various elements, is still fragmented and problem-based.
- Inadequate monitoring of the number and frequency of cases results in a lack of information to shape the program model and to plan the services and interventions. This results in preventative elements that do not address the origin of the causes of child protection episodes.
- The child protection data needs to be digitized and put in a unique system for the right collection.
- Youth unemployment (30.4%) is high in Albania and this is characteristic of the countries in the region, while unemployment at national level is 16.9%. However the latest data (first quarter 2016) the unemployment rate for youth aged 15-29 has decreased by 3.7 percentage points compared with a year ago.
- Labour statistics between the years 2007-2016 show that labour force participation of youth is persistently lower compared to all other groups of the population. Youth labour force participation in 2016 is 46.2% compared to 65.9% of the age-group 15-64 years. The year 2013 had the lowest labour force participation of youth with 38.7%. Within youth, there are also differences between men and women. Young women consistently

have lower labour force participation rates compared to their male counterparts throughout the period 2007-2016. Actually in first quarter of 2016, female labour force participation was 38.6% compared to 52.7% for male.

**For youth**, in particular for young women, the agriculture sector is even more important for employment opportunities (for 51.1 per cent), in many instances for contributing family workers. Market services and construction together absorb 37.0 per cent of the employed male youth, whereas market and non-market services together accommodated 30.1 per cent of employed young women, particularly in administrative functions.

3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the targeted groups?

- In February 2017, has been approved the Law No.18 / 2017 "On the Rights and Protection of **the Child**", which replaces the previous legislation. It proposes system building projections at central and local level. The drafting of the law is synchronized with the drafting of National Agenda for Protection of Children's Rights 2016-2020, thus ensuring the planning of the necessary follow-up measures of approval of the law.

**The law No.18/2017 "On the Rights and Child Protection", which has been approved in the Parliament in February 2017** defines the rights that every child enjoyed and child protection through the implementation of a comprehensive legal framework, the measures to secure the child the exercise of rights based on its highest interest. At the same time in this law were forecasting the efficient mechanisms and well-functioning of responsible institutions laden with concrete measures for promotion of the respect and protection of children rights. The law provides for the first time a comprehensive system for the protection of children being redefined clearly the function of institutional mechanisms and structures of the protection of the children at central and local level, which is coordinated with the new law of social services and the new legal reality and administrative of territorial division of the country.

**Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and State Agency for Protection of Child Rights with collaboration of UNICEF too have developed the National Agenda for the Rights of the Children 2016 - 2020, DCM nr 372, date 26.04. 2017.** The document expresses the commitment of the Albanian government for the promotion, protection and realization of children's rights, including the protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. Through the implementation of this document, the Government of Albania aims to reduce violence against children, provide quality services - friendly to children and strengthen infrastructure for monitoring children's rights in Albania.

**The vision of Agenda** is to create a favourable environment for the safe and healthy growth of children, to develop the maximum physical and psychosocial potential of children, social inclusion and active participation in all areas which affect their lives, as well as guaranteeing of

the assessment of the progress of right of the children in key public policy areas related to the children.

The strategic pillars of Agenda are: (i) Governance into promoting, respecting and protecting of the right of the Children; (ii) The elimination of all forms of violence; and (iii) The child-friendly systems and services for children and adolescences into the field of the education, justice, health and social protection.

- To implement the recommendations from the “The high-level seminar on **Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian** - It’s a new challenge to the social development of Albania” organized on 20-21 February 2014, MSWY began working on drafting the National Plan of Action for the Integration of R & E for the period 2016-2020 which is in line with the Albanian government in the field of social inclusion and standards that Albania has ratified international.
- The Action Plan for integration of the R & E was developed through a holistic planning process. The guiding principles of this plan includes, among other things, an approach oriented towards human rights, minority rights, the focus of youth and gender equality etc. Lessons learned from the implementation of the National Roma Strategy and Action Plan of "Decade of Roma Inclusion", are the core of the new development of this Action Plan. Special attention was paid to harmonize the development process of this new plan with the territorial administrative reform and the decentralization of social services.
- National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians is adopted by DCM no. 1072, dated 23.12.2015.
- Based on DCM no. 1072, dated on 23/12/2015 "On the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020", MSWY issued an order Minister no. 276 dated 30.12.2016 "On the Functioning and Administration of the Integrated Online Data Management System" RomAlb "for Monitoring the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020".

#### ➤ **Youth issue**

In the past 2 years, the commitment of the Government to the employment agenda has translated into significantly more funding towards Employment Promotion Programs. For 2016 the funds are 5 times higher than 2013. The number of beneficiaries is on a steady rise since 2013.

There are different employment promotion programs, which includes the ones on youth. The focus and attention is placed on young people entering for the first time in the labour market and young graduated, recognizing the difficulty they have in finding a job in the Albanian labour market. Also the focus is given targeting Household women and girls which have children under 18 years old, to better respond to the needs posed by this social group, taking into account demographic diversity and needs. Young orphans up to 30 year old are supported by a new

employment promotion program. Youth entrepreneurship and on the job training are programs that are designed especially for youth and are on-going.

## **ARMENIA**

### **Question 1**

1.1 What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the targeted groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

The Government of RA has initiated large-scale reforms in the above-mentioned spheres. One of the main goals of the reforms is to bring the national legislation into compliance with the international standards, particularly with international obligations taken by Armenia, including the Revised European Social Charter. The conclusions of European Committee of Social Rights are always taken into account in the context of all new legislative changes. The major challenges that RA experiences in the process of assuring social rights for the mentioned groups is the increasing number of services and public programs assisting them and in parallel with this improving and assuring existence of appropriate laws and legal basis as well European Social Charter.

1.2 What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the targeted groups?

Some of the reforms are as follows:

- Reform on the Integrated Social Services
- New methodology of case management
- Development of social support network
- Capacity development of social workers: continuous education, crediting mechanism
- Full transfer from the passive to active state employment policy and programs
- Improving assessment methodology of the family poverty
- Implementation of new model of child care by developing public foster homes care passports for each type of service for each vulnerable child, and also some services of care will be delegated to outsourced organizations by ensuring that latter is complies with pre-defined care standards
- Implementation of new Employment IS which will include online electronic job exchange module for job seekers and employees. This module will allow to find the best matching job for job seeker and best employee for employer. Besides the job seekers and employers will be guided in the process of engagement in public employment programs

- Development of new monitoring and evaluation methodology in harmony with all the above mentioned reforms which will ensure high quality of provided services,
- Integration of social protection information systems into one unified system with single database

1.3 What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the targeted groups?

***Cross border open innovations on social protection:*** One of the possible innovations regarding the policy measures of the Committee of Ministers can be the program on exchange of social workers and policy makers between member and associate countries. This can bring to a unique possibility to multiple the effect of new tactical and strategic policy measures as well as business processes between countries.

***Universal model on practical provision of social protection:*** Developing and adopting practical guide to the universal social protection model which can be a good tool for each country. The guide can include practical solutions on the policy and service provision of mentioned groups.

***PECS Live Platform:*** Development of international social assistance platform (based on PECS) where live consultants will answer to various practical questions and will give case solutions for member countries.

## **Question 2**

2.1 Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?

Over the past 26 years (since the collapse of the USSR), Armenia became an independent nation, the country has made major strides toward achieving political and economic reforms as well as in social protection and health. Despite achieved solutions and development, number of challenges still lie ahead, particularly in demography and labour market. The trend of young population has decreasing nature during the last 3 years which is the result of high level of migration of youth. This challenge is particularly restrained as based on various estimations more than 70% of youth in out migration are students in various European and US universities. Finally, most of them come back to Armenia and bring new and innovative knowledge to the labour market especially.

There is no particular challenge following the economic crisis currently and the most visible challenge can be low rates of economic development. From the other side current economic development corresponds to the government plantings and estimations.

2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the targeted groups?

In general the policy of government is directed also to keep macroeconomic indicators stable and to promote economy development.

State programs implemented by the Ministry of Sport and Youth related to young people are dedicated to the trainings, awareness rising and the provision of business loans.

The purpose of the state employment policy by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is to ensure internationally accepted standards and consistent enforcement of conditions of decent work, as well as assistance programs for non-competitive people in the labour market and ensuring effective involvement in the labour market of potential beneficiaries, which should be considered as one of the main conditions easing absence of social tensions in the country.

There are more than 80 other state programs implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the field of social protection in Armenia related to elderly, youth, children and other vulnerable groups.

All mentioned policy actions can lead to the mitigation of challenges from the economic crisis

2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?

Please refer to 1.3.

### **Question 3**

3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the targeted groups?

Currently Armenia is developing new method on poverty evaluation, which will bring to more targeted identification of poor people within mentioned groups and the assistance to the potential beneficiaries will be more targeted.

The main challenge can be migration. In Armenia, there is no challenge of hunger, violent radicalization etc.

3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the targeted groups?

As country which faces socio-economic challenges, the Government of the Republic Armenian is working continually to reduce the poverty.

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Republic of Armenia elaborates and implements the policies in the labour market and social assistance. As mentioned above MLSA is taking practical steps for the precise poverty assessment which is following to more targeted poverty

reduction. of the new poverty assessment system, has been updated with modern tools and regression models to make the targeted assistance to vulnerable groups more diversified. State policy on reduction of the poverty in Armenia has being implemented by multiple ministries based on the adopted legal document, strategies and programs of the Government of RA. Particular policy measures are also minimum wage increase, pensions increase, etc.

- 3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the targeted groups?  
Please refer to 1.3.

## **BELGIUM-FLANDERS**

### **Question 1 (for youth)**

- 1.1 What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the targeted groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

Challenges:

- Growing demand for social and mental help for children young people
- Increasing number of children in migration – a.o. unaccompanied minor refugees
- Poverty
- Radicalisation
- Digitalisation

Trends

- Inclusive policy
- De-institutionalisation of (youth) care
- Self-determination of (social?) assistance (cfr pvf)
- More demand oriented care, instead of supply oriented care
- Care that is based on community building and strengthening networks around people

- 1.2 What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the targeted groups?

Elevation of financial means and investments in youth care, increasing collaboration between different actors in youth care

- o More demand oriented care, with early access to youth care (a.o. online assistance)
- o To reduce ‘waiting lists’:
  - more investment in supply
  - more collaboration between different actors so that a child that is waiting for help, yet receives some kind of help during this ‘waiting time’

- Early detection and – intervention of mental problems by young people
- A better collaboration between youth care and specialised mental health care
- ...

Reform of the child benefit

Increased places for residential supply of unaccompanied minor refugees/asylum seekers and growing amount of family foster places for these young people. Also the general youth care makes efforts to accompany these people, and offers special mental guiding (mental trauma, mental injuries) to refugees and children/young people in migration.

### **Question 2 (for youth)**

2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the targeted groups?

Introduction of a new system of child benefit (called as a ‘growing package for every family and every child’):

- A base amount: the same amount for every child, without conditions
- Social supplement and supplement for special care, with attention for family size: for children with special needs, children in foster care, children growing up in families with low income ...
- Supplement for participation: general supplement which increases for growing up children, supplement to stimulate early school participation (from 3 years)

The new system will be introduced on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. Study shows this system would decrease the risk of poverty with 1 percent.

- A new concept of flexible day care and investments to increase the accessibility of day care (reduce inequalities):
  - The elevation of number of crèches where the cost for parents depends on their income.
  - Crèches which pay greater effort to reach vulnerable families, get more subsidies.
  - Quality standards for day care

The development of the ‘Huizen van het Kind’ (House of the Child) to basic services in every community/town. These ‘Houses of the Child’ are broad local networks of actors which can support (vulnerable) families with children, and young people in different aspects of family life and can lead to a more integrated and integral help supply.

### **Question 3**

3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the targeted groups?

The figures with regard to poverty in the region of Flanders remain stable for both poverty and social exclusion. However, in EU-SILC 2015 it can be established that the figures (15 % persons



in poverty or social inclusion) are better than the three previous years. Flanders continues to perform very well in comparison to other EU member states.

3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the targeted groups?

The implementation of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2015-2019 is in full progress. This action plan is focused on families with young children. Local authorities, for example, are further subsidised and supported in realising a local child poverty reduction policy. The aim is to distil concrete policy recommendations for local authorities and the Flemish authorities into a more efficient and effective local (child) poverty reduction policy.

In addition, the Government of Flanders also continues to promote the provision of accessible and qualitative services. A working group is addressing this theme and is working on a screening instrument that may help civil servants (engaged in poverty), besides other methods, to examine the accessibility of initiatives. The integration of the services of municipal authorities and OCMWs at the local level will also lead to more accessible services. Another action pertains to the Children's Centres (Huizen van het Kind/HvK) which are intended to offer fully-fledged basic services and where plenty of partners, like childcare, parenting support, education, leisure time actors, etc. are brought together at the local level. In early 2017, 135 Children's Centres were recognised with an operating area of 191 municipalities and the Brussels-Capital Region, which means that more than 70% of the children live in a municipality with a Children's Centre.

The Government of Flanders also continues to concentrate on health promotion. Within the framework of a new organisation model and the organisation of primary health care a content-related framework was proposed at the primary healthcare conference, which focuses on cooperation between healthcare and welfare actors at all levels of governance and operation. This policy framework will be translated into an action plan in 2017. The Government of Flanders also promotes access to sufficient healthy food. Focus is placed on the redistribution of qualitative and healthy food surpluses to the most vulnerable in our society. The roll-out and evaluation of €1 meals projects for children up to 12 years of age also tie in with this framework. In order to allow people with a migrant background to participate in society in a fully-fledged manner, living labs for 'central guidance for newcomers from third countries aged 16 to 18' were started. The living labs for 'customised civic integration for low-literate women with young children' are currently running as well. In the implementation of these living labs attention is paid to the integrated work that is done with regard to social orientation, NT2, parenting support and childcare. In these projects the main emphasis is on providing Dutch language lessons in a low-threshold provision, helping mothers in the care and upbringing of their children and improving the development opportunities of children.

For many households having sufficient disposable funds is of decisive importance for what is possible and what is not. To tackle poverty through the activation to work, integrated and strong cooperation is required. Jobseekers are also provided with tailor-made services by the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) within the framework of the comprehensive customised approach. After each interview with a jobseeker a mediator assesses whether he/she is in need of further personalised services. Signs of poverty are one of the points to consider during the assessment. Target group employees within the social economy receive

the support they need to continue to work on their professional development. Moreover, employers who recruit a long-term jobseeker receive a premium since 2017. This premium is allocated in two instalments and is intended for both the recruitment and the sustainable employment of these jobseekers. On the other hand, Flanders invests in cost-reduction measures which increase the disposable income of households with young children (e.g. income-based childcare, growth package, rent premium and rent subsidy). It is important that rights are automatically granted whenever possible or that accompanying measures (e.g. administrative simplification and proactive service provision) are taken to allow people to easily avail themselves of their rights. In the school year 2015-2016 a record number of 116,000 dossiers for school and study allowances were automatically initiated through the so-called safety net mechanism. Within the boundaries of current and future regulations social corrections are used in the different policy areas for specific socially vulnerable target groups. The terms and criteria, which differ between regulations for the specification of these target groups, will be reviewed. The final purpose of this review is not to achieve a uniform description of the target group for social corrections, but to reach, through a joint vision, a well-considered and concerted choice for the specification of this target group in the specific policy measures in the different policy areas. For this reason, the Government of Flanders established the Social Corrections working group in early 2016 to implement this.

The Government of Flanders adopted the Energy Poverty Programme in 2016 which is founded on two pillars, viz. social protection and energy saving. Regulatory work was carried out to prepare the implementation of the selected measures. The legal basis for the introduction of social programmes for cavity wall insulation and high efficiency glazing is included in the amendment Order that updates the premium system, among other things. In 2017, the implementation of an integrated set of instruments is envisaged for adopting a structural approach to energy poverty.

The Government of Flanders also promotes quality housing. The rent guarantee fund, the rent subsidy, the rent premium, the guaranteed housing insurance and the social loan scheme are measures which people in poverty can apply for. In 2016, the ad hoc study for the preparation of a new rent subsidy scheme was started by the Policy Research Centre for Housing. In 2017, a harmonised Order on rent allowances will be aimed at.

An initial evaluation of the recognition Order of social letting agencies (Sociale Verhuurkantoren/SVK) was started to examine whether the new provisions effectively support and encourage SVKs to extend their housing provision, without this being detrimental to the quality of the services provided to tenants and prospective tenants. In a short-term amendment of the SVK Order an extra budget of €8.7 million is earmarked for the sector. This will reinforce the own capital of SVKs, since the additional funds serve as a buffer against rent arrears and rental damage. Furthermore, the rate of payment of the subsidy instalments to SVKs was optimised. In 2017, the regulatory framework will be further adjusted on the basis of the evaluation results.

On the other hand, the private rental market has been subject to a scrutiny process as well. On 15 July 2016, the Government of Flanders adopted a concept paper on private renting, outlining its vision on the private rental market. Housing rental law is an essential component of this paper, next to measures for improving access to the private rental market. Within this framework a new rent guarantee scheme is being developed, i.e. the rent guarantee loan. The concept paper also envisages the development of an action plan 'Flemish anti-discrimination policy on the private

rental market', which pools all the initiatives and measures taken to give shape to the anti-discrimination policy. Apart from the structural approach for quality housing, the Government of Flanders also concentrated on the prevention of evictions in the private rental market through (accompanying) guidance. This policy measure is intended to respond more quickly in case of imminent evictions. This highly preventative measure and other measures were included in a global plan on homelessness 2017-2019 that was drawn up in late 2016. This plan is used to address this complex issue in an integrated manner.

To achieve a sustainable approach to poverty, it is crucial for society, organisations and policymakers to have a nuanced perception of poverty and the impact of living in poverty. In this field initiatives are taken across the policy areas.

Emphasis is also placed on the inside of poverty. One of the methodologies under consideration to fight poverty is to enhance and strengthen the informal personal network of vulnerable individuals and families To flesh out this objective in a sustainable and effective manner, scientific research was started.

3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the targeted groups?

The Groups mentioned in the questions are:

- A. Migrants and refugees,
- B. Youth and children,
- C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly

In general, there are two main priorities in the Flemish policy against poverty. The first aim is to ensure that families are able to provide in their own needs. The main instrument here is to support people in obtaining a job. The second aim is the need to make a policy shift from curing poverty to preventing poverty. Examples in Flanders are a focus on energy efficiency to prevent energy poverty, early guidance for people with housing problems to prevent them from becoming homeless, giving incentives for early subscriptions in schools to stimulate children's development as soon as possible... A focus on early childhood education and care services is important to break poverty that is being transmitted through generations.

## **BULGARIA**

### **Question 1**

1.1. What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the targeted groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

## **A. Migrants and refugees**

### Challenges

The Republic of Bulgaria is an EU external border and works for the implementation of the long-term common policy for security of the European borders, **combating illegal migration, smuggling and trafficking.**

There are four reception centres in Bulgaria with a total capacity of 5 130 places (Banya 70; Pastrogor 320; Harmanli 2 710 and three shelters in Sofia - Ovcha Kupel 860; Vrazhdebna 370; and Voenna Rampa 800).

## **B. Youth and children**

The challenges for the youth can be resumed in :

- Reducing school drop out
- Reaching the invisible NEET and proposing them a tailor-made solution
- Facing the the youth unemployment

## **C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly**

### Challenges

#### **Roma communities**

Housing and unemployment remain among the main challenges to be addressed. The early school dropout is also a major problem for Roma children.

#### **Retired persons**

Retired persons were the most hit during the whole transition period starting in 1989 to date. Their vulnerability is mostly economical but there are also other aspects, as access to health care, the access to goods and services, the access to independent living.

#### **Disabled persons**

Based on the challenges faced our country makes an effort to gradually implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Our key policy priorities identified for the period 2016 - 2020 are:

- Providing access to the living environment through transportation and transportation services, information and communications
- Ensuring equal access to inclusive education at all levels and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Ensuring effective access to quality health services
- Providing conditions for employment of people with disabilities.
- Providing adequate support for living in the community;
- Providing access to sport, recreation, tourism and participation in cultural life.

### **Gender gaps**

Despite the existing provisions on equal treatment and gender equality in separate laws, we have not yet created conditions for achieving de facto equality between women and men in all spheres

of public and private life. The new Gender Equality Act is a strong and sustainable management tool to introduce a gender perspective in all sectoral policies, coupled with the application of special measures (temporary incentives) if necessary. Such measures will be included in the biannual plans for implementation of the Strategy for gender equality, according to current gaps identified.

1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the targeted groups?

### **A. Migrants and refugees**

The 2015-2016 Action plan to implement the National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020 foresees

- Provision of services for social, medical and psychological assistance to vulnerable persons granted international protection, in the period of initial integration.
- Provision of care to unattended minor and underage children granted international protection – provision of legal aid and consultations as well as specialised intercultural training of the people working with them.
- Provision of care to unattended minor and underage children seeking and granted international protection, placed in the territorial units of the State Agency for Refugees, including Bulgarian language courses and provision of translation and interpreting.
- 3-month Bulgarian language course for children granted protection and for children who are third-country nationals and reside legally in the country, with a view to determine their grade in the mainstream schools

### **B. Youth and children**

Bulgaria implements a National Strategy to promote and to improve the literacy (2014 – 2020). The Youth Guarantee and Youth employment initiative are the long-term policy instruments for intervention.

### **C. Roma**

The 2015-2016 Action plan to implement the National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020 set up a

**Priority No. 1** Providing employment opportunities and increasing labour income through active involvement in the labour market

Measure: Improving the employability of unemployed persons by providing training courses leading to qualifications

**Priority No. 2** Ensuring equal access to quality pre-school and school education

**Priority No. 3** Providing equal and effective access to quality healthcare

**Priority No. 4** Removing the institutional model of care and development of intersectoral services for social inclusion

Measure: Provision of sustainable, quality and affordable community-based social services corresponding to the individual needs of the users

**Priority No. 5** Ensuring sustainability and adequacy of social transfers

Measure: Provision of financial support for disadvantaged individuals and families

**Priority No. 6** Improving capacity and cooperation in education, health, employment and social services in realisation of common objectives for social inclusion policies and services

**Priority No. 7** Providing accessible environment –physical, institutional, informational

Measure: Ensuring physical access to public buildings, homes, open-air areas, etc.

**Priority No. 8** Improving living conditions of vulnerable groups and support of homeless people

**Priority No. 9** Working in partnership to tackle poverty and social exclusion and their consequences

Measure: Improving the information support of the policy for combating poverty and social exclusion in terms of their causes, dimensions and manifestations

1.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the targeted groups?

The four International Youth centres set up in Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Dobrich and Vratza should be used at their full potential. The Stara Zagora International Youth Centre has been awarded a quality label by the CoE for its leading role as a model for working with young people and young people at risk. It is part of the National and European Network of Youth Centres. The quality label enables the centre to participate in projects, exchange of information and good practices, as well as team trainings.

The four International Youth centres can also be used as leading units for the field implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers regarding young people's access to rights, i. e. Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on young people's access to rights, the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, etc.

In the Strategy for reducing the school dropout (2013-2020), early school leaving is defined as a complex phenomenon that seriously affects the destinies of the pupils directly affected and the well-being of their families, the possible development of their communities, and on the overall socio-economic development of a country in the medium and long term.

Prevention and resolution of the problem requires an integrated policy and commitment of all sectors and institutions related to education and the personal and professional development of children and young people in Bulgaria.

One of the factors leading to the school drop-out is the school bullying. This problem required to introduce a joint mechanism that aims to help schools in their efforts to cope with this phenomenon. The prevention of this phenomenon should also be flagged as an important challenge for the CoE Member states.

## **Question 2**

2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?

Poverty and social exclusion are complex phenomena that manifest in different ways. They concern not only people's income and material situation but also their opportunities to participate actively in society.

The problem with poverty and social exclusion has become particularly sensitive in the context of the on-going global financial and economic crisis and the consequences from it: job cuts, rise of unemployment, lower labour quality, etc. In such circumstances it is the most vulnerable groups of the population that pay the highest social price. During the crisis, the issue about the necessity to apply measures which would significantly limit the spread of poverty and social exclusion has become more prominent. A complex and integrated approach is needed, particularly with regard to the vulnerable groups. It will contribute in the long term to overcoming their social exclusion and will put an end to the transmission of poverty across generations.

The national policy documents in the field are:

- The National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020
- The 2015-2016 Action plan to implement the National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020 sets up its operational framework
- The National life-long learning strategy for the period 2014 -2020

### **A. Migrants and refugees**

The National strategy on migration, asylum and integration goals formation of effective and uniform national policy on the management of migration processes synchronized with the migration policy of the European Union (EU).

The basis of this document is the understanding of the phenomenon of migration as a source of labour needed for the national economy, as well as a potential threat to the security of the country.

### **B. Youth and children**

A National Strategy for reducing the school dropout (2013 – 2020) is being implemented.

The National plan 2016 - 2017 for the implementation of the National Strategy for reducing the school dropout (2013 – 2020) sets up the operational framework in line with the targets set up in National Action Plan for Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## **C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly**

### **Measure: Provision of employment to vulnerable groups in the labour market**

#### **Roma people**

- The National Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (2015 -2020)
- National plan (2015 -2020) for the implementation of the National Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (2015 -2020)
- National framework programme for Roma integration in the Bulgarian society 2010 - 2020

The National Strategy for Roma Integration (2012-2020)

The Government approved the 2016 Administrative monitoring report on the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration (2012-2020) and the municipalities' Action plans for the last year.

The report reflects the successful practices and the remaining outstanding issues and challenges facing our society. In the field of education, the introduction of the standard for civic, health, environmental and intercultural education for the first time in the Bulgarian school, which defines the nature and objectives of the civil, health, environmental and intercultural education (FEAE); The inclusion of intercultural education in the first high school stage at class time, as well as within the framework of the whole-day organization of school day and pre-school education; Not allowing children and pupils to be separated into groups and classes on the basis of their ethnicity. Progress in the field of education is also taken into account in connection with the introduction of a whole-day organization of the school day for students from grades I to VII; Ensuring the right to equal access to quality education for children and pupils from small settlements, including through the integration of Roma children and students into ethnically mixed kindergartens and schools.

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the targeted groups?

The CM could suggest the use of uniform indicators to the Members states, i. e. the European Community general indicators for monitoring of the countries' progress in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

### **Question 3**

- 3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the targeted groups?

According to the last recommendations given to Bulgaria by the European Commission, Bulgaria is dealing as a priority with invisible NEET under the Youth guarantee programme and the Youth employment initiative.



- 3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the targeted groups?

## **B. Youth and children**

The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria provides that every young person aged 15 to 29 years receives a quality employment proposal: work, continuing education, apprenticeship or training within four months after losing his or her job or leaving the formal education system.

With a view of insufficient vacancies, quality job offer is defined against the following criteria: to be consistent with the education / training of the young man; to be suitable for his/her health; to be tailored to the individual profile of a young man; to offer sustainable employment; to meet the requirements for safe and healthy working conditions; to allow the individual development of the young.

The National Youth Guarantee of Bulgaria is being implemented in stages. Youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) are not registered in the labour offices are informed about the possible services that can be used after registration at Labour offices, within one month of receipt of their individual data and mailing address in the institution or organization that will carry out their activation. This makes possible several "paths" for activation and integration in the labour market, according to their individual profile and discretion: (1) guidance to local schools and / or RIE to return to the education system; (2) directing the local Directorate Labour for the registration and use of the provided services there for employment, internship, apprenticeship and training; (3) targeting organized job fairs, local associations cooperation, educational fairs and other informal forms of support for job search or inclusion in education; (4) targeting private employment agencies and businesses for temporary employment as an opportunity to implement labour market without the mediation of public service employment and the use of information technology, to search for vacancies and to prepare application documents and electronic applications.

In this process the Employment agency cooperates with the NGOs working on the Roma integration, for better contact and mediation with the community.

The implementation of the National Youth Guarantee was launched in January 2014 with measures and programs funded by the state budget. In 2014 launching of schemes aimed at young people took place, funded by the ESF, incl. under the Youth Employment Initiative.

In 2016, 37 cooperation agreements between higher education institutions and schools and PES were signed. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) plays an important role in the implementation of measures and Reforms to ensure access and quality of education and training, prevention of early school leaving and the return of young people to school.

In 2017, 36 Youth Advisory and Information Centres will open their doors. Some of the Activities planned by the Ministry of Youth and Sport project is to provide Comprehensive services for young people aged 15 - 29, including direct services Youth unemployment and the activation of young people to enter the labour market. The work desks have taken steps to sensitize unregistered young NEETs, By organizing job fairs and working locally with young people and with

The Roma mediators. The results are still limited. Young NEETs enrolled in BT Benefit from individual action plans. The TB is in contact with schools and Universities to identify young people at risk of dropping out of school and to support Transition towards the employment of young graduates.

- The National programme for prevention and protection against domestic violence
- 
- The National Programme for prevention and fighting against trafficking in human beings.

The national specifics require a tailored response, so the national legal framework encompasses different areas of life and is enshrined into:

A. The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, prom., SG. 56/13 Jul 1991

- The Labour Code
- The Social Security Code
- The Penal Code
- The Law Prohibiting trafficking in Human beings
- The Protection against domestic violence Act
- The Protection against discrimination act
- The National Ombudsman Act
- The National education Act
- The Gender Equality Act

Despite the existing provisions on equal treatment and gender equality in separate laws, we have not yet created conditions for achieving de facto equality between women and men in all spheres of public and private life. The new Gender Equality Act is a strong and sustainable management tool to introduce a gender perspective in all sectoral policies, coupled with the application of special measures (temporary incentives) if necessary. Such measures will be included in the biannual plans for implementation of the Strategy for gender equality, according to current gaps.

On 21 April 2016 Bulgaria signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. A report containing a gap analysis of Bulgarian criminal legislation against the Istanbul Convention has become available. It is one of the outcomes of the project "Improvement of the national legal framework to bring it in line with Council of Europe standards and strengthening the capacity of competent institutions involved in case of gender-based violence including domestic violence". The project is implemented jointly by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Justice of Bulgaria in the framework of Programme BG12 "Domestic and Gender-based Violence" funded by the Norway Grants.

The Ministry of labour and social policy implements a project financed under the HRDOP focused on the strengthening of the existing social services provided for the victims of VAW in order to set them up in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention of the CoE and to prepare its ratification. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is the Program Manager of the BG06 Program "Children and Youth at Risk", co-funded by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014, with a total financial resource of EUR 10 153 074. The program is administered by the Directorate General "Structural Funds and International Educational Programs" of the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with the Council of Europe.

#### **A. Youth and Children**

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is the Program coordinator of the BG06 Program "Children and Youth at Risk", co-funded by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009- 2014, with a total financial resource of EUR 10 153 074. The program is administered by the Directorate General "Structural Funds and International Educational Programs" of the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with the Council of Europe. The first International Youth Centre for Work with Children and Young People at Risk was implemented by the Municipality of Stara Zagora under a project worth BGN 2.7 million funded through the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, with the support of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the targeted groups?

The national policy documents in the field are:

- The National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020
- The 2015-2016 Action plan to implement the National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2020 sets up its operational framework.

3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the targeted groups?

The Groups mentioned in the questions are:

**A. Migrants and refugees,**

**B. Youth and children,**

**C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly**

Easier access to housing should be provided for low-income households by increasing the number of residential buildings constructed with non-economic purpose and by introducing a new subsidizing system and a specialized system for savings and loan-granting for housing.

The accessible use of information and communication technologies is an important factor promoting

social inclusion. Providing access to information and communication is a serious problem which requires

measures targeted at introducing regulatory minimum requirements for supply of information by public institutions in an accessible format; improving computer literacy, skills and regular use of INTERNET by representatives of vulnerable groups;

CoE members states should be regularly encouraged to improve their national legislation and institutional and services frameworks in line with the Istanbul convention of the CoE. Countries that have not yet ratified the Convention should be supported to prepare for ratification.

The *business case for diversity* good practices as migrants' start-ups and women's start-ups should be encouraged at national level through adequate actions.

## CROATIA

### Question 1

1.1. What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

#### **Field of employment, and career guidance**

Positive trends have been detected in the area of employment, regarding inclusion of unemployed persons to the labour market; such trends could be attributed to the economic recovery, but also to systematic support to the unemployed and services tailored to the needs of beneficiaries.

#### **Group 1**

Article 14 of the Act on Employment Mediation and Unemployment Rights (Official Gazette 153/13, 16/17) governs registration of asylum seekers and aliens under subsidiary or temporary protection with the Croatian Employment Service (CES). The CES is continuously conducting activities aimed at informing aliens about the rights and obligations within the area of employment, in sense of employment preparations.

In 2017, refugees registered at the Unemployed Registry will be able to participate in active labour market measure policies, the employment benefit in particular (co-financing of partial salary costs for persons employed in the private sector), trainings (enrolment in training programs for occupations wanted in the local labour market) and public works (short-term

employment in jobs beneficial to communities – community services, social services, cultural or educational services).

By the end of 2016, there were 75 asylees registered with the Unemployed Registry.

## **Group 2**

Young person in the Republic of Croatia are considered to be between 15 to 29 years of age. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of young persons registered as unemployed varied. The highest number of unemployed in this Group was registered in 2013, with 113,200 registered on average during the entire year, whereas the lowest number was recorded in 2016, on average, registered 68,541 young persons.

## **Group 3**

Other vulnerable groups are also part of activities aimed at raising employability and employment. In particular, such groups are persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed persons, Roma national minority and elderly persons.

In handling long-term unemployed persons, the CES guides itself with the Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01).

By the end of 2016, the share of long-term unemployed persons in total registered unemployment amounted to 49.4%. Compared to 2015, the number of long-term unemployed decreased by 21,992; however, the share of long-term unemployed did not change. The reason, as we believe, is that most of the long-term unemployed are persons over 50 years of age; their share in the total number of registered long-term unemployed persons amounts to 45%.

Based on the 2011 Population Census, Croatia had 16,975 persons of Roma national minority or 0.39% of the total population. Since the CES does not monitor unemployed persons by their ethnic background, the estimates on unemployed Roma persons are based on beneficiaries' statements, knowledge of the Romani language, and the exercise of rights set in the National Roma Minority Programme. The fact that Roma minority persons declare themselves differently also presents a significant obstacle in setting up the database of unemployed Roma persons. For that reason, the CES is continuously collecting data required to determine accurate figures on unemployed Roma persons and subsequently updating its databases.

Estimates are that 4,777 Roma persons were registered by the end of December 2016, or 2% of the total unemployment in Croatia. Based on the CES Registry, during 2016, 566 Roma persons were employed in the open labour market, which is an increase for 29.5%, compared to 399 Roma persons employed in 2015.

Professional rehabilitation is a set of activities implemented in order to support persons with disabilities in work while maintaining their remaining general and work abilities. Since professional rehabilitation is often a prerequisite for the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market, special circumstances or self-employment, one of significant challenges, and simultaneously one of the inter-departmental priorities, is development of a systematic, quality model of professional rehabilitation. Implementation of the new Act on

Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette 157/13, 152/14) is certainly contributing such outcomes; following a three-year period of implementation, this Act was subject of necessary amendments in 2017. The common objective of these services, aimed at persons with disabilities, is to facilitate their integration into the labour market and society as a whole, to increase employability and enhance competencies, to facilitate career guidance and transition from education to the labour market.

In recent years, Croatia has been investing substantial resources in development and establishment of a lifelong career guidance system for different target groups, in particular focusing on vulnerable groups and young persons. Development and introduction of new technologies and tools for professional information and counselling is also in focus. Professional career guidance is becoming increasingly accessible to different target groups, through introduction of new self-help methods, internet pages and new tools.

In order to strengthen coordination between institutions in the field of lifelong career guidance, we should mention activities in relation to formation of the Lifelong career guidance and career development Forum. The Forum brings together all relevant stakeholders in the field of education, employment and social inclusion. Its fundamental role is to coordinate government bodies, public institutions and stakeholders in the field of labour and employment, to promote of lifelong career guidance as well as to give guidelines for developing strategies and plans in this field. The Forum was established in 2014; Forum's working group jointly developed the National Strategy for Lifelong Career Orientation and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia until 2020; the Government of Croatia adopted the Strategy in 2016.

Based on the Strategy, one of areas that will require intensive work in the coming period would be the professional guidance system in the education system (elementary and secondary education).

Lifelong professional guidance is increasingly evolving in systems where no major relevant activities have been undertaken so far - especially in higher education. By establishing new career guidance centres at universities, career guidance and career development services have become more accessible to students in need of support in enrolling the world of work, but also in changing career paths and career development.

Furthermore, in order to respond to the needs of children-asylum seekers, so as to integrate them into the education system, in 2016 the CES have started drafting a protocol for cooperation and preparatory activities for inclusion of children/seekers of international protection in secondary education. The protocol has been drafted in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Education and the Office for Education, Culture and Sport of the City of Zagreb. The Professional Guidance Service at the CES has provided children/international protection seekers with professional support in selection of high school programs through professional counselling.

Pursuant to the GoC Regulation on monitoring, analysis and projection of labour market requirements for selected vocations, drafting and assessing recommendations on education enrolment policy (OG, 93/10), the CES carries out continuous analyses and projections in relation to labour market requirements for selected vocations. Recommendations for education enrolment and scholarship policies are drafted annually, based on projections for selected

vocations. Recommendations in this document are given in a way that increase or decrease is proposed for quota of pupils and students enrolled in particular education programmes. The aim of proposed recommendations is to reduce disproportion between education and labour markets and prevent social exclusion caused by inadequate choice of vocation or education, or education in non-competitive occupations.

Also, in order to promote scarce occupations and encourage students to enrol in programs wanted in labour market, the CES annually publishes a list of scarce occupations. Pupils and students, should they enrol in such vocations, may achieve certain benefits in some institutions (additional credits for student accommodation, scholarships etc.).

### **Field of youth**

Over the last few years, young people in the Republic of Croatia have been facing the problem of integration into society, which is a consequence of the economic crisis, lack of jobs, total decrease in the number of employees, employment insecurity, resulting in a high unemployment rate among young people. In addition to the statistical indicators, the young people themselves have expressed on several occasions (results of the research "Needs, Potentials and Problems of Young People in Croatia, Consultations within the Structured Dialogue, etc.) that unemployment is one of the major problems they face. Youth unemployment directly affects the ability to become independent, plan the future, build certain skills and abilities and enrich education. It also affects family planning and housing solutions. Constant worrying while trying to meet essential needs with modest or no financial resources, reduces or completely excludes social, political, cultural and other activities. One of the key elements for preventing the emergence of new categories, as well as the reduction of the number of young people at risk of poverty and socially excluded young people, is to ensure quality and available youth services and to provide incentives for higher education and lifelong learning, as well as providing quality and available social services for all citizens (social care, healthcare, education). The number of young people at risk of social exclusion require high level of involvement of different support systems for young people. Centres for social welfare play a key role when it comes to young people at risk of social exclusion, considering the official authority of the providers of preventive services and family support services. The same also represents a major challenge for the Centres because of the inadequate capacity to respond to this problem. Consequently, civil society organizations have emerged as important providers of preventive services and support services for young people at risk of social exclusion. Above all, it is important to recognize the role of youth organizations and local youth work which significantly contributes to the development of skills and increases employability of young people, especially those who are furthest from the labour market. In the Republic of Croatia, work with young people has a long tradition through the work of numerous youth organizations and through the involvement of social workers and experts of related professions. However, work with young people has not been recognized nor is there a strategic approach to its support and development. Also, it has not been determined which competencies the persons working with young people need to have in order to successfully perform their work. The most common challenges they encounter are the lack of institutional and financial support, as well as the lack of recognition of their profession in the formal and legal sense, but also by the beneficiaries and the public.

### **Field of culture**

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the Ministry of Culture has designed programs aimed at social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the community through participation in cultural and artistic activities and programs, thereby contributing to the rights and principles of the European Social Charter, in particular the principle "Everyone has the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion".

#### **Field of interior affairs and security**

Pursuant to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, 70/15) applicants for international protection in Croatia are entitled to material reception conditions such as: accommodation in the Reception Centre, food and clothing provided in kind, remuneration of the cost of public transport for the purpose of the procedure for the approval international protection, and financial assistance.

Applicants for international protection are entitled to work after 9 months from the day of lodging an application upon which the Ministry has not yet rendered any decision if the applicant, through his/her conduct, has not caused the reasons for the failure to render a decision. The applicant is entitled to work without a residence permit or work permit, or a certificate on registration of work until the decision on the application becomes final.

In addition, provisions of this Act regulate that asylees and aliens under subsidiary protection are entitled to healthcare and social welfare. Right to healthcare is awarded based on provisions of the legal act regulating healthcare insurance and healthcare of aliens in Croatia. Also, both categories are entitled to social welfare, awarded pursuant to provisions of the legal act regulating social welfare for Croatian nationals.

Furthermore, regarding the legal migrations, the Aliens Act (Official Gazette, 130/11 and 74/13) regulates conditions for the entry, movement, stay and work of aliens and conditions for work I rights of posted workers in the Republic of Croatia. An alien is entitled to his/her rights in accordance to Croatian legal acts regulating specific areas.

In accordance to the Aliens Act, nationals of EEA member country and members of their families, regardless of the fact whether they are EU nationals or not, are entitled to stay in the Republic of Croatia, have equal rights as Croatian nationals within framework of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

#### **Field of healthcare**

The Act on Mandatory Health Insurance and Health Care of Aliens in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 80/13), in force since July 1, 2013, regulates the scope of health care for aliens/third-country nationals illegally staying in the Republic of Croatia; aliens who apply for asylum or subsidiary protection (asylum seekers) and aliens granted asylum or subsidiary protection.

### ***1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?***

#### **Field of education**



The principles of inclusive education and individual access to each child are the basis of Croatian education policy, in line with the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary schools, and other implementing regulations relevant to education system in Croatia. The education policy in Croatia pays particular attention to combating prejudice and stereotypes that further contribute to social exclusion, discrimination and suppression of human dignity, especially among groups that are or have been marginalized in society. Setting out from the premise that education significantly contributes to the improvement of upbringing and education on universal and generally accepted values and human rights, the Ministry of Science and Education participates in drafting of various integration plans whose holders are other bodies in order to achieve this objective, and implements the inclusive education policy in line with current legislative framework. Long-term measures from *the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology* aim to establish a system of equal opportunities regardless of exclusion degree of particular social groups, thus contributing to reducing social exclusion and ensuring actual social integration.

Measures defined in strategic area “Education and lifelong learning”, in line with STRATEGY FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA (2014 - 2020), aim to establish a system of equal opportunities in education for each child /pupil regardless of their social group background.

**- Co-financing textbooks, for pupils - members of households that are beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefits**

In order to create equal conditions for vulnerable groups of pupils in their access to education, and to ensure equal schooling conditions and acquisition of competences necessary for re-enrolment into education or access to the labour market, free school textbooks are provided to pupils who are members of households that are beneficiaries of the Guaranteed Minimum Benefit and students who enjoy such rights based on war veteran status of their parents, children of the protection of military personnel and civilians disabled in war and pyro-technicians killed in the line of duty. In 2016, legal, administrative and organizational preconditions were ensured just as in 2015, necessary for the implementation of this measure, based on implementing regulations (Ordinances and Decisions) related to textbook (co)financing. In 2016, a total of 18,789 beneficiaries received assistance in the amount of 11,937,498 HRK, including 10,180 beneficiaries of Guaranteed Minimum Benefit, in amount of 5,390,483.91 kn. Students whose parents are beneficiaries of Guaranteed Minimum Benefit do not receive assistance for school textbooks.

**- Scholarship for regular students coming from lower socioeconomic background and co-financing transport costs for regular students with disabilities in their inclusion to the higher education**

For a number of years, the Ministry of Science and Education has been awarding state scholarships to regular students of lower socioeconomic background through public announcements and in line with Ordinance on conditions and manner of exercising rights for awarding student scholarships. Between January and September 2016, a total of 5,286 scholarships were awarded in monthly amount of 1,200.00 HRK, thus totalling to 55,884,000.00 HRK for this measure. It should be noted that the state scholarship registry includes 170 active

beneficiaries who in previous years were entitled to complete course of their study programme (study level) they had enrolled; in 2016, a total of 1,146,700.00 HRK were paid for that purpose. In 2016, aggregated funds for state scholarships amounted to 57,030,600.00 HRK. Scholarship programme aims to ensure access to higher education for full-time students, Croatian nationals and nationals of EU with registered stay in Croatia and approved status of foreign persons with permanent residence in Croatia, persons enrolled in university and professional study programmes in Croatia based on Act on International and Temporary Protection, students with disabilities and students without adequate parental care enrolled in postgraduate studies who are all of lower socioeconomic background.

The Ministry of Science and Education is continuously implementing measures and activities planned for the following period, by securing budgetary and EU funds to support public announcements for awarding new scholarships to full-time students enrolled in university and professional programmes, and students with disabilities a regular students of university and professional studies, students with disabilities and students without adequate parental care enrolled in postgraduate university studies in accordance with the new Ordinance on conditions and manner of exercising rights for awarding student scholarships based on socio-economic status (OG 43/17). It should be noted that the number of scholarships for students in poor socioeconomic status, funded from structural funds, increased to 4,500 annually.

In addition, throughout recent years, funds have been secured for covering partial transfer costs for full-time students with disabilities, based on *Ordinance on conditions and manner of exercising right to financial assistance for partial transport costs, for students with disabilities* and Decision regulating amount of financial assistance for transport costs, for full-time students with disabilities in academic 2015/2016: the Decision is enacted for every academic year. In 2016, 131 students with disabilities exercised their right to financial support for transport cost in monthly amount of 1,000.00 HRK; aggregated funds for this measure amounted to 1,062,500.00 HRK.

#### **- Asylum seekers, asylees and aliens under subsidiary protection**

Croatia has been aligning its legislation related to upbringing and education with international charters on human rights and EU directives concerning the education of migrants' children as well as adults. Accordingly, the Ministry of Science and Education has amended existing legislation pertaining to rights to education for asylees, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary protection and aliens under temporary protection, third-country nationals illegally staying in Croatia, children of migrant workers, children who do not speak or have insufficient knowledge of Croatian, children whose education in the Republic of Croatia is mandatory and who also have their place of residence in Croatia, and children who continue their primary or secondary education in Croatia. Based on the Act on education in primary and secondary schools, *the Aliens Act* and *the Asylum Act*, the Ministry of Science and Education introduced by the end of 2014 a number of regulations to provide opportunity for diaspora returnees, children of aliens and asylum seekers, asylees, aliens under temporary protection and aliens under subsidiary protection( all of who are to be enrolled in Croatian education system) to enrol in courses on the Croatian language, Croatian history and culture. Furthermore, Article 43 of the Act on Education stipulates that schools are required to provide special assistance to children entitled to education in the Republic of Croatia but who do not speak or have insufficient knowledge of Croatian.

Currently, 40 pupils in elementary schools in Zagreb and 23 pupils in elementary schools in Kutina attend preparatory classes in Croatian language. In addition, 8 students (asylum

seekers/international protection) in Zagreb and 4 students (asylum seekers/international protection) in Kutina have been enrolled in secondary education.

*A Croatian language, history and culture for asylees and aliens under subsidiary protection, for their inclusion in Croatian society Programme* was adopted in December 2014; funds for Croatian language courses are planned and allocated in the State Budget. In 2015 and 2016, Croatian Language Course was implemented across 6 cities (Zagreb, Velika Gorica, Kutina, Split, Pula, Poreč); a total of 74 persons had the duty to attend these courses (funds were secured by the Ministry), whereas 21 students fulfilled their obligations and successfully completed the course (70 hours).

The Ministry of Science and Education will continue to secure funding for Croatian language courses in future; as an additional funding source, the Ministry plans to focus on EU funds, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

#### **- Provision of special needs classroom assistants and expert communication intermediaries**

The existing elementary and secondary education legislative framework regulates the right of every child/student with developmental disabilities to an appropriate programme and form of education, whenever possible in their living environment, by means of ensuring necessary programme and professional support along with spatial adaptations and pedagogic-didactic adjustment and by taking into account their needs, interests and abilities, in accordance with all national strategic documents and international documents accepted by the Republic of Croatia. This allows children/students with significant developmental difficulties to successfully engage, along with rehabilitation and professional support, in the education system in their communities, which suggests setting high standards in dealing with the problem.

The aim of providing special needs classroom assistants and expert communication intermediaries for students with developmental disabilities in elementary and secondary educational institutions is to increase social inclusion and integration of students with developmental disabilities in these institutions. This measure also aims to provide support for inclusion of pupils with developmental disabilities in elementary and secondary educational institutions in order to ensure conditions for improvement of their achievements in schooling, better socialization and emotional behaviour through activities related to providing special needs teaching assistants and expert communication intermediaries to students with developmental disabilities.

The Ministry of Science and Education is overseeing and ensuring the right to education for 21,542 students with developmental disabilities schooled across regular or special institutions; the Ministry provides professional, material and programme support to the education system in order to enable equal opportunities for full inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in their communities during education tailored to their needs, and to raise the quality of their lives.

The Ordinance on Primary and Secondary Education and Education of Students with Developmental Disabilities was published in March 2015. It is based on the principles of inclusive education and individual approach (this implies respect for character of each child and adjustments of schools and education system to a child/pupil in order to facilitate their involvement in everyday activities, both at school or in a community) and facilitates education, primarily in the regular system, for every student with developmental disabilities to his abilities, opportunities, interests, preferences and needs (individual approach to each student). The

implementation of this Ordinance will ensure an even greater involvement of children with disabilities in the development of a regular system of education.

**- Financing of special transport, adjusted teaching aids and materials, and nutrition for students with disabilities enrolled in primary and secondary education programmes**

Transport, adjusted teaching materials and nutrition for students with developmental disabilities are provided based on the *Decision on Criteria for Financing of Additional Transport Costs and Adjusted Teaching Aids and Materials and Co-financing of Nutrition for Students with disabilities in primary education programmes in 2016*. In the school year 2015/2016, 3,038 pupils with developmental disabilities used the transport service, nutrition was financed for 2,763 pupils, whereas 3,100 pupils were provided with special teaching aids and materials. In 2016, a total of HRK 26,323,281.00 was spent on these services.

Based on the *Decision on Criteria for Financing of Additional Transport Costs and Adjusted Teaching Aids and Materials and Co-financing of Nutrition for Students with disabilities in secondary education programmes in 2016*, students with developmental disabilities are also entitled to transport, adjusted teaching aids and materials. In the school year 2015/2016, the transport service was secured for 175 high-school students, whereas 682 students were provided with teaching aids and materials. In 2016, a total of HRK 1,415,961.80 was paid for these services (funds allocated in the 2016 State Budget).

**- Upbringing and education in languages and scripts of national minorities**

The right on upbringing and education in languages and scripts of national minorities is set in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and the Act on Education of National Minorities in Their Languages and Scripts. Members of national minorities have the possibility to be educated in their mother tongue at all levels of education, ranging from pre-school to the higher education. Education in languages and scripts of national minorities is an integral part of the overall education system, whereas the fundamental documents of education policy also relate to this part of the education system. A high degree of implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities has been achieved in the field of education in languages and scripts of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. Education of pupils, in classes held entirely in a language and a script of a national minority (MODEL A), has been successfully implemented, whereas more and more primary school pupils become involved in learning about language and culture of national minorities (MODEL C).

Curriculum designed for education in languages and scripts of national minorities, in accordance with the *Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities* and *National Pedagogical Standards*, besides general provisions, must include provisions related to particularities of a national minority (its mother tongue, literature, history, geography and artistic production - art and music). Such provisions in curriculum are drafted and authorised by the Ministry of Science and Education, following opinions submitted by a respective national minority's Association/Council. National minority pupils may participate in additional, government co-financed, education programmes implemented by minority associations (such as the Croatian Czech Alliance from Daruvar, the Slovakian Culture Centre in Našice, "the Association of Macedonians in Croatia" from Zagreb, the "Prosvjeta" Serbian Cultural Society from Zagreb, "the Association of Ukrainians in Croatia" in Zagreb, "the Union of Ruthenians in Croatia" in Vukovar, the Hungarian Associations from Beli Manastir, etc.) Other government-

supported activities include professional specialization of educators, teachers and lecturers at national level in the Republic of Croatia and countries of origin, mother-tongue learning, classroom competitions in languages and scripts of national minorities, mother-tongue e-learning classes.

In order to preserve the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of national minority pupils, in school year 2015/2016, the Ministry of Science and Education announced *the Public call for award of funds to national minority associations implementing special education programmes for national minority pupils in the Republic of Croatia*. Associations received HRK 581,000.00 for implementation of related activities, namely summer school courses. In 2016, a total of HRK 721,880.09 were allocated in the State Budget for outdoor classes, summer schools, drama classes, competitions in literary and artistic creativity, printing of a child magazine in Czech, and collection of literary works in Slovakian.

### **- Education of Roma national minority**

Based on the *National Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2013-2020*, activities aiming to improve access to quality education, including education and care provided in early childhood, as well as during primary, secondary and university education, with a particular emphasis on removing possible segregation in schools, preventing early school leaving and ensuring easy transition from school to workplace.

Further progress in education was made during 2016 with the enrolment of Roma minority children in all levels of education system. In accordance with the *National Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2013-2020*, Roma children are part of inclusion process in pre-school programs in order to bridge the gap between the socio-economic situation in which such children live and opportunities for their successful integration during compulsory primary education.

The pre-school programme is producing good results and indicates that pre-school education should be organized for all children of the Roma national minority. Measures defined in the action plan, for children and pupils of Roma national minority, are considered relevant and will be implemented in the future. Due to insufficient or complete lack of knowledge of the Croatian language among population of Roma children, based on Art. 43. of the Act on Primary and Secondary Education, schools are under obligation to provide special assistance to children who are entitled to education in the Republic of Croatia but who do not know or have insufficient knowledge of Croatian. Consequently, the Ministry of Science and Education provides Croatian language classes, i.e. it ensures overtime work hours for teachers and lecturer in Croatian who work with Roma pupils. We should mention professional conferences for teachers and lecturer in Croatian language, aiming to assist in acquisition of basic intercultural competences, in establishing acceptable level of interaction and communication with people coming from different culture, in adopting intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills - better understanding and respect for different cultures, adopting effective behaviour in other cultures - intercultural sensitivity and development of personal knowledge and communication competences in working with students of different cultural background.

In addition to assistance in learning the Croatian language, the Ministry of Science and Education, aiming to facilitate integration into regular schools, provides after school programmes for Roma minority pupils. Their enrolment in after school and similar activities carries significant importance as a prerequisite for successful completion of primary education of Roma

minority pupils. Such pupils have achieved significant progress in acquisition of language, good personal hygiene habits and their socialization.

Furthermore, Roma minority pupils are provided with co-financing of their graduation trips, nature schools, summer schools, and placements in homes. The secondary education has also recorded an increase in enrolment of Roma minority pupils. Such pupils may enjoy high-school scholarships and placements in homes. Roma minority students may enjoy university scholarships, whereas Roma minority adults may enrol in literacy programmes and trainings in getting their first vocation.

In order to promote understanding of Roma, improve their success in education and inclusion, activities were initiated in 2015 on drafting a Curriculum on Fostering Language and Culture of Roma National Minority in Primary and Secondary Schools of the Republic of Croatia (Model C). The curriculum would determine the purpose, goals and outcomes of Roma language learning, contents, the principles of teaching and learning, outlines of learning process, and the principles of evaluation, grading and reporting. The Curriculum proposal should include all levels and types of education where the course would be taught.

These measures match the needs to ensure access to quality and inclusive education in early age; they aim to reduce inequalities manifesting in early stages, to eliminate discrimination, to reduce challenges the children from vulnerable social categories are facing, and to promote emotional, social, psychological and physical development of all children. In 2016, a total of 11,089,223.39 HRK were spent on such activities.

## **Field of employment and career guidance**

### **Group 1**

The CES is continuously implementing activities aimed to inform persons under international protection about rights and obligations in the field of employment. Through individual counselling, employment counsellors determine the work, professional and personal capacities of unemployed person, provide expert assistance in developing a professional employment plan, provide support in implementing activities set in professional plan, and facilitate employment. Furthermore, through workshops, unemployed person gains the skills of writing a résumé, a job application and successful presentation of oneself to employers, having as the ultimate goal the acquisition of skill necessary for active job search. In particular cases, clients are referred to professional guidance in order to identify person's capabilities, competences and interests, along with psychological testing and medical examination. This approach allows for more convenient identification of employment opportunities and easier mediation in the labour market. If getting a job through usual procedures proves unsuccessful, what follows is the procedure of engaging a person in active labour market measures to facilitate the employment of clients with lower employability. As part of active labour market policies, the following measures were introduced, subsidies for employment of special groups, financing education for unemployed persons under international protection and financing employment of migrants in public works.

The biggest obstacle for aliens in competition and application to job vacancies in free labour market is the lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language.

Active labour market measures related to enrolment of young persons in vocational training include Training at workplace to enable acquisition of job skills at workplace for a specific employer and Vocational training without possibility of employment that enables acquisition of work experience in professional field in which person is educated. Through measure Education of unemployed, unemployed persons are able to acquire necessary qualifications in demand by labour market.

## **Group 2**

Employment mediation activities, for young unemployed persons that enhance competitiveness in labour market and acquire knowledge of active job search, include individual counselling, preparation of a professional employment plan, workshops in active job search, employment mediation, professional counselling, education for unemployed persons based on labour market demands, active labour market policy measures. Knowledge and skills acquired during education, if not demonstrated in practice or in a workplace, are rapidly lost, leaving not only the individual at a loss but also the society as a whole.

For young persons, CISOK centres (in places where they have been established) are central points for access and activation of the NEET group. CISOKs are also central points for outlining types of co-operation and responsibilities ascribed to individual partners, as well as creating prevention measures. In places where CISOK centres have yet to be established, the NEET access points Youth Centres, i.e. youth advisers, operating from each CES branch office.

## **Group 3**

Long-term unemployed persons require much more support in activation and preparation for job search, unlike those who only recently became unemployed. Individualized approach, i.e. individualized support for long-term unemployed persons, aims to go through the obstacles leading to long-term unemployment, by means of individual and group employment preparation, job mediation and referral to employers. For this purpose, additional programs are created for long-term unemployed persons, primarily motivational counselling and activation programs.

In order to create preconditions for increased employment of Roma persons, all registered unemployed Roma minority persons are included in regular CES activities and activities aimed for Roma persons exclusively. Activities tend to influence their more rapid inclusion in labour market, focusing in particular on individual counselling, development of professional employment plan, panel discussions, as well as employment mediation.

Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (CISOK) provide professional guidance services in cooperation with partners, making services accessible and visible to all citizens in order to develop their capacities, enhance career management skills and make them active participants in labour market, thus contributing to community and economy development at local and national level. Centres are central points to provide affordable, open and familiar tailor-made services based on client needs.

Clients are primary and secondary school pupils, students, unemployed persons, employed persons (who are changing jobs or careers), employers, parents, school staff, career advisers, the NEETs and all others expressing interests in career development.

The purpose of outreach and activating the NEETs is to encourage their social inclusion, primarily through education/employment activities, gaining information and counselling on career development. These measures contribute to advancement of employment, facilitated enrolment in labour market and prevention from (long-term) unemployment among this target group.

CISOK Centres (in places where they have been established) are recognized as the central point for outreach to and activation of the NEETs, including outlining types of co-operation and responsibilities ascribed to individual partners, as well as creating prevention measures. Accordingly, since March 2016, the Centres have been signing Agreements on cooperation with local partners (primary and secondary schools, faculties and universities, volunteer centres, Roma minority associations, social welfare centres, public health institutes, youth organizations, craftsmen association internet pages, and agencies for development) in relation to identification and activation of the NEETs.

Agreement between the European Commission and Croatia on funding through the European structural and investment funds (The Partnership Agreement) prescribes the framework for use of instruments of EU Cohesion Policy in Croatia between 2014-2020. The Partnership Agreement describes Croatia's approach to fulfilment of the common Europe 2020 strategy goals, along with its national goals, by means of EU funds allocated for Croatia during 2015-2020 period. "Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020" operational programme (OP EHR) is a plan and program, describing and elaborating in detail the measures and activities for effective implementation and use of the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF, adopted by the European Commission Decisions dated 17 December 2014 C(2014)10150), is one of the main instruments of the European Union aiming to provide support for investment in human capital and strengthening the competitiveness of the European economy. The main objective of the OP EHR is to contribute to growth of employment and strengthening of social cohesion in Croatia. Through Operational Programme, four key areas of investment are elaborated: employment and labour market, social inclusion, education and lifelong learning, and support to public administration. Activities financed from ESF funds help people to improve their skills and integrate more easily in labour market; they focus on combating poverty and social exclusion as well as improving the public administration efficiency.

As part of the National Reform Program – key area 3) Labour market, subcategory Flexibility and mobility of the labour market, Measure 4) Improvement of the system of professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities – attempts are made to ensure higher employment of persons with disabilities and to create conditions for their equal participation in labour market by means of removing obstacles and creating equal opportunities for their employment, regulating rights on professional rehabilitation, as well as outlining measures and incentives for employment which would directly impact their social inclusion and basic improvement in quality of living.



Timely inclusion in professional rehabilitation will reduce costs of the pension, healthcare and the welfare system, and reduce financial burden on the state budget. By expanding the obligation of quota employment to the private sector, along with introduction of financial penalties in cases of non-employment of persons with disability, more effective inclusion of persons with disability on the labour market is expected.

The GoC key guidelines for 2016-2019 directly contribute to promotion of employment of persons with disabilities, by defining the following principles: enabling persons with disabilities to enrol in the world of work (on the free market, with support from personal assistants, workplace adaptations or employment in secured workshops); stimulating employers in employing persons with disability; enabling, through prompt re-qualification, recruitment of young persons who are not competitive in the labour market; consolidating disability certification criteria with EU standards.

The Act on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability (OG 157/13, hereinafter - Act) entered into force on January 1, 2014. The Act introduced some key changes like establishment of the Institute for Disability Certification, Professional Rehabilitation, and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Centres for Professional Rehabilitation, inclusion of private sector into quota employment system, supervision of system through introduction of register on employed persons with disabilities, along with changes related to incentives for employment of persons with disabilities and performance in integrated and secured workspaces. Five ordinances were brought in April 2014, regulating, in detail, specific areas of the Act. Based on the Act, the CES brings decisions in the first instance on the right to professional rehabilitation of unemployed persons with disabilities. The Act on Amendments to the Act on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability (OG 152/14, hereinafter - Act on Amendments) was adopted in December 2014. The Act on Amendments prescribes more clear-cut definition of the priority rule in employment of persons with disabilities, supervision of administrative inspection and manner of reporting on amounts of calculated fee in cases when mandatory prescribed quota for the employment of persons with disabilities has not been fulfilled. This Act also regulates in detail founders of Centers for professional rehabilitation, special working conditions for units dealing with employment of persons with disabilities, and the manner of monitoring the fulfilment of conditions required for granting subventions to employers. In July 2014, the Ordinance amending the Ordinance on Content and Method of Keeping the Register of Employed Persons with Disabilities (OG 97/14) was adopted, providing more elaborate details on the percentage of physical disability based on which a person with disability can be registered as such. In January 2015, the Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on Determining the Quota for Employment of Persons with Disability (OG 2/15) was adopted. This Ordinance gives more specific conditions for exclusion from the quota for workers employed in jobs with special working conditions. The quota is set to 3%, regardless of service employer is providing. The Ordinance also gives more comprehensive outline of agreements in area of business cooperation with self-employed persons with disabilities, details on Reasonable Accommodation and sheltered workshops, companies, co-operations or associations, all part of a substitute quota. The Ordinance on Amendments to the Regulations on Professional Rehabilitation and Occupational Rehabilitation Centres (OG 2/15) was adopted simultaneously, providing more detailed outlines of the conditions for introduction of social inclusion programs,

education of experts in the field of application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

The Act on Central Disability Certification Institute (NN 85/14) was adopted in July 2014, prescribing definitions of disability certification, scope and areas in which disability certification is implemented. The Act aims to harmonize procedures of disability certification in different systems in the Republic of Croatia, i.e. the establishment of a central disability certification institution which, based on a single methodology, decides in matters of physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments/functional abilities, work and remaining working capacity for the purpose of exercising rights in different systems.

In April 2017, the Government of Croatia adopted new National Strategy of Equalization of Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities from 2017 to 2020 (hereinafter: Strategy). The UN Committee on Rights of Persons with Disability recommendations to Croatia, based on the Initial Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2015, were the key element in drafting of the Strategy for the next programming period. The new Strategy gives proposals of measures and activities in 16 strategic areas, elaborating 199 activities through 78 measures; stakeholders are state administration bodies, units of local and regional self-government, scientific institutions and civil society organizations. The Strategy ensures the continuation in developing a multi-departmental policy on promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and the equalization of opportunities, aiming to ensure a higher quality of living in communities. The Strategy introduces calculable indicators and, to the greatest extent possible, implements the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This new Strategy's task is to align all activity-related policies in the area of promotion of rights of persons with disabilities to globally achieved standards and to provide them better life, higher level of integration and equality while respecting the principles of universal design and rational adjustment.

Currently there are on-going activities regarding formulation of new national policies for the next programming period, aimed for the most vulnerable categories:

- the National Strategy on Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence 2017-2022
- the National Plan on Prevention of Human Trafficking 2017-2020
- the National Strategy on Suppression of Addiction 2018-2023
- the National Action Plan on Suppression of Addiction 2018-2023
- the National Anti-Discrimination Plan 2017-2022
- the National Action Plan on Implementation of the National Anti-Discrimination Plan 2017-2019

In 2017, in accordance with its authority, the CES introduces a new procurement procedure for services in the field of education of unemployed persons, aiming to increase the quality and sustainability of process dealing with improvement of competences wanted in the labour market. The selection criteria for the most economically advantageous offer, beside price, include professional qualifications of service providers, methodology and organization of education, duration of education, spatial and material conditions, etc. Two-year contracts are signed between the CES and adult education institutions, which include, inter alia, quality control prior to, during and following provided services (including on-line and face-to-face communication

with participants, analysis, monitoring and evaluation based on data collected). Occupations in demand by the labour market are identified through comprehensive approach that includes data on: job posts, employment/unemployment by sector/occupation category, data from Annual Employer Survey, etc. Data is collected at local/regional level, taking into account local/regional strategic plans, as well as the number of pupils/students enrolling in particular education programme.

### **Field of youth**

In order to meet the needs of young people and raise the quality of their lives with the purpose of their optimal social integration, the National Youth Program 2014-2017 was adopted (the third strategic youth paper for the Republic of Croatia). The document contains seven priority areas with 40 measures and 118 assignments and 17 state administration bodies are responsible for the implementation of this document. Proposed measures and assignments within each area are preceded by the analytical framework as the starting point for their conceptualization. Priority areas of the National Program are: education, vocational training and professional training in the context of lifelong learning, employment and entrepreneurship, health and healthcare, social protection and inclusion, volunteering activities, active participation of young people in society and political participation, young people in the European and global environment and young people and culture.

### **Field of regional development and EU funds**

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME „COMPETITIVENESS AND COHESION 2014 – 2020 “  
PRIORITY AXIS 8: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND HEALTH

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 9: Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

INVESTMENT PRIORITY 9a: Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 9a3: Promoting social inclusion and reducing inequalities through improved access to social services and transition from institutional care to community care through improved social infrastructure.

Croatia is facing regional disproportion in the development and availability of social services. The problem needs to be addressed from two closely connected aspects. First, based on the Deinstitutionalization Plan, the main goal of the deinstitutionalization process is to increase the number of people leaving the social welfare homes providing long-term accommodation service. The expected result of this process is to reduce the number of persons entering the institutions and increase the number of persons leaving long-term accommodation institutions. This result is given in the number of users who need to be deinstitutionalized. The expected results until 2016 (2018) are: to deinstitutionalize 301 children and youth without adequate parental care; 90 children and youth with behavioural difficulties; 427 persons with intellectual, sensory and physical difficulties until 2016, and 226 persons with mental difficulties until 2018. The target value for the reduction of the number of people in institutions, used for the result indicator, is

based on the estimate for the number of persons who are going to be deinstitutionalized by 2023 as per the draft Operational Plan which will be adopted for the period 2017-2020.

On the other hand, there is a need to improve availability of community-based services for the vulnerable groups, to enable better access and to ensure higher quality of social services. Support to the broadening network of these services provided by various service providers like NGOs is a precondition for sustainable deinstitutionalization. It is necessary to support the provision of a wider range of community services for vulnerable groups, in order to prevent institutionalization. Further, to better prepare beneficiaries and their families for deinstitutionalization it is necessary to improve conditions of social welfare centres, which support this process. All of the regions have insufficient availability and accessibility of social services provided to members of vulnerable groups as defined in Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, and projects will be implemented in the entire Croatian territory.

So far the following calls have been published in order to achieve the above mentioned performance indicators and outcomes:

9a3.1 Upgrading infrastructure for providing social services in the community to persons with disabilities as a support to the deinstitutionalization process-Phase 1

OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL: support to the process of deinstitutionalization of the social service provision system in the Republic of Croatia through infrastructure investments in conversion and equipping of institutions

TOTAL AVAILABLE AMOUNT OF GRANTS: 107.294.118,00 HRK

NUMBER OF SUBMITTED PROJECT APPLICATIONS: 2

NUMBER OF SIGNED CONTRACTS: 1

9a3.2 Upgrading infrastructure of providers of social service for children and young people as a support to the deinstitutionalization process-Phase 1

OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL: support to the process of deinstitutionalization of the social service provision system in the Republic of Croatia through infrastructure investments in conversion and equipping of institutions

TOTAL AVAILABLE AMOUNT OF GRANTS: 71.424.800,00 HRK

NUMBER OF SUBMITTED PROJECT APPLICATIONS: 1

NUMBER OF SIGNED CONTRACTS: 0

9a3.3 Upgrading infrastructure of the centres for social welfare as a support to the deinstitutionalization process-Phase 1

OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL: support to the process of deinstitutionalization in the Republic of Croatia through investments in conversion and equipping of institutions

TOTAL AVAILABLE AMOUNT OF GRANTS: 73.125.000,00 HRK

NUMBER OF SUBMITTED PROJECT APPLICATIONS: 1

NUMBER OF SIGNED CONTRACTS: 0

### **Field of labour, employment and pension system**

Concerning the increase of social cohesion, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System introduces and coordinates guidelines for implementation of active labour market policies in order to enable particularly vulnerable categories access to labour market (e.g. persons

under international protection, youth between 15 and 29 years of age). In particular, we underscore the implementation of EU Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, which allows this Ministry to put youth into special focus.

In 2017, the ministry will implement the “tracking system” to monitor the NEET person, namely young persons who left their education, but are unemployed and have no plans to continue education. Special attention will be placed on so-called inactive NEET persons, or youth who are not registered with Croatian Employment Institute in order to receive assistance in job finding or professional orientation. As this category is considered the most vulnerable, starting from the end of 2017 and throughout 2018, a significant “grant scheme” will be initiated through the Youth Guarantee in order to support their re-enrolment in education and labour market.

Furthermore, demographic trends in Croatia are characterized by the aging population and prolonged life expectancy, which leaves a negative impact on public spending, especially regarding the public expenditures for pensions.

In addition to demographic trends, one of the significant issues worth mentioning is the pensions sufficiency. Considering these facts, matters related to the improvement of pension system are also linked to sustainability of pension system and adequacy of pension rates, combating poverty and social exclusion in senior years. In order to achieve and maintain social adequacy and financial sustainability of pensions, amendments to legislative are planned in order to associate retirement age with estimated life expectancy, to discourage early retirement, to stimulate longer stay in labour market, to strengthen employment opportunities based on worker’s remaining working abilities, to revise the system of so-called “accelerated retirement”, etc.

Balanced pensions could be achieved thorough permanent implementation of measures that will bear positive impact on the labour market and employment, while simultaneously adjusting the pension system to current and anticipated demographic and economic trends.

A key measure to improve the efficiency of the pension system is to encourage a longer stay in the labour market, by discouraging early retirement, namely by increasing the so-called “penalties” for early retirement (old-age) pensions. In addition, one of measures to encourage a longer stay in the labour market is to accelerate the alignment of early retirement age and old-age retirement for men and women and then gradually to rise the retirement age to 67 years for women and men. By expanding the pool of pension beneficiaries who, besides enjoying pension, are able to find additional employment, several other categories of pensioners would be able join the labour market, in order to stimulate activation of elderly persons, their gradual exit from the labour market, and providing additional income during their senior years.

In addition, some local self-governments, based on their decisions regulating area of social welfare, provide financial assistance (pension supplement) to the most vulnerable pensioners residing in these respective areas and receiving the minimal monthly income, thus facilitating social inclusion for such persons.

### **Field of healthcare**

Funds for healthcare costs are allocated in the State Budget, within funding projection of the ministry exercising competence in healthcare. This is a rather special category of aliens in need of healthcare; especially if we consider the fact that some them are categorized as vulnerable groups (children, women in pregnancy, persons with disabilities, children without parental care).

### **Field of economy, entrepreneurship**

The Ministry of Economy carries out a series of economic measures to encourage and strengthen the entrepreneurial activity of all groups. Thus, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts is responsible for the Strategy of Women Entrepreneurship Development in the Republic of Croatia 2014-2020 and the Action Plan for its implementation. The Strategy has a long-term course towards continuous implementation of activities that will have an impact on changes in value system, behaviour and environment, factors which the strengthening of women's entrepreneurial activity depends on. The Strategy also has a medium-term orientation by 2020 - to increase the number of women starting a business venture, and number of women - owners of growing business ventures in order to achieve the level of women's entrepreneurial activity at the level that is achieved on average in the EU, measured by the TEA (Total Entrepreneurial Activity) indicator, for male and female. Encouraging all stakeholders to address the key challenges facing women in entrepreneurship and encouraging women to use entrepreneurship supporting institutions strengthens women's entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia. Since 2015, programs from the Operational Programme "Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014-2020" are being implemented, which opens the possibility of adding additional points to the majority-female owned companies as well as to other disadvantaged groups through the evaluation of horizontal issues.

Also, this Ministry is implementing the project "Scholarships for shortage occupations" from the Open Public Call 2014-2020 based on the Operational Programme "Effective Human Resources" funded by the European Social Fund. An open public call is intended for high school students who are educating for jobs in shortage occupations in the craft related system based on a unique model of education for craft occupations. The Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts is the co-holder of the measure and activity from the Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia 2015-2020, which falls within the competence of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System.

Measures and activities in the Strategy are: 1. Introduction and improvement of the legislative and institutional framework for the development of social entrepreneurship; 2. Establishment of a financial framework for the efficient operation of social entrepreneurship; 3. Promoting the Importance and Role of Social Entrepreneurship through formal and informal education; and 4. Ensuring the visibility of the role and possibilities of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia and informing the general public about issues related to social entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts updated the issue of implementing measures for target groups of entrepreneurs and crafts that do not meet the conditions needed to be included in the support measures of the Operational Program Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014-2020 because they are in a group of micro entities or are part of the necessity entrepreneurs (GEM). These can also include employees who do not receive salaries, who are in bankruptcy or will be dismissed from their jobs, cooperatives and workers' cooperatives and entrepreneurs in difficulties. One of the proposals is to establish the employment obligation in such a project with the use of measures / eligible costs under the European Structural Funds.

- 1.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the following groups?

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| <b>Field of youth</b> |
|-----------------------|

One of the key elements for preventing the emergence of new categories, as well as the reduction of the number of young people at risk of poverty and socially excluded young people, is to ensure quality and available youth services and to provide incentives for higher education and lifelong learning, as well as providing quality and available social services for all citizens (social care, healthcare, education).

It is extremely important to connect with other policy areas (education and employment) and find ways in which youth policies can contribute in addressing key issues which are not primarily "core" youth policy issues but are under authority of other systems. A special emphasis should be placed on the establishment and development of quality work with young people as a comprehensive priority and a common foundation in the youth field, complementing, contributing and adding value to all other priorities. In addition, attention should be paid to ensure that adequate financial resources and investment in professional development of persons working with young people are ensured.

## **Question 2**

- 2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

### **Field of youth**

Young people at risk of social exclusion require high level of involvement of centres for social welfare and other support systems for different groups of young people. Centres for social welfare play a key role when it comes to young people at risk of social exclusion, considering the official authority of the providers of preventive services and family support services. Recently, social welfare centres have been turning increasingly towards creating and developing collaborative relationships with other service providers, civil society organizations and other educational and health institutions and social welfare institutions to better secure the network of social services focusing on the protection of children and young people and family support. This is a major challenge for the social welfare centres because of the insufficient capacities for such a change in the approach to service provision. Consequently, civil society organizations have emerged as important providers of preventive services and support services for young people at risk of social exclusion. Above all it is important to recognize the role of youth organizations and local youth work which significantly contributes to the fight against social exclusion.

### **Field of healthcare**

Even though *the Act on Mandatory Health Insurance and Health Care of Aliens in the Republic of Croatia* prescribes such measures, many problems and challenges arise in practice on how to provide aliens with adequate healthcare during their stay in the Republic of Croatia (either during temporary stay or during determined timespan) on one hand, and on the other hand, how to ensure and provide protection for Croatian population (healthcare workers in particular) from

various diseases aliens carries with them, taking into account the manner and conditions they came to the Republic of Croatia.

2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the following groups?

#### **Field of youth**

Pursuant to the National Youth Program 2014-2017, on the basis of the public call invitation for the application of programs and projects focusing on young people for financial assistance from part of income from winnings from games of chance and available resources of the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2015, for the Priority Area "Work with young people not in employment, education or training", the approved and contracted funds amounted to HRK 795,000.00 (per year) for 7 programs. This is a three-year long program funded from the State Budget, and for each year contracts are concluded in the same amount. In order to ensure and encourage the cooperation of as many relevant stakeholders as possible in solving this problem, priority in program funding will be given to the applicants who established the cooperation with the Center for Social Welfare, secondary schools, adult education institutions, the Croatian Employment Service or its regional offices and branches and other relevant institutions and/or organizations in the area of project implementation.

The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy established the National authority for interdepartmental and cross-departmental coordination for monitoring young people at risk of social exclusion. The task of the National authority is to analyse the existing categories of young people at risk of social exclusion, to develop a new system of risk categories, to develop instruments for identifying and monitoring youth groups at risk according to established categories, to conduct research on youth groups at risk of social exclusion in local communities, identify needs of young people at risk of social exclusion and form support for these young people, make proposals for the establishment of appropriate regional coordinating bodies composed of representatives of competent youth institutions, youth associations and regional self-government units and provide guidelines for their work as well as develop a program of action of national and regional bodies.

Working with young people is one of the ways of combating unemployment and social exclusion. The National Youth Program identified the importance of working with young people and with the aim of gaining insight into the organization, implementation and establishment of institutional preconditions for the improvement of youth work, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy established a Working Group to analyse the possibilities of professionalizing youth work. The main tasks of the Working Group include development of definitions of youth work, analysing the possibilities of professionalization of youth work, and developing guidelines for creating occupational standards and qualification standards. For fulfilling the task, the Working Group has contributed to the development of the project operation summary thorough which it will continue to work on drafting occupational standard and qualification standard.

#### **Field of healthcare**



Since 2014, the Ministry of Health has been signing one-year contracts with community health centres to provide emergency medical care for asylum seekers staying at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers.

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

#### **Field of youth**

Social protection has been recognized as one of the most important dimensions of the protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens based on the principle of solidarity, since it enables the citizens to overcome a range of life difficulties when they are unable to solve them for objective reasons. Therefore, it is important to ensure a range of appropriate measures that will be available to individuals to improve their health, increase their chances of employment, provide housing, achieve the desired level of education etc. The number of young people at risk of social exclusion requires high level of involvement of different support systems for young people who require coordinated action of all stakeholders at different levels of society and in different areas, especially in areas where the greatest risks are present. Civil society organizations have emerged as important providers of preventive services and support services for young people. Above all, it is important to recognize the role of youth organizations and local youth work.

Aiming to observe their needs and ensure the quality of living for children in the Republic of Croatia, leading domestic experts, in cooperation with children, and with support from the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy and the UNICEF Office for Croatia, have developed a set of indicators to observe welfare of children. By implementing such measures, they will gain insights into key data that will enable the quality planning of the policies and services needed to ensure that each child have access to conditions for development of their capacities.

Indicators will monitor welfare of children by parameters - health, education, family relationships, subjective and psychological wellbeing, material wellbeing and poverty, peer relations and risk behaviour, participation, child safety and vulnerable groups of children. In the forthcoming period, operational measures and further use of indicators will be defined.

#### **Field of healthcare**

Due to steep influx of asylum seekers, the migration crisis in September 2015, and the increase in the number of healthcare services for asylum seekers, the Ministry of Health accepted the initiative of *Médecins du Monde* humanitarian organisation and signed the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Médecins du Monde Belgique, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health*, aiming to strengthen access to health services and the right to health services for aliens staying at Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers, and to strengthen co-operation with public health services in providing adequate and accessible health services.

### **Question 3**

- 3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the following groups?

#### **Field of youth**

The Youth Department does not have information concerning trends in radicalization among young people in the Republic of Croatia. However, we believe that it is important to have a broad preventive approach and measures aimed at combating discrimination, strengthening tolerance and respect for diversity (working with young people, active participation of young people in society, etc.).

- 3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the following groups?

#### **Field of youth**

Pursuant to the National Youth Program 2014-2017, on the basis of the public call invitation for the application of programs and projects focusing on young people for financial assistance from part of income from winnings from games of chance and available resources of the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2015, for the Priority Area "Work with young people not in employment, education or training", the approved and contracted funds amounted to HRK 795,000.00 (per year) for 7 programs. This is a three-year long program funded from the State Budget, and for each year contracts are concluded in the same amount. These programs consists of implementing different activities (programs are not identical, they are implemented locally, the beneficiary can be reached in different ways - in cooperation with schools, centres for social welfare, CES regional offices, etc.). All activities encourage involvement in the education system, training system or employment. Part of the activities is targeted at empowering, educating and motivating young people at risk of social exclusion for active inclusion in the labour market (counselling, job search support, labour market research, support with applying to job advertisements, submitting open job applications, preparing for interviews with employers, education focused on communication and presentation skills, etc.). Some programs also include preventive activities in terms of working with young people at risk of early school leaving etc. In order to ensure and encourage cooperation with as many relevant stakeholders as possible to solve this problem, priority in program funding was given to the applicants who used the program to establish cooperation with other relevant institutions and / or organizations in the area of project implementation. The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy established the National authority for interdepartmental and cross-departmental coordination for

monitoring young people at risk of social exclusion. the National authority task is to analyse the existing categories of young people at risk of social exclusion, to develop a new system of risk categories, to develop instruments for identifying and monitoring youth groups at risk according to established categories, to conduct research on youth groups at risk of social exclusion in local communities, identify needs of young people at risk of social exclusion and form support for these young people, to make proposals for the establishment of appropriate regional coordinating bodies composed of representatives of competent youth institutions, youth associations and regional self-government units and provide guidelines for their work as well as develop a program of action of national and regional bodies. Working with young people is one of the ways of combating unemployment and social exclusion. The National Youth Program identified the importance of working with young people and with the aim of gaining insight into the organization, implementation and establishment of institutional preconditions for the improvement of youth work, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy established a Working Group to analyse the possibilities of professionalizing youth work. The main tasks of the Working Group include development of definitions of youth work, analysing the possibilities of professionalization of youth work, and developing guidelines for creating occupational standards and qualification standards. For the purpose of fulfilling the task, the Working Group has contributed to the development of the project operation summary which will be submitted by the Ministry for allocation of funds from the European Social Fund, under which the Working Group will continue to work on drafting a standard for occupational standards and qualification standards.

### **Field of employment and career guidance**

CISOKs represent a new type of life-long vocational guidance service providers; this type of guidance caters for needs of individuals, in particular non-typical CES clients. CISOKs achieved their success primarily because of placing focus on partnerships with other organizations in order to meet the common goals, namely creating balance in the labour market and developing competencies which are necessary in Croatian economy, but also to ensure CISOK sustainability in future. CISOKs (in places where they have been established) were recognized as the central points for outreach to and activation of the NEETs, including outlining types of co-operation and responsibilities ascribed to individual partners, as well as creating prevention measures. The purpose of outreach and activating the NEETs is to encourage their social inclusion, primarily through education/employment activities, gaining information and counselling on career development. These measures contribute to advancement of employment, facilitated enrolment in labour market and prevention from (long-term) unemployment among this target group.

Accordingly, since March 2016, the Centres have been signing Agreements on cooperation with local partners (primary and secondary schools, faculties and universities, volunteer centres, Roma minority associations, social welfare centres, public health institutes, youth organizations, craftsmen association internet pages, and agencies for development) in relation to identification and activation of the NEETs.

In addition to promotional materials for different target groups, the CES annually publishes and updates "Where after the elementary?" brochure, in order to inform pupils about their prospects

in secondary education in the Republic of Croatia. This brochure is published in five different Croatian regions, each featuring descriptions of occupations, information on enrolment conditions, scholarships, schools and education programs, student homes and the CES vocational guidance services. Brochures also list occupations in highest demand by the labour market, by counties, aiming to increase the number of enrolled students in scarce occupations, thus enabling social inclusion through increased employment opportunities.

Steady increase in employment of people with disabilities (by 20,18% in the previous period in 2017, compared to the same period in 2016; by 9,18% in 2016 compared to 2015; by 34,21% in 2015 compared to 2014) indicates that expansion of the quota employment system, from public to private sector, was justified.

### **Field of culture**

Within the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources" 2014-2020, which is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), Priority Axis 2 - Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia has foreseen the preparation of several operations and the publication of calls for submission of project proposals. The general objectives of the call are aimed at social inclusion of various vulnerable groups (young people, the elderly, the unemployed, including long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and others) through cultural and artistic activities. Activities funded under the call also include incentive programs for development of social skills, work habits and other skills that will increase social inclusion and youth competitiveness in the labour market and reduce the risk of young people entering the NEET group (not in education, employment, or training), as well as measures to strengthen networks and initiatives that promote access to intercultural activities and social integration of vulnerable groups. Arts and culture activities contributing to the improvement of social, cognitive, emotional and creative skills of persons over the age of 54 are also encouraged, as well as the activities promoting their activation, non-discrimination, dignity and greater involvement in society, along with adjustments of cultural and artistic content to meet the needs of people with disabilities in order to enable them to participate equally and actively in cultural life. Participation in cultural and artistic activities and content is an important aspect of inclusion of any age group in society, and for people over the age of 54 it is one of the factors that enable active and healthy ageing.

So far, two calls for project proposals have been issued (Art and Culture for Young People and Art and Culture 54+), targeted at young people (aged 15 to 25), especially disadvantaged young people, and persons over the age of 54, two more calls for project proposals are being prepared; Development of community media and Inclusion of marginalized groups in the community through cultural activities and projects. The Ministry of Culture has provided national co-financing for all these calls.

### **Field of healthcare**

Aliens staying illegally in Croatia are entitled to emergency medical assistance at Ježevu Reception Centre, based on the one-year contract between the Ministry of Health and Community health service of Zagreb County, or at the nearest healthcare facility in the location

where they were detected. Asylees, aliens under subsidiary protection, and minors without parental care are entitled to complete healthcare protection, in accordance to legal regulations.

- 3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the following groups?

#### **Field of employment and career guidance**

##### **Group 1**

Develop different forms of learning through integrated and combined learning approach in workplace and learning Croatian, which should enable faster integration into the labour market, faster learning of Croatian language (because learning in workplace creates the need for language learning), the expansion of the migrant social network.

##### **Group 2**

Education systems should introduce elements of practical work and elements of entrepreneurship in order to train young people for entrepreneurial approach to all spheres of life through regular education and facilitate the transition from regular education to the labour market.

Develop support systems for young start-up entrepreneurs to prevent early abandonment of entrepreneurial ideas and self-employment.

Eliminate barriers and enable better educational mobility to enable young people to be more easily involved in education (especially higher education), which will enable better employability and thus adaptability to the labour market.

##### **Group 3**

Develop active employment policy measures that will enable easier access to the labour market for the less employable groups of people.

Develop different forms of learning tailored to people with lack of motivation in education (exceptionally long-term unemployed, elderly persons, persons without qualifications, and persons without elementary education).

#### **Field of youth**

Today, a large number of young persons exist who are at risk of social exclusion and who do not necessarily fall into the existing classification of minority groups (Roma youth, young persons with disabilities, young persons from alternative care systems etc.). Present-day problems, such as the high percentage of unemployment among youth in the Republic of Croatia or prolongation of parent-dependence, lead to an increasing number of young persons at risk of social exclusion according to the categories of education, housing, employment, poverty and health care. Due to the large differences in the characteristics of young people at risk of social exclusion, a number of support systems are needed. Therefore, coordinated action of all stakeholders at different levels of society and in different areas is required, especially in employment and education areas, where the greatest risks are present. Civil society organizations have emerged as important providers of preventive services and support services for young people at risk of social

exclusion. Above all, it is important to recognize the role of youth organizations and local youth work which significantly contributes to the development of skills and increases employability of young people, especially those who are furthest from the labour market.

### **Field of culture**

European Social Fund resources, along with national co-financing, certainly contribute to the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In the cultural sector, cultural and artistic activities contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the community as well as the fight against poverty, easier employment of young people and better and healthy ageing. Consequently, the recommendation is to increase the resources of the European Social Fund oriented towards programs in the field of culture for vulnerable groups.

The Groups mentioned in the questions are:

- C. Migrants and refugees,
- D. Youth and children,
- C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly

## **HUNGARY**

### **Question 1**

- 1.1. What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

Challenges to face:

Youth: improve access to labour market.

Children: improve access to quality education, health and social services

Vulnerable groups (esp. Roma): improve access to education, labour market, social and health services

- 1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?

#### **A. Youth**

A smooth transition from education to work is one of the most important conditions to social integration. The issue of youth unemployment must be in the focus of employment policy because, even though the unemployment rate in Hungary's 15-24 age bracket went below the European Union's average in 2014, youth unemployment is still 2.5 times higher than the

unemployment rate in the overall population of the country. Promoting the employment of young people. It is one of the main objectives of the government's employment policy to help young people find jobs, improve their employment indicators, and keep them in Hungary.

### **Programs promoting youth employment and full participation in society:**

**Improvement of the employability of the disadvantaged program:** 140,294 people involved until the end of December 2014, 44,892 belonged to the youth target group, and another 15,808 young people not registered as jobseekers received labour market services.

**Labour market programme for the employment of the disadvantaged in the Central Hungary region:** 3375 youth target group, and another 4,138 young people not registered as jobseekers received labour market services

**Supporting youth entrepreneurship:** The training of more than 3,200 young people has been supported in the programme, and about 1,500 new businesses have been established.

**Internship program:** As a result of the program, young people receive more and better training as interns and acquire practical job and professional knowledge, which in turn improves their perspective in the labour market and increases their employment level.

**Support to career starters with vocational qualifications in obtaining work experience:** the support of part-time employment to provide an opportunity for fresh graduate skilled jobseekers to gain work experience and to prevent redundancies.

Complex measures divided in the following sectors:

### **Training support**

The training of a young person (below 25 years or, in case of a person with a tertiary degree, 30 years of age) can be supported unless that person became eligible for job-seeking support or aid after the termination of their status as a student.

The training support can take the form of wage-supplementing support or wage compensation, or reimbursement for training-related costs.

### **Support for starting a business**

This tool is not intended for young people only; it is available to persons registered as jobseekers for at least three months, people receiving rehabilitation support, as well as self-employed people working as individual entrepreneurs, in their own company as personal contributors, and agricultural smallholders.

Available support forms:

- repayable or non-repayable capital support, up to HUF 3 million; and

- support up to the compulsory minimum wage for up to six months, payable monthly;
- costs of the consultancy necessary for starting and pursuing the business activity.

The capital support can be partly repayable and partly non-repayable, within the specified amount limits. Further conditions to awarding capital support: at least 20% self-financing of the investment cost; and sufficient monetary reserves in case the subsidy is repayable or must be refunded because of a breach of contract.

The listed support forms are provided based on an application, and can be combined or awarded separately.

### **Support aimed at increasing employment**

The target groups include disadvantaged persons, such as jobseekers younger than 25 years of age. The support is paid to employers who employ jobseekers younger than 25 years of age; it must not exceed 50% of the wage and social contribution tax payable by the employer.

### **Support aimed at helping qualified career-starters gain work experience**

This support form is targeted at career-starting jobseekers that have at least basic vocational or intermediate qualification or a vocational secondary school degree, or advanced or high-level vocational qualification, or a tertiary degree.

The support can be applied for by an employer who employs a career-starting jobseeker for at least four hours a day and for at least 365 days, in a job that provides sufficient work experience.

The support is available for the term of employment, not to exceed 365 days, at a value amounting to between 50 and 100% of the wage costs incurred by employing the career starter. The monthly amount of the grant - if 100% of the wage costs are covered - shall not exceed

- the combined amount of the mandatory minimum wage and the social contribution tax in the case of career starters with primary level qualifications,
- 150% of the mandatory minimum wage in the case of career starters with secondary level education, secondary level qualifications or career starters who graduated from a secondary vocational school,
- twice the mandatory minimum wage in the case of career starters with an advanced level or higher vocational education, or career starters who graduated from a tertiary level school.

If the support ratio is below 100% of the wage cost, or the career starter is not employed full-time, then the upper limit equals the proportionate part of the amount specified above.

### **Housing support**

Housing support has been available from the National Employment Fund since 1 October 2012



in order to improve the position of jobseekers in the labour market and increase the mobility of Hungary's work force. The housing support is aimed at improving the chances of jobseekers by allow them to take jobs to be performed far from their homes (more than 100 km or requiring over five hours of travel).

The support is available, among others, to career starters; in their case, the prior registration period does not apply. The support can be paid for up to 18 months;

It is non-repayable. A person applying for housing support may submit his application to the labour office competent at his address or the place of registration by filling in the relevant form and attaching the required documents. The labour office competent at the applicant's temporary address may also act in subsidy settlement matters.

An application for housing support must be submitted before the start of employment or, if the legal relationship underlying the employment was established before the submission of the application, within 30 days from establishing the legal relationship.

#### Services

The services offered by the competent labour office is available to young persons, just like to other jobseekers

These services are the following:

- recruitment
- work consultancy
- career consultancy
- job seeking consultancy
- psychological and local consultancy (concerning the small region)
- training and labour market information.

#### **B. Roma people**

Application and individual grants provided from the "Ethnic Minority Grants" appropriation (Budget XX. Chapter 20. Heading 56. Subheading). A key aspect in relation to grants provided from the "Ethnic Minority Grants" appropriation is to preserve the sense of identity, to foster the native language, traditions, tangible and intangible heritage of ethnic groups, and to organise events of national or regional importance essential for cultural autonomy as well as language and cultural identity. The further development of the institutional structure implementing the cultural autonomy of ethnic groups and meeting the recommendations of the joint committees of minority groups working in the context of agreements concluded with neighbour countries must

also be highlighted.

Hungary is a member of the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Fund. It aims to promote the use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of the Roma population and as a result enhancing the effectiveness of policy targeting the Roma: In 2016 144 measures have been taken to improve social inclusion through national and regional human resources development OPs, territorial ad settlement development OPs, economic development and innovation OPs. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the following groups?

### **Question 2**

- 2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

Children and people with roma origin are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society most affected by the crises.

- 2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the following groups?

#### **A. Children**

Early childhood development (ECD) interventions can lay out the basis for cognitive development and long-term health and productivity. These include effective cognitive development in the first 1,000 days, also as supported by better parenting skills; healthy development as supported by regular maternal/child health check-ups; good nutrition practices; smart incentives for immunization; and community outreach regarding learning stimulation and good parenting practices. Expanding early childhood education (ECE) in the 3–6 age range will allow these gains to be consolidated and cognitive and behavioural foundations to be further developed. This can include investments in quality ECE infrastructure, adequate staffing, resources, and curricula; and removing financial, logistical, and administrative barriers to preschool and kindergarten attendance. Doing so will help children prepare for primary school and achieve proficiency in the national language. In primary education, promoting equal opportunities will mean investing in accessibility and inclusiveness. Interventions should pay special attention to keeping Roma children in school by identifying students at risk of dropping out, improving teacher training, and offering afterschool programs. Support will be particularly important during transitions between grades, when the chance of dropping out is highest for marginalized Roma children.

Hungary has a wide network of kindergartens, low associated costs (there are no tuition fees, and children pay only for meals and extracurricular activities; meals are free for disadvantaged

children), and conditional cash transfers for families with multiple disadvantages who enrol their child in preschool before age four and maintain stable attendance during the school year. Since 2014, preschool education in Hungary has been compulsory from age three (this rule enters into de facto force in the 2015–16 school year due to capacity constraints), and since 2008, local governments have been required to offer free kindergarten placements to children from families with multiple disadvantages from such age (Eurydice 2012).

Early interventions have great importance in preventing social exclusion at the earliest possible age in early childhood that has to be carried on in the school system. Since 2007 several types of programmes called ‘Chances for Children’ were launched in disadvantaged regions in order to increase chances for children and eliminate recurring poverty. Within the framework of Chance for children program 112 ‘Sure Start Children’s Houses’ had been established until 2016. Besides supporting integrated regional children’s programs in disadvantaged regions, 50 new Sure Start Children’s Houses are planned to be established by 2020. The expansion of Sure Start Children’s Houses previously integrated into the child protection service is constantly going on. The so called ‘Good Place to Be’ program is a new opportunity in settlements under 1,000 residents with many children but without services. Sites for children and youth and a series of programs for several age groups are being developed. In disadvantaged settlements priority is given to prevention programs: the ‘Safety Net for Families’ program has been going on since 2012, designed to address family violence and human trafficking. Sure Start Children’s Home endorse social inclusion of vulnerable families and their children especially in vulnerable areas by providing integrated social services. Reduce the socio-cultural gap between vulnerable children and children from families with better opportunities. To move people away from the risk of poverty and facilitate their integration into future education and better opportunities. Promote vulnerable children to close up to the average before attending the education system. Aim is to complement the existing system with a clear focus on the most vulnerable communities. The services are complementing the existing child care and social system with a clear focus on the most vulnerable communities.

## **B. Provide better access for vulnerable people to health protection services**

The National Public Health and Medical Officer Service (hereinafter referred to as NPHMOS) undertakes the the Praxis I. programme to provide health services for areas where no general practitioners have been practicing for a long period of time by the public employing physicians who have not taken their certification exams to become a GP but comply with certain requirements. Pursuant to Government Decree No. 43/1999. (III. 3.) on the detailed rules for financing health services from the Health Insurance Fund, the areas are financed at 140% of the national monthly average financing through NPHMOS, acting as the operator of the practices, whereby a portion of the funds is conveyed to the local governments for the maintenance of consulting rooms. Until the end of 2016, 109 doctors joined the program and filled the position of the family doctor previously unfilled for a long time. Of which 30 doctors commenced the family doctor’s activities in favoured districts, 12 doctors in districts to be developed, while 29

doctors in districts to be developed through a complex programme towards improving access to the general health care system.

Physicians with clinical qualifications listed in the Praxis II. programme become eligible to work as general practitioners. 257 physicians joined the health care system through the program until the end of 2016 and acquired thereby the right to practice as general practitioners. In the framework of project No. SH/8/1 titled "Primary care organizing model program with a public health focus using healthcare funds and backed by a Virtual Service Centre" supported by the Swiss-Hungarian cooperation programme, 4 communities of practice have been set up with the participation of 24 basic-care practices in the North Great-Plain and Northern Hungary regions (centres in Berettyóújfalu, Jászapáti, Borsodnádasd and Heves). The objective of the program is to develop and pilot a model of basic health-care provision that focuses on prevention and the care of patients with chronic diseases, is oriented at the community and involves local communities (in particular the Roma population) in close cooperation with local and ethnic local governments, local health-care and social services and medical workers, and also to formulate recommendations (based on experience) for national health-care policy.

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

### Question 3

- 3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the following groups?
- 3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the following groups?

Hungary is committed to the view that education has a vital role in „producing” qualified people who can enter the labour market which is an important element to avoid poverty and social exclusion. The Hungarian Government enhances **the talent management of disadvantaged pupils**, develops appropriate training systems and **prevents early school leaving by scholarship programmes and also enhance better opportunities in future labour market participation**. The Arany János Talent Fostering Programme for disadvantaged students (more than 4 000 students took part in the programme) and the 'Útravaló' (On the Road) Scholarship Programme provide the **opportunities** for disadvantaged gifted students to develop their abilities. **Tanoda (study hall) Programmes** help disadvantaged students' inclusion at school with tools of outside public education and complex development.

In 2016 the Government pays particular attention **to improve job creation at companies**, while also supports certain disadvantaged target groups in terms of employability, especially the unemployed, people from disadvantaged areas, unskilled employees, youth and women. Active

labour market tools are being used such as support for social enterprises, social land programme, and increasing the efficiency of public employment, i.e. accessibility to the open labour market.

“A safety net for families” programs main aim is **to strengthen the social role of families, increase family cohesion, handle or prevent crisis situations by providing complex services that supplement the obligatory basic services of local governments and address problems from multiple aspects, in a mutually reinforcing way.** The aim is to reduce the number of family conflicts and the proportion of vulnerable children and young people. In the scope of this, local communities are organised with the participation of voluntary coordinators or by supporting the realisation of community building programmes, and through this young people and elderly people can be reached and mobilised.

In Hungary the territorial targeting is conceived to address, using an integrated methodology, the specific needs of the areas most affected by poverty or the target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion. Measures are undertaken targeting city areas with Roma camp/Roma population are foreseen with the aim of eliminating segregated Roma camps.

Investment priorities promoting social inclusion and combating poverty:

- Active inclusion – active participation and improving employability: programs such as Training in employment of the Roma (esp.: Roma women),, Active citizenship of disadvantaged people and the Roma; Promoting the employment of Roma people in vocations high in demand within public services is directed at a priority target group

## ITALY

### Question 1

1.1 What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

The major trends with regards to the three groups involved are the fostering of social inclusion, the tackling of poverty and discrimination, the strengthening of institutional capacity and the fostering of an efficient public administration.

1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?

The policy action, addressed to the three groups involved, supports and promotes social innovation and complementary use of public and private resources. The objective is to define effective models addressed to the most vulnerable parts of the population and to the ones at risk of social exclusion. The main aims are to strengthen the network of services, to define and test

model for integrating people at risk of social exclusion (victims of trafficking or violence, Roma people, unaccompanied foreign minors, prisoners and former prisoners) and to promote economic activities within the social field.

- 1.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the following groups?

The main recommendation is to overcome the logic of passive welfare strengthening services and measures for active inclusion. At the same time, it is necessary to enhance the capacity of local social services to network with other public, private and third sector bodies.

## **Question 2**

- 2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

The main challenge is to provide an economic support and to activate a care project tailored on the specific households and involving its members. Expected result is the activation of beneficiaries in order to overcome hardship conditions, to achieve self-reliance and to provide access to quality social and health protection services. All trends address to the three groups involved.

- 2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the following groups?

The main policy actions to provide accessible and quality social and health services are:

- The introduction of a national measure to fight poverty and social exclusion; this measure, the so-called **Inclusion Income**, is an essential level considered as a basic key of social care, to be granted evenly at a national level. The inclusion income will be financed through the National Fund to Fight Poverty and Social Exclusion, provided by Stability Law 2016. The priority target will be families with children, people with disabilities, pregnant women and unemployed over 55;
- The reorganization of all **Social Assistance Benefits** aimed to fight poverty;
- The strengthening of the **Coordination** of all the **Social Services Interventions**, in order to grant the same essential level of performance at a national level.

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

The main recommendation is to overcome the logic of passive welfare strengthening services and measures for active inclusion. At the same time, it is necessary to enhance the capacity of local social services to network with other public, private and third sector bodies.

### Question 3

- 3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the following groups?

The main trends faced during this last period concerning the fight against poverty aim to create a system of multidimensional services in order to promote the active inclusion of the disadvantaged citizens, thanks to the coordination of active labour market policies, housing conditions and social care policies. All trends address to the three groups involved.

- 3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the following groups?

Among the several relevant initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the development of measures to fight poverty and social exclusion is of strategic importance.

The Support for Active Inclusion (**SIA**) is a measure promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to counter poverty by assisting financially families in economic difficulties; it is a national measure against poverty addressed to families in severe economic conditions where at least a member is a child, or a son/daughter with disability or a woman in confirmed state of pregnancy.

The SIA ensures an economic support and activates a care project tailored on the specific households and involving its members. Expected result is the activation of beneficiaries in order to overcome hardship conditions and achieve self-reliance.

Another important measure to underline is **Law nr. 33/2017**, “*Rules to fight poverty, to reorganize assistance benefits and to coordinate the system of social services interventions*”, that provides for a comprehensive systematization of measures against poverty, countering economic and social constraints for citizens equity and human development and promoting wider and harmonized social policies.

- 3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the following groups?

The main recommendation is to overcome the logic of passive welfare strengthening services and measures for active inclusion. At the same time, it is necessary to implement personalized care planning for the most disadvantaged families through innovative services and multidisciplinary actions.

The Groups mentioned in the questions are:

- E. Migrants and refugees,
- F. Youth and children,
- C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly

## LITHUANIA

### Question 1

- 1.1 What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?
- Reduction of social exclusion and income inequality
  - Promotion of the wellbeing and empowerment of families
  - Encouragement of young people participation and their integration into society
- 1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?
- Revision of children rights protection system
  - Improvement of social security as the guarantee for the stability and cohesion of societies
- 1.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the following groups?
- Development of the societies' ability to access to economic and social rights
  - Strengthening of social relations, interactions and links
  - Improvement of civil dialogue

### Question 2



- 2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

Ensuring equal opportunities to access social, health, culture and legal services

- 2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the following groups?

- Development of community and family based services for children, disabled, elderly
- Improvement of long term care
- Improvement of integration system of the disabled in social security and employment areas

- 2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?

- Analysis of alternative care models for children, disabled
- Promotion of local communities based approach for migrants integration

### **Question 3**

- 3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the following groups?

Consolidation of all relevant stakeholders

- 3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the following groups?

- Development of employment, opportunities
- Improvement of social protection

- 3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the following groups?

Promotion of determined social policy

The Groups mentioned in the questions are:

G. Migrants and refugees,

H. Youth and children,

C. Vulnerable people, including the elderly

## MALTA

### Question 1

#### **1.1 What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?**

The increasing economic prosperity in Malta was pivotal in improving the lives of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable. In local political discourse this was called prosperity with a (social) purpose.

One of the challenges for migrants and refugees in Malta is access to the labour market. Needless to say, lack of access to the labour market hinders them from having access to housing, education, social security, etc. On the other hand, when these individuals enter the labour market they might find themselves fighting for labour rights and equal pay for equal work which eventually makes them more vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty. Therefore, working in the informal sector might be an easier route for such individuals.

Furthermore, migrants living in Malta may encounter difficulties in finding accommodation given that the cost of housing is increasing as a result of high demand, population density and land scarcity. Local research evinces the difficulties faced by migrants in accessing housing.<sup>1</sup>

Youths, on the other hand, find an uphill struggle in the transitory stage from full-time education to the labour market. Quite often this stage is perceived as one of the most critical. This economic transition could be successful if it forms the basis for the ultimate attainment of domestic independence, household and/or family formation.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the consequence of young people spending longer periods in education is that they have to delay their labour market debut. In addition to this, the rise in house prices and a booming economy in Malta make it very difficult for young people to either rent or purchase a house. Eventually, young people have to postpone their plans for later stages in their lives. In fact, property prices went up by 67% since 2001.<sup>3</sup> This might have left average-wage earners and vulnerable people some steps behind.

---

<sup>1</sup> Reference:

[https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects\\_and\\_Specific\\_Initiatives/I\\_m\\_Not\\_Racist/imnrb\\_research\(1\).pdf](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/I_m_Not_Racist/imnrb_research(1).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Reference: [http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Malta\\_2005\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Review.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Malta_2005_Youth_Policy_Review.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Reference:

[http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/business/property/69029/property\\_prices\\_up\\_by\\_67\\_since\\_2001\\_leaving\\_average\\_wage\\_earners\\_behind#.WVD\\_0euGPIU](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/business/property/69029/property_prices_up_by_67_since_2001_leaving_average_wage_earners_behind#.WVD_0euGPIU)

Just like in many other EU countries children in Malta are being raised in more diverse and pluralistic families. Different family forms such as lone parent households and reconstituted families are changing the social definition and composition of households. Lone parent and reconstituted families have exhibited an increase in the last number of years. Another emergent reality constitutes of inter-cultural marriages and same-sex unions.<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to the aging population ‘The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020’ enlisted five distinct challenges that elderly persons might be facing. The pinpointed challenges were the following: income security, age discrimination, citizenship, community care and healthcare.<sup>5</sup>

While in the disability sector, the consultation document - ‘The Malta National Disability Strategy’ - set its sight on a number of challenges faced by persons with a disability and their families in different domains of their lives. This strategy laid down thirteen objectives that are accompanied with a number of strategies and actions to respond to these principles, which in turn reflect the challenges faced by this sector. Amongst the mentioned objectives, one can find: right to live a dignified life, accessibility, education, employment, access to information and independent living.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?**

The following are some policy actions aimed at addressing the aforementioned challenges:

1. The Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants (FSM) was established in 2010, and in 2014 it initiated its works with various migrant organizations to create a third country national support network. This network (TSN Malta), registered in October 2015, has provided adult education, employment, residential and social support programs for almost 4000 refugees and asylum seekers from over 20 nationalities at the Marsa Open Centre from 2010 until September 2015.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the Migration Policy document - ‘Strategy for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants’ - was published and had two main objectives:

- a) The adoption of a comprehensive approach to the reception of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, addressing all basic needs; and

---

<sup>4</sup> Reference:

<https://tfal.org.mt/en/professionals/PublishingImages/Pages/Documents/National%20Children%27s%20Policy%202016.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Reference:

[https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/1433/National%20Strategic%20Policy%20for%20Active%20Ageing%20-%20Malta%202014-2020%20\(English%20Version\)?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/1433/National%20Strategic%20Policy%20for%20Active%20Ageing%20-%20Malta%202014-2020%20(English%20Version)?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>6</sup> Reference: <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Reference: <http://fsmmalta.org/>

- b) The institution of procedures intended to better safeguard the rights of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, though always with reference to national security and public order, as well as public health.
2. In June 2017 the Government of Malta presented the Marriage Equality Bill in the House of Representatives. The Bill aims to open the institution of marriage for same-sex couples, with all rights and obligations this brings about. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 Malta legalised same-sex marriage as the House of Representatives voted in favour of the Marriage Equality Bill. The Civil Union Bill was already introduced in Malta in 2014. The bill granted same-sex couples the opportunity to enter legally-recognised civil unions. This union was basically alike marriage in all but name.

Indeed, Malta was the sole Council of Europe member state when it developed a policy framework, supported by legislation, on intersex people, which included intersex children and young people.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the government of Malta prepared ‘Malta’s LGBTIQ Action Plan 2015-2017’ – a two year action plan that includes 38 separate policy measures that seeks to strengthen policy initiatives across all government departments and public services. This tool aimed to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

3. To help and encourage people to purchase a property the Government of Malta introduced the First-time buyers’ scheme. The scheme allows first time buyers to benefit from the exemption of stamp duty on the purchase of immovable property on the first €150,000.<sup>9</sup> It was proposed that the First-time buyers’ scheme shall be extended to second-time buyers as well.

Furthermore, it is very likely that the home loan granted by local banks will cover not more than 90% of the purchase price. Nevertheless, the ever-rising property prices in Malta make it very difficult for young people to purchase. To assist further, the government, through the Home Ownership Scheme will aid those couples who cannot afford to provide the 10% bank deposit to purchase their first property.

4. The National Commission for Active Ageing compiled a ‘National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020’. This strategy is built on three major premises: active participation in the labour market, participation in society and independent living. Malta’s active ageing policies aim to increase the number of elderly persons in employment and at the same time allow persons above the

---

<sup>8</sup> Reference: <https://rm.coe.int/16806a8d8f>

<sup>9</sup> Reference: <http://yesitmatters.com/malta-budget-2017-first-time-buyers/>

statutory retirement age to continue working or re-enter the labour market. In fact, the National Strategic Policy indicates that ensuring active labour market participation of elderly persons aged 55-64 years intensifies economic growth, sustains social cohesion and the capacity of pensions, while it regulates the rising financial burden on social protection systems.<sup>10</sup>

5. The 'National Children's Policy' was published in 2016 and includes tackling poverty and social media addiction. The structure of the 'National Children's Policy' aims to achieve four goals and outcomes. The four long-term goals are: have active and healthy generations, protect children and ensure an adequate living environment, grow-up to be independent and responsible adults and become active participants within their community and state.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, as recently as two months ago the Children's House was set up with the aim of making Justice more child-friendly. The Children's House concept allows children and adolescents who are called to give witness to do so in more child-friendly and adequate environment and at the same time away from court. Moreover, the set up enables questioning to be done by specifically trained persons, more specifically forensic interviewers.

6. Free Child Care centres for working parents were introduced in 2013. The introduction of Free Childcare services meant more women were attracted to the labour market. The Government provides free childcare services to parents/guardians who participate in the labour market or are furthering their education. The primary aim of the scheme is to help families achieve a work-life balance.

#### **1.4. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding policy measures that would enable real access to and enjoyment of social rights, particularly by the following groups?**

Recommendation no. 1: Encourage labour market participation of vulnerable groups. Introduce measures of making work pay and this includes supplementary income for low income workers, reduced income tax and tapering of social benefits for persons moving into employment. In addition introduce adequate and affordable child care to encourage more persons move to the labour market with ease. Nevertheless all young people should be either in education and or training and or employment and for this reasons measure should be in place to avoid early school leaving, timely intervention with young people who may have fallen behind in their education

---

<sup>10</sup> Reference:

[https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/1433/National%20Strategic%20Policy%20for%20Active%20Ageing%20-%20Malta%202014-2020%20\(English%20Version\)?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/1433/National%20Strategic%20Policy%20for%20Active%20Ageing%20-%20Malta%202014-2020%20(English%20Version)?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>11</sup> Reference:

<https://tfal.org.mt/en/professionals/PublishingImages/Pages/Documents/National%20Children%27s%20Policy%202016.pdf>

and vocational training programmes that lead to rewarding jobs while supporting them adequately in the transition period. Employment is important for various reasons; first of all, being employed means that one can be financially independent. Secondly, employment adds to knowledge, it enables a more productive use of time; it empowers self-confidence and boosts the well-being.<sup>12</sup>

Recommendation no. 2: Incentivise employers who employ disadvantaged persons like persons with disability. Despite the fact that employers are reluctant to employ persons with disabilities, it remains, that persons with a disability are a resource, a pool of labour-supply that can be better utilised if employers have economic incentives.<sup>13</sup>

Recommendation no. 3: Involve vulnerable people. For instance, people with disabilities might have distinctive insights about their disability and that of other persons. Therefore, when formulating and implementing policies, laws and services these persons should not only be consulted but also involved (WHO, 2011).<sup>14</sup>

## **Question 2**

### **2.1. Bearing in mind the negative effect of the economic crisis, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the provision of accessible and quality social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?**

Locally it was argued that the financial crisis in Malta was not severe. This makes it very difficult to create a link between the provision (or the lack of it) of accessible and quality social and health protection, on the one side, and the economic crisis, on the other. In simpler words, one cannot be sure that there is a strong correlation between these aspects.

Having said that, during the destabilizing period in Europe, Malta's unemployment rate fluctuated between 6.0% and 6.9% in the period covering 2008 and 2011.<sup>15</sup> The at-risk of poverty stood at 15% in 2009,<sup>16</sup> the deficit was expected to narrow and the debt was projected to reach peak levels.

These factors made it more difficult for the government at the time to ensure quality social and health protection services. However, some years down the line, the situation in Malta has changed rather drastically to the extent that the unemployment rate stood at 4.1% in April 2017

---

<sup>12</sup> Reference: Council of Europe 2010 Strengthening Social Cohesion – Improving the situation of low income workers.

<sup>13</sup>Reference: Ref Council of Europe 2003 Access to social rights for people with disabilities in Europe.

<sup>14</sup> Reference: [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report.pdf](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Reference: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment\\_rate\\_2004-2015\\_\(%25\)\\_new.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment_rate_2004-2015_(%25)_new.png)

<sup>16</sup> Reference: [https://nso.gov.mt/en/News\\_Releases/Archived\\_News\\_Releases/Documents/2010/News2010\\_240.pdf](https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Archived_News_Releases/Documents/2010/News2010_240.pdf)

and has hit the lowest lows in January and February 2017 (3.9%).<sup>17</sup> In addition, in 2017, Malta registered a surplus balance in its finances for the first time in many years.

## **2.2. What policy action is your country taking to mitigate such challenges particularly with regards to the following groups?**

The Government in Malta declared that its aim is to encourage and support, as much as possible, all individuals to participate in the labour market. Concepts like making work pay, curbing poverty, discouraging dependency and enhancing social cohesion were all frequent mentions in political and social discourses in the past few years in Malta, and were put into practice by policies such as:

### **1. Tapering of benefits –**

The Tapering of Benefits Scheme intends to attract persons in receipt of Unemployment Assistance (UA), Social Assistance (SA) and Social Assistance for Single Unmarried Parents (SUP) to the labour market. The Tapering of Benefits is a scheme that covers a three year period and is given to those beneficiaries that enter the labour market or are self occupied and earn the national minimum wage or more.<sup>18</sup>

Below is a statistical snapshot of the people that benefited from the Tapering of Benefits:<sup>19</sup>

December 2014 – 497

December 2015 – 1,731

December 2016 – 2,480

### **2. Increase in old age pension –**

During the 2017 Budget the government introduced an increase in minimum pension. Moreover, individuals of 61 years of age or more will be exempt from paying income tax on their pension unless it exceeds 13,000 Euros. Apart from that, the income threshold for eligibility to the supplementary assistance was increased so that more senior citizens become eligible.

### **3. Increase in the minimum wage –**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2017 a National Agreement on the Minimum Wage was signed by the Social Partners. This meant that the National Minimum Wage will be raised beyond the cost of living allowance for the first time in 27 years. This increase which will be over and above the increase given for inflation shall see the minimum wage increase by 8 Euros a week by 2019.

---

<sup>17</sup> Reference: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

<sup>18</sup> Reference: <https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/Social-and-Unemployment-Assistance/Pages/Tapering-of-Benefits.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Reference: <https://mfss.gov.mt/en/Press%20Releases/Pages/The%20Minister%20Press%20Releases/It-tapering-tal-benefi%C4%8B%C4%8Bji-u-l-in-work-benefit-ged-i%C4%A7allu-iktar-flus-fil-but-ta%E2%80%99-min-g%C4%A7andu-b%C5%BConn.aspx>

#### 4. In-work-benefit –

The in-work-benefit is awarded to:

- a. Individuals who are in employment and have children living within their household that are under 23 years of age. Single parents in employment who earn more than €6,600 and less than €16,500 are eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €1,250 yearly per child with an additional €80 paid to the first eligible child if income falls between €8,200 and €9,099.
- b. Married couples with both parents in employment whose collective income is greater than €10,000 and is less than €24,000 (the income of one of the spouses must be over €3,000) are eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €1,200 yearly per child.
- c. Married couples of whom only one is in gainful employment and whose income is greater than €6,600 and less than €16,500 are eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €350 yearly per child.<sup>20</sup>

Below is a statistical snapshot of the people that benefited from In-Work Benefit over the past two years:<sup>21</sup>

December 2015 – 1,338

December 2016 – 2,225

#### 5. Disabled persons in the labour market –

The 2015 budget introduced fiscal incentives for companies that employ disabled persons. More specifically, this means that an employer who employs disabled individuals will be exempt from paying social security contributions for these employees. In addition, the employer would be eligible to claim tax deduction on profits equivalent to the disabled person's salary.<sup>22</sup>

#### 6. Youth guarantee programme –

This programme was offered to unemployed individuals that have 23 years of age or less. Those who do not follow this training programme will not receive unemployment benefits.<sup>23</sup> The main aim of this programme is to re-integrate young individuals into the labour market.

---

<sup>20</sup> Reference: <https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/Short-Term-Benefits/Pages/In-Work-Benefit.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> Reference: <https://mfss.gov.mt/en/Press%20Releases/Pages/The%20Minister%20Press%20Releases/It-tapering-tal-benefi%C4%8B%C4%8Bji-u-l-in-work-benefit-ged-i%C4%A7allu-iktar-flus-fil-but-ta%E2%80%99-min-g%C4%A7andu-b%C5%BConn.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Reference: [https://mfss.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The\\_Budget\\_2015/Budget\\_Doc\\_2015.pdf](https://mfss.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2015/Budget_Doc_2015.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Reference: <http://www.nexiabt.com/en/file.aspx?f=123>



**2.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures that would improve the accessibility to and quality of social and health protection services particularly to the following groups?**

**Recommendation no. 1: Making work pay and discourage dependencies**

In Malta this strategy was introduced in the 2015 Budget where measures like the in-work benefit and tapering of benefits after marriage were introduced, while there was a confirmed commitment towards the Youth Guarantee Programme. The Government intended to create more opportunities and reduce dependencies as much as possible by creating clear incentives for individuals to enter the labour market. For instance, the introduction of free child care centres was a key measure for many women to enter or re-enter the labour market.

**Recommendation no. 2: Enhance the purchasing power of the citizens**

Schemes such as a grant of €300 to those persons over 75 years of age, the First Time Buyers Scheme, lowering the cost of utilities and raising the minimum wage meant that people were left with more money in their pockets.

Also, one has to keep in mind that Malta has universal access to free education and health care. In addition, students who obtain a Masters level of education will save a year on their taxes as they enter the labour market, while students that get a PhD will be exempt from two years of taxes as soon as they are employed.

Moreover, individuals that reach the age of 18 years in 2017 will benefit from one year of free public transport.

All this means that people will have more purchasing power.

**Recommendation no. 3: Diversify the country's economic activity**

Malta is neither limiting itself to one particular sector of the economy nor taking the risk of depending on few selected sectors. In fact, in the recent years there was an emergence of new industries (e.g. gaming industry), while the tourism industry which remains a hefty source of income for the Maltese economy, was reinforced.

A sound economic footing is crucial for every Government to strengthen the social sphere of society. Free education, pensions, elderly care, free health care can only serve the long-term social welfare purpose if they are built on sustainable foundations.

In this regard, Malta is a diverse economy based on the service industry however also having a strong and active manufacturing sector. Agriculture and fisheries is small nevertheless with sight of Government policy.

**Question 3**

**3.1. Bearing in mind that poverty and social exclusion may foster violent radicalization, what trends and challenges does your country face with regards to the following groups?**

In Malta the public debate on immigration varies from complete rejection to advocating the provision of active support services. When it comes to qualified immigrants; they find regular jobs and are accepted without much difficulty. On the other hand, when migrants either engage or are perceived to engage in activities that diverge from those of the Maltese, opposition resists.<sup>24</sup>

Quite often, it is stated that Malta might be risking too much in not fully assessing migrants, and specifically but not exclusively those in rehabilitation or other centres, for contagious diseases (e.g. AIDS). The perspective in favour of this policy is that if a medical condition is identified then it has to be catered for, thus taxing heavily on public finance. This situation is considered to be risky because of the constant contact between immigrants and the local population.<sup>25</sup>

Free childcare is another challenge for immigrants because the scheme is limited to persons either in full employment or in training. This means that immigrant females who do not fall into either of these two categories aren't benefiting from what could possibly be an opportunity for integration. What is not clear yet is whether this flow of immigrants will result in permanent non-Maltese residents, potentially forming cultural ghettos, or whether these people will return home when their home economies resurge.<sup>26</sup>

When it comes to youth unemployment in Malta; this has registered a decline, and in this sector Malta is doing even better than the remaining EU28. Although, policies to ensure that school leavers have the necessary skills to take up employment were introduced, problems persist because school leavers are not always equipped with the right skills to find gainful employment. Thus, early school leaving remains a major concern.<sup>27</sup>

In the disability sector, ensuring these persons have all the opportunities that other citizens in the community benefit from is linchpin. Formal, informal and non-formal education are all crucial to make certain that disabled people can make the choices they want, take advantage of the opportunities that exist and live up to their ambitions.<sup>28</sup>

**3.2. What policy action is your country taking to reduce poverty and integrate those at risk of social exclusion, particularly the following groups?**

---

<sup>24</sup> Reference:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587323\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL_STU(2016)587323_EN.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Reference:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587323\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL_STU(2016)587323_EN.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Reference:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587323\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL_STU(2016)587323_EN.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Reference:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587323\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL_STU(2016)587323_EN.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Reference: <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>

In Malta one does not observe poverty and social exclusion on the streets, but this doesn't mean that it's inexistent. The following are some policy actions aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion:

1. The 'National Youth Policy 2020' was published in 2015 and was build on 3 interlocking pillars:
  - a. The reality of the lives of young people in Malta today
  - b. The development of youth policy over the past 20 years at both European and at national level
  - c. Greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change<sup>29</sup>

These pillars are pivotal for the inclusion of young people in mainstream society. In addition, the Government provides students in post-secondary, higher and tertiary institutions with stipends to encourage them to further their education. This measure is critical to decrease the early school leaving rate and include youths in formal education.

2. Reform of the Disability Pension – During the 2017 budget the Government introduced three tiers of payment for those entitled to take the disability pension. The reform is aimed especially at those who will never be in a position to be gainfully occupied and makes a distinction between different degrees of disability.<sup>30</sup>
3. Just Society (Soċjetà Ġusta) project – The Government continued to promote the Just Society project with the aim of establishing ten small homes in the community for persons with disabilities. These homes will give peace of mind to parents of persons with disabilities who worry about their children's future once they themselves pass away.<sup>31</sup>
4. National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion – The strategy is set for the period 2014 – 2024 and intends to promote the well-being and improve the quality of life for all, particularly for persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The strategic policy is based on the values of equality, solidarity, dignity and respect for fundamental human rights and social justice.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Reference:

[https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Towards\\_2020.pdf](https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National_Youth_Policy_Towards_2020.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Reference: [http://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The\\_Budget\\_2017/Budget\\_Speech\\_2017\\_English.pdf](http://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2017/Budget_Speech_2017_English.pdf)

<sup>31</sup>Reference: [http://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The\\_Budget\\_2017/Budget\\_Speech\\_2017\\_English.pdf](http://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2017/Budget_Speech_2017_English.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Reference:

<http://www.google.com.mt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwii4Jall4HVAhVEOBoKH>

See also:

5. Youth Guarantee – refer to Section 2.2 point 6
6. Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants – refer to Section 1.2 point 1
7. The ‘Malta National Disability Strategy’ (Consultation document) – Refer to Section 1.1 para. 8.
8. Disabled people in the labour market – refer to Section 2.2 point 5
9. Increase in minimum wage – refer to Section 2.2 point 3
10. Tapering of Benefits – refer to Section 2.2 point 1

**3.3. What recommendations can you offer to the Committee of Ministers regarding measures to combat poverty and social exclusion and integrate successfully those at risk of social exclusion particularly the following groups?**

Recommendation no. 1: Set up a Migrant Integration Policy – If integrated within mainstream society migrants become a resource. Migrants can give their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of European societies. Their integration into society in the host country is pivotal to maximise the opportunities of legal migration as well as to make the utmost of the contributions that immigration can make to EU development.<sup>33</sup>

Recommendation no. 2: Focus on quality employment – It goes without saying that employment can develop people as persons, enhance their life chances, sustain relationships, improve their quality of life and above all be as independent and autonomous as much as possible. Thus if people are actively engaged in the labour market they will have full control of their life choices and transition.<sup>34</sup> Therefore we shall not focus solely on the quantity and the low unemployment rate because this might create an illusion. Quality jobs will attract and keep more people in the labour market.

Recommendation no. 3: Focus on Active Aging – Active aging is crucial for the elderly if we want to integrate them into mainstream society. For example, accessibility to public spaces and public transport are amongst the important issues which must be addressed to make the life of older people more socially accessible.

---

QIDDWEQFggyMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parliament.mt%2Ffile.aspx%3Ff%3D49869&usg=AFQjCNHYQIheOt5esCZNE3YIYhLQZ8M9hg

<sup>33</sup> Reference: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/integration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/integration_en)

<sup>34</sup> Reference: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)587323\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/587323/IPOL_STU(2016)587323_EN.pdf)

## PORTUGAL

### Portuguese response to the questions:

#### Question 1

##### 1.1

Recent data on the socio-economic situation of Portugal point to a general improvement, after the period of economic and financial adjustment that the country has had with social repercussions.

In the last few years, the national social protection system has been confronted with a series of constraints which, either through increased expenditure or through reduced revenue, as a consequence of high levels of unemployment and the incidence of situations of poverty, which have traditionally already been high, have become a serious challenge to their capacity to respond.

With regard to the economic and social context and according to the data of the Portuguese National Statistics, the economic activity, measured by GDP, reveals an increase of 1.4% (year-on-year) in 2016 (INE, National Accounts). Projections for the Portuguese economy, according to the Bank of Portugal, point to a continuation of economic activity recovery over the period 2017-2019 at a faster rate than in recent years. The average annual GDP growth is expected to be of 2.5% by 2017, 2.0 % in 2018 and 1.8 % in 2019.

The Portuguese labour market has also seen signs of recovery, with the unemployment rate falling to 10.1% in the 1st Quarter 2017, although the number of long-term and very long-term unemployed remains a challenge. The evolution of the activity should be accompanied by an improvement in conditions in the labour market, with the projection of continuation of employment growth and the continuation of the downward trend of the unemployment rate.

Despite the recent evolution of the economic and social situation pointing to an improvement in labour market indicators and a stabilization of indicators that reflect Portuguese living conditions, there has not yet been a total reversal of the negative effects of recent years. It will take some time until the negative effects of the economic, financial and social crisis are reversed, since the decrease in family incomes, associated with the rise in unemployment and precarious employment and the reduction of social spending, the result was an increase in the exposure of households to situations of poverty and social exclusion.

Some of the major challenges Portugal is experiencing are:

- Combating unemployment levels, particularly among the youngest, also combating NEET, as well as those segments of the population that are particularly vulnerable (such as women, people with disabilities, people over the age of 45, low-skilled workers and the long-term and very long-term unemployed);
- Investing and promoting the access to lifelong learning;

- Eliminate inequalities in the different types of hiring (segmentation) and income, which are manifested in the inequalities of access to protection in particular the unemployment situation and the rights to pensions;
- Ensure decent working conditions for all workers in all forms of employment;
- Combating social and economic inequalities, particularly in the distribution of income, given that inequalities are threats to social cohesion and sustainable growth. The social groups most vulnerable to the risk of poverty are children, single-parent families and households with unemployed adults;
- Develop policies to combat child poverty and promote the well-being of children and young people, ensuring, among others, access to health, education and social services;
- Strengthen social dialogue to build long-term commitments on the definition and implementation of relevant structural, economic and social policies at national level;
- Promoting Work-Life Balance and strengthen gender equality in the labour market.

## 1.2

The Portuguese Government has assumed the commitment to defend and strengthen the Social State, implement policies that promote decent work and a fair wage, guarantee the sustainability and adequacy of Social Security and restoring social minimums, promoting access to basic public goods, and implementing a strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion, with a special focus on children.

The current Government is strongly committed to fight child poverty; to improve the living conditions of the population, especially of disadvantaged families; to ensure adequate and sustainable social protection; and at the same time to foster an inclusive labour market in order to tackle long-term and very long term unemployment and youth unemployment, as well as in-work poverty.

In this regard, commitments made by the Government have already produced concrete results, in particular measures taken to reinforce disposable household income, especially of those who are most vulnerable and at risk of poverty and exclusion like the low-wage workers, the senior citizens with low pensions and children: increase of minimum wage from €05 in October 2014 to €30 in January 2016 and to €57 in January 2017; unfreezing of pensions indexation from the beginning of 2016, updating lower pensions amounts taking into account Consumers Price Index (the automatic indexation mechanism); reinstatement of reference amount of the social supplement for the elderly (CSI); reinstatement of reference amount of the minimum income scheme (RSI) and of its equivalence scale, having as a result an increased percentage of the amount to be allocated to each adult from 50% to 70% of the RSI reference value, and to each minor from 30% to 50%; update of Child Benefit amounts for the first three households' income levels and an increase of the mark-up from 20% to 35% of Child Benefit for single parent families; rollover of the 10% increase of unemployment benefit for unemployed parents; extension and reinforcement of social tariffs for basic needs services (electricity, gas, etc.); creation of temporary benefit to reinforce protection of long-term unemployed; etc.

The Government is also committed to deliver a Strategy to fight child and youth poverty, reassessing the national framework of social benefits, and it has already presented a Development Plan of the Long-term Care Network for 2016-2019.

The Government has been also making efforts to strengthen the response in partnership, in particular with so-called "public-social partnerships" between the State and Social Economy Organizations, which have assumed particular relevance as promoters of social intervention and economic agents generating wealth. In general terms, the promotion of social economy has been based on cooperation protocols, contractual instruments between the State and social sector organizations that reinforce the logic of partnership as a form of participatory social management, with more decentralized and active methodologies of action, close to citizens and families and based on the sharing of common responsibilities.

### **1.3**

We would like to highlight:

*Programa Qualifica* (Qualifica Program) is a comprehensive strategy aimed at providing adults with qualifications based on the skills acquired by experience and complementing them with modular training. As a basic principle: learning and training paths are diverse and should, whenever possible, have a qualification horizon. Its main goal is to reinforce adult education in order to address the challenge of high share of low-skilled and low participation in life-long learning.

## **Question 2**

### **2.1**

The access to the National Health Service and the Social Services Network are also a huge challenge.

Providing the National Health Service with the capacity to respond quickly to citizens' needs, simplifying access to health care, taking advantage of the means of proximity and simplifying and modernizing the administration and management of the National Health Service are nowadays challenges that are undertaken. Measures to increase the transparency of information, enabling citizens to better circulate at different levels of care are also tests the country face.

Strengthening the Social Services Network reinforcing the response in partnership with Social Economy organizations assumes particular importance, as these organisations have been essential agents as promoters of social intervention. Social Economy Organizations, spread throughout the territory, are a fundamental pillar in the response to citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, by their proximity, as well as their greater capacity to respond to situations of lack or social inequality, through the promotion of the principle of positive differentiation.

### **2.2**

The National Health Service is a great achievement of the Social State in Portugal. The reinvigoration and recovery of the National Health Service and its performance constitute a

political determination of the current Government to better respond to the needs of citizens, especially the most vulnerable. The Government is implementing reforms aimed at (i) promoting health through a new ambition for Public Health, (ii) reducing inequalities among citizens in access to health, improving accessibility, speed and humanization of the National Health Service, (Iii) expanding the capacity of the primary health care network, (iv) improving hospital management, circulation of clinical information and articulation between levels of care, (v) expanding the long-term care national network (Vi) improving the governance of the National Health Service and (vii) improving the quality and safety of the care provided.

In the context of promoting sustainability, the Government is committed to improving the governance of the National Health Service so that more and better results can be obtained. Increased efficiency is being supported by the development and improvement of governance instruments aimed at (i) incentives in the current contractual service model, (ii) strengthening managerial autonomy and responsibility, (iii) reducing inefficiencies, (Iv) introduction of transparency measures at all levels, (v) dissemination of information on the performance of the National Health Service, (vi) strengthening of regulatory mechanisms, and (vii) reduction of conflicts of interest.

In the last year, significant reduction have been done in citizens' fees to access to health care (6 million Portuguese are exempt from paying) and in the fees for transporting patients. The outgoing trajectory of health professionals outside the National Health Service was interrupted, both due to the significant decrease in the emigration of these professionals and the reduction of their exit to the private sector.

The 'Long-term care national network' provides a set of structured responses to people in a situation of dependency, through different levels of functionality throughout the life cycle. In the scope of the expansion and improvement of the national network, (i) a national coordination was created to reform the National Health Service in the area of long-term care, which interconnects health and social security networks, (Ii) the rules of articulation between hospital support teams in palliative care and the pain management units were defined.

Considering the important role played by non-governmental organizations in the social area, the new *Commitment on Cooperation for the Solidarity Sector 2017-2018*, recently agreed with the partners, is the basis of this commitment and a renewal of the principles of the Pact for Cooperation and Solidarity that for decades governed the partnership between the State and social institutions.

The purpose is to ensure the sustainability of the social sector and the accessibility to social services while maintaining the quality of services provided to the populations. In particular, the aim is to clarify and streamline certain issues in the area of Social Security, Health and Education, strengthening the principles of transparency, trust and sharing a strategic plan in the area of social development, which guarantees the sustainability of institutions of the social sector and accessibility to social services by citizens while maintaining the quality of services provided to the population.

Concerning the *Social Services Network* has been also recently promoted an Investment Program in social facilities (called PROCOOP), based on the principle of territorial planning and qualification, aimed at social responses with lower coverage rates and with greater need to adapt



to new socio-demographic profiles. This programme is addressed to all Social Economy Organizations. With a budget of 13 million EUR, PROCOOP is intended for Social Economy Organizations which develop or intend to develop social services (Creche EUR 2 600 000; Residential Structures for the Elderly EUR 8 200 000; Day-care Centres EUR 800 000, Occupational Activity Centres and Residential Structures for People with disabilities EUR 1,400,000) within the scope of the Social Services Network.

## 2.3

We would like to highlight:

Cooperation model between the State and the Social Economy Organizations within the *Social Services Network*: partnership between the State and the Solidary Sector.

The Social Services Network (RSES) is a fundamental element in the promotion and development of social protection, consubstantiated in the provision of a broad set of social responses, focused particularly to the most vulnerable groups, decisive to combat poverty, as well as promoting social inclusion and reconciling professional activity with personal and family life.

## Question 3

### 3.1

Despite the recent evolution of the economic and social situation pointing to an improvement in labour market indicators and a stabilization of indicators that reflect Portuguese living conditions, there has not yet been a reversal of the negative effects of recent years. In fact, the analysis of the most recent indicators highlights the following results:

The monetary poverty risk rate was 19% in 2015, below 19.5% in 2013 and 2014, but still above the 17.9% recorded in 2009 and 2010. If the general indicator shows a positive evolution of reduction, when we analyse the age groups it is clear that the situation of the elderly is worsening and that of children and adults of working age improve - this can be explained by the positive evolution of the labour market, with the unemployment rate decreasing, thus contributing to increasing the income of households with working-age adults and dependent children. The elderly population, with the retraction of social spending, lost income and saw the risk of poverty increase. It is hoped that with the changes introduced in 2016, notably in the CSI, the next indicators reflect a reversal of this trend in the elderly population.

Families with dependent children continue to be one of the groups most vulnerable to the risk of poverty, with households with children registering a rate of 21% (22.2% in 2014) compared to 16.8% for households without children. One-parent families (31.6%) and the large families (42.7%) have the highest values. The last indicators show, however, that the risk of poverty decreased for single-parent households (-3p.p.) and increased for the large (+ 5pp.) And for the aggregates "2 adults with one child" (+ 1.3pp). With the recent changes to the RSI and the Family Allowance, for example, and the changes planned for the following years, it is expected that social transfers will be able to resolve some of these more worrying developments.

The evolution of the poverty risk rate according to employment status is stagnant in the main variables in 2015: the poverty risk of the unemployed population increased from 38.3% in 2011 to 42% in 2014 and 2015; The risk of poverty of workers also remains at 10.9%. Pensioners, meanwhile, saw their risk of poverty increase (again) from 12.9% in 2013 to 16% in 2015.

The poverty intensity, the difference between the poverty line and the incomes of the population below this threshold, contracted by 2.4 % in 2015. After having registered a rate of 30.3% in 2013, it fell to 29% in 2014 and to 26.6% in 2015.

In sum, the difficult situation that hit Portugal, particularly between 2010 and 2013, with the expression of high unemployment rates and the contraction of disposable income, left a social burden, which translated into significant increases in poverty levels - Incidence, persistence and intensity - which now needs to be reversed. In addition, in Portugal, these levels were already high before the crisis, due to structural factors, which require medium and long term interventions.

The national social protection system has played a key role in reducing inequalities and the risk of monetary poverty. Overall, social transfers have seen their poverty impact shrink slightly in recent years, from 61% in 2011 to 59% in 2014 and 2015, after a steady increase between 2003 and 2009.

Concerning economic inequalities, Portugal is usually one of the countries of the European Union with greater asymmetries in the distribution of incomes among the population.

Despite the reduction observed in these indicators in 2014 and 2015, it is still worth note the worsening that Portugal registered between 2009 and 2013, especially visible:

- in the S90 / S10 ratio, which measures the distance between the equivalent net cash income of the top 10% of the population and the income of the lowest 10% of the population, from 9.2 in 2009 to 11.1 in 2013, dropping to 10.1 in 2015;
- in the S80 / S20 ratio, which declined slightly from 6.2 in 2013 to 6.0 in 2014 and 5.9 in 2015;
- in the Gini coefficient, which takes into account the entire income distribution, thus allowing for the estimation of income differences between all population groups, which has remained relatively stable since 2010, standing at 33.9% in 2015.

### 3.2

Strongly influenced by the European Social Model, the Portuguese Government has been making efforts to combat poverty, exclusion and social inequalities through an integrated and transversal logic, supported by the European recommendation that advocates an active inclusion approach that promotes the *empowerment* and the quality employment, while at the same time guaranteeing decent social minimums for those who are further from the labour market. As far as social policy is concerned, since the end of the 1990s an attempt has been made to follow a guideline which requires a continuous articulation between different strategies and national plans and bodies implementing policies, interlinking the various systems, social security and employment, education and training, reinforcing the assumption that the promotion of integration into the labour market and adequate income measures, as well as access to quality social services, can make a major contribution to social inclusion.

The Government has proposed to strengthen social cohesion and equality, and its strategy is to convey an integrative and coordinated approach to various sectorial measures, which should complement each other, fostering synergies and focusing on proximity measures, focusing on children and in their families, and is oriented around several main axes, namely:

- Implementation of the national strategy to combat poverty among children and young people;
- Replacement of support that guarantees social minimums to citizens in situations of greater vulnerability (such as Social Integration Income and the Complement Solidarity for the Elderly, for example), as well as the reinstatement of the rules for updating pensions and other benefits;
- Implementation of policies that promote decent employment and a fair wage (such as a sustained increase in Statutory Minimum Wage (RMMG), or the creation of new public support for low wages, in the form of a tax credit, protecting the income of workers with low wages and high turnover of employment);
- Promotion the access to essential resources, goods and services for all citizens.

The fight against the intergenerational transmission of poverty has been pointed out as a priority throughout Europe, although, according to the conclusions of the European Commission reports, the policies adopted diverge greatly in the level of implementation and results achieved. According to European guidelines, three clear guidelines have been suggested: reinforcement of early child intervention in areas such as health and education; investment in the quality and availability of child support services; guarantee of adequate income to families through a well-designed combination of universal and specific benefits. Aware of this situation, the Portuguese Government will develop a National Program to Combat Child Poverty. This Program presupposes the articulation of measures directly addressed to children and young people with measures that allow the increase of the resources of the families in which these children and young people are inserted. The reconfiguration of family benefits, such as Family Allowance, combined with access to fundamental services, such as a quality education system and adequate health care, among others, that foster synergies and invest in proximity measures, according to a territory-centered strategy, choosing areas marked by critical situations of child poverty.

The Social Integration Income (RSI) aims to guarantee social minimums by protecting the most fragile and vulnerable groups, distinguishing themselves from other social benefits and benefits by including a component of integration and inclusion, which is materialized through the conclusion of integration agreements with the beneficiaries of the provision. Individuals or families who are in a situation of serious economic need and at risk of social exclusion may thus avail themselves of the support provided by the RSI measure, consisting of (i) an insertion contract, and (ii) a monetary benefit for satisfaction of basic needs. The Social Integration Income holders celebrate and sign an insertion agreement, which includes a set of duties and rights, which presupposes their social and professional integration.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities is a central priority of the Government, whose priority objectives are the identification and recognition of different situations of incapacity, with different degrees of dependency, which require different responses and support, since the Integration are of a different nature. One of the measures to be implemented is the implementation of a new social benefit which responds to the need to enhance the effectiveness of social protection in this area and to update and simplify the benefits framework for People with disabilities. Inspired by a principle of citizenship for people with disabilities, this new provision in the field of social benefits is aimed at improving social protection, combating poverty and encouraging labour participation and empowering people with disabilities. It will

have an integrated perspective and life cycle, adapting to the different needs that may occur in different phases of the biographical journey.

The new context required the Portuguese society to develop policies and services for the reception and integration of migrants. Portugal was one of the pioneer countries in the adoption of Plans for the Integration of Immigrants (since 2007). Recognizing the importance of defining a clear and transversal strategy with concrete measures for the integration of migrants, the country promotes the implementation of these plans with measures involving various ministries that are called to cooperate for the common objective of a better integration of migrants and combating inequalities. The plans' innovation also takes place in terms of the methodology used in its construction, given the State's commitment to mobilize and involve the direct participation not only of the governmental structures that have them integrated, but also of civil society, in a common integration effort. In 2015, reinforcing this vocation, Portugal launched the Strategic Plan for Migration (PEM). The PEM is assumed since 2015 (to implement by 2020) as the national document, which aims to adapt the country politically to a new, complex and challenging migratory reality. In this sense, it is proposed to respond in a transversal and articulated way to challenges such as the transversal fight against the demographic deficit; The consolidation of integration and training of migrant communities living in Portugal; The inclusion and training of new nationals; International mobility, talent management and enhancement of the attractiveness of the country and the better linkage between immigration and emigration and support for the return of emigrants. Composed of 106 measures and 201 indicators, distributed along 5 Strategic Axes, in its implementation, are involved 10 ministries and several services of the public administration, as well as civil society entities.

**One-Stop-Shop:** The National support and Local Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) aim to provide a step forward regarding the integration of Portugal's migrants, including refugee population by offering competent, efficient and humane assistance in order to respond to their needs. Were created in 2004 and 2003 respectively, with the aim of responding in an integrated manner to the integration challenges facing migrants in Portugal, making available in the same building different public services (of 8 ministries) that immigrants have to resort in order to have full integration in Portugal and complementary support services, which result from ACM's (High Commission for Migration) partnerships with different civil society organizations, such as immigrant associations. In this innovative service, intercultural dialogue is also guaranteed through the work of intercultural mediators who promote care with cultural, linguistic and affective sensibility, promoting proximity between the State and migrant communities. Intercultural mediators, who originate from the different immigrant communities, play a key role in all CNAIM services. Each CNAIM provides a range of Government and non-Government services under one roof in a variety of languages (Arabic, Cape Verdean, English, Guinean Creole, Mandarin, Portuguese, Romanian and Russian). Services include, among others, the provision of information and direct assistance regarding legalisation and visa issues, family reunification, the educational system, access to healthcare, professional and educational skill recognition, social security and welfare issues, employment concerns, legal aid and support for immigrant associations. All services are provided free of charge.

The National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People for the years 2017-2023 (ENIPSSA) was recently approved by the Council of Ministers to enhance the work already done

at this level. This strategy encourages measures to be implemented with regard to: promoting awareness of the phenomenon of homelessness, including information, awareness-raising and education; to reinforce intervention promoting the integration homeless people; Coordination, monitoring and evaluation of ENIPSSA 2017-2023. The defined intervention model is based on the profitability of human and financial resources, as well as on the need to avoid duplication of responses and qualify the intervention in terms of the prevention of homelessness and follow-up among the users. The homeless population is particularly vulnerable, constituting a specific group where it is important to intervene with a view to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination.

To reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), the National Plan to Implement Youth Guarantee was continued during 2016. In 2017 and in coming years, it is important to make efficiency operational gains in the institutional system associated to the Youth Guarantee, broadening and reinforcing the network of partner institutions, with an aim to improve capacity in the identification of Youth NEET. By operationalizing the strategies conceived and developed in the National Strategy for young people neither in education nor in employment (designed in collaboration with ILO and support of the EU), in the field of technical assistance, it should promote efficiency gains in the identification and enrolment of youth, by using more efficient configurations of partnerships, aiming at the target audience of youth NEET, as well as unemployed youth not registered in the Employment Public Service. At the same time, a more articulated relationship between the different school counselling subsystems, in the employment public service and in the Qualifica Centres will be promoted, ensuring all youth and adults have knowledge of the available offers.

The valuation of training in learning results, in the scope of the double certification for young people, is also part of a comprehensive strategy for raising young people's qualifications and employability, with an emphasis on the training routes with a strong link to the labour market, in the context of high youth unemployment. Also with the aim of promoting and facilitating access to double certification qualification for youth and adults, we highlight the National Qualifications Catalogue (Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações, or CNQ) as an instrument of strategic management of non-academic qualifications.

Aside of the effort to upgrade the qualifications of younger people, it is important to overcome the qualifications deficit among adults, in particular economically active and unemployed adults, the long-term and very long-term unemployed with low qualifications, promoting lifelong learning. The Qualifica Programme foresees the establishment of 300 centres for hosting, guiding and certify adults, spread over all the online devices (Qualifica Passport) and a call centre, in conjunction with a broad offer of education and training of adults, with the aim of involving one million Portuguese people and to ensure that, by 2020, at least 50% of the adult population has completed secondary education and achieve the target set by the European Agenda for Adult Learning that by 2020, 15% of adults take part in lifelong learning activities and 25% by 2025.

In addition, there are a number of programmes and initiatives, such as: i) the programme Incentivo ao Desenvolvimento Associativo, that allows for the development of work placements of young people in youth organizations; ii) the programme Empreende Já — Network of

Perceptions and Business Management, to stimulate an entrepreneurial culture by supporting projects of young entrepreneurs who create jobs for young people; iii) the national project Youthpass which allows for the recognition and validation of skills acquired through non-formal education; iv) the creation of the profile of Technical Youth, a professional that should reach the most disadvantaged young people and mobilize them for more fulfilled education courses.

The citizenship and participation of young people is a central aspect of public policies that boost demand, in qualitative and quantitative terms, i.e. increasing participation, but also reducing inequality in access to rights for full social inclusion: the programmes and projects involving leisure activities for young people, youth volunteering, knowledge and experience of democratic institutions, in addition to the focus on young people, generally allow access to youth who usually do not have the same economic and social opportunities, such as Voluntary National Review – Portugal,

Youth Parliament, the Euroschool, the Programme for Occupation of Free Time, Holiday on the Move, the Programme Without Borders, the Agora Nós (Us Now, youth volunteering), or the International Work Camps.

### 3.3

We would like to highlight:

- The Choices Programme (Programa Escolhas) is a governmental programme created in January 2001, promoted by the Council of the Presidency of Ministers and integrated in the High Commission for Migration. It is presently in its 6th edition (2016-2018), supporting 112 approved projects, involving around 85.000 participants. The program's mission is to promote the social inclusion of children and young people from the most vulnerable socio-economic contexts, in view of equal opportunities and the strengthening of social cohesion. The direct participants of the Choices Programme are children and young people from vulnerable socioeconomic contexts, namely descendants of immigrants, Roma communities and Portuguese emigrants, between the ages of 6 and 30 years old. In recent years, the Choices Programme has been focusing on the descendants of immigrants and ethnic minorities (with priority, but without exclusivity). The projects are defined by local consortia of partners. The projects are structured in five main categories: 1) School inclusion and non-formal education; 2) Vocational training and employability; 3) Community and civic participation; 4) Digital inclusion and 5) Entrepreneurship and empowerment.
- One-Stop-Shop: The National and Local Centres for the Integration of Migrants.
- Developing and supporting projects based on the concrete needs of society and promoting links between the different levels of governance (national, regional and local) and between the different actors in society will always be an important asset for social cohesion and the realization of social rights. To this end, we recall the Council of Europe Plan of Action for Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe Research and Advocacy Division for Social Cohesion within the framework of the Project "Responding Together:

engaging citizens in reducing poverty and precariousness". Implemented in Portugal within the Social Network of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

- In changing, complex and multicultural societies, as those we live in, social rights awareness-raising is a crucial and transversal educational issue, which deserves deep consideration both in curriculum development and students education. In Portugal, despite being a transversal educational content, social rights have a pivotal role in two main educational domains of the curriculum: Education for Citizenship and Class Tutoring. So, we suggest the design of a training course in b-learning regime that can confront theory and practice in national contexts, and simultaneously allow the exchange and share of experiences, analysis and meta-analysis between educational professionals of different countries.

While in Portugal the main recipients of the training course should be professionals involved with teaching of education for citizenship and class tutors, social mediators and other education technicians, in other countries and according to the characteristics of their own local and national contexts the recipients should be the educational professionals usually engaged with social rights awareness-raising.

## SWITZERLAND

### **1. Access to social rights, in general**

#### Challenge:

The effective access to social rights (which is a very familiar subject to all of us who attended the Conference in Malta in 2002 :)) may be a challenge for some people. Access to social rights and services in a country such as Switzerland may be due less to the origin, sex or age of the person than to their ability to understand and express oneself in a society that is always more complex. Services become more user-friendly on the web and make life easier for the persons at ease with internet but not for all citizens. In view of the profusion of the offer (and sometimes the complexity of the situations), not everyone can get away alone through the labyrinth of administration. In addition, the game of ping-pong between services can discourage the best will in the world.

#### Example of measures taken

To tackle some of these problems, in 2010, national structures for an inter-institutional collaboration were established at the national level (in French: collaboration interinstitutionnelle, CII, <http://www.iiz.ch/fr-CH/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=103236&dsclang=fr-CH>): all actors at the national, cantonal and municipal levels active in the field of unemployment, insurance, invalidity insurance, social assistance, occupational training and migration/integration are part of the CII. The objective is to develop an optimal coordination of the interfaces so that existing offers can be used efficiently and effectively in the interest of the persons concerned. The CII defines models of formal and informal cooperation in strategies, operational processes, coordination of offers, and even collaboration in specific cases. By contributing to the reduction of duplication and inconsistencies between unemployment insurance, invalidity insurance, social assistance,

vocational training and migration/integration, these structures play a major role in the coordination of the Swiss social protection system.

#### **Instruments of the CoE**

CM Recommendation to member States (2003) 19 on improving access to social rights is a great achievement of the CoE and is based on the results of the Malta Conference. However, some 15 years after its adoption, the expert could have a look at it and evaluate if it is still up to date or if some new challenges appeared, and/or if some elements of its Annex need further consideration.

## **2. Fight against poverty/Children and Youth**

### **Challenge**

A good education is one of the best ways to avoid poverty. However, unfortunately, the socio-economic background of a family still determines the social and cognitive development of children and thus their school success. To break the vicious circle of "inherited" poverty, it is important to promote equal opportunities and this from the earliest possible age. This is particularly important for children with a migration background and for children from poor families. "Early encouragement" has been shown to be a key tool for preventing poverty and the consequent risk of – often lifelong – disadvantage for individuals and groups.

### **Example of measures taken**

In the framework of the Swiss National Program against Poverty 2014-2018 (<http://www.contre-la-pauvrete.ch/home/>), early education programs are encouraged. The aim is to develop early childhood education and care systems for disadvantaged families because such systems are considered to be a fundamental tool to prevent poverty. Indeed children from socially disadvantaged families derive particular benefit from high quality early intervention. Attending a high quality education and care facility (day-care centre, playgroup or child minder) stimulates children's learning and development. The National Program supports on the one hand projects that analyse the quality of the offers and on the other hand projects to reduce barriers to access to offers or to convince parents to collaborate. In this context, a guide on best practice was published ([http://www.contre-la-pauvrete.ch/fileadmin/kundendaten/Studien\\_NAP/Leitfaden\\_Wirksamkeit\\_von\\_Angeboten\\_der\\_fruhen\\_Foerderung\\_F.pdf](http://www.contre-la-pauvrete.ch/fileadmin/kundendaten/Studien_NAP/Leitfaden_Wirksamkeit_von_Angeboten_der_fruhen_Foerderung_F.pdf)).

It describes the prerequisites and the framework conditions so that the early intervention offers have a positive impact, in particular on children from disadvantaged families; this guide is a working tool for all professionals, organizations, public authorities when planning, elaborating, monitoring and developing early education offers.

### **Instruments of the CoE**

CM Recommendation to member States (2011) 19 on fostering social mobility as a contribution to social cohesion

is more recent, but again the expert could examine it and identify an especially important element of it that could be further studied because it corresponds to a challenge in most countries of the CoE.



## TURKEY

### Question 1

1.1. What major new trends and challenges are you experiencing in your country with regards to the way the following groups enjoy the social rights as indicated in the European Social Charter?

The current challenges in Turkey, namely, poverty, unemployment, low labour force participation rate especially for women, difficulties in integration of vulnerable people into economic and social life, and inequality of income make it necessary to provide better social services and monitor the labour market in an effective way.

In Turkey, vulnerable people in particular people with disabilities, ex-prisoners and ex-convicts, poor people living in slum (gecekondü) areas, Roma citizens, parents of working children and the children in need of special protection are excluded from economic and social life mainly in relation with poverty or being at risk of poverty. Although each group has different specific problems; the common problems for all groups are limited access to labour market, education, health and social security.

Even though the vulnerable people in the labour market have equal rights in terms of legislation, labour market indicators display a worse outlook. Either vulnerable people cannot attend to the labour market or in case of employment; unfavourable conditions such as low incomes, informal working, irregular income and deprivation of social security are the existing problems. The low labour force participation rate of the vulnerable people stems from their low level of education and job related qualifications, barriers restricting their employment and insufficient employment opportunities. Such problems in participating to the labour force faced by vulnerable people result in social exclusion and poverty risk. The harsh and devastating effect of poverty affects mostly disadvantaged groups which are already in an unfavourable situation. As they have lower chances to be employed, they are more likely to be poor and unemployed.

The main problem faced by vulnerable people in the labour market is social exclusion. Vulnerable people are pushed out of mainstream social and economic life on various grounds. Social exclusion results in unemployment, insecurity, violence, lack of social security and education, poor health conditions, poverty and risk of poverty. The main reasons of social exclusion of vulnerable people are lack of necessary skills, lack of information about available services, prejudices against them and inefficiency of public services.

Within this context, it is generally acknowledged that no sustained improvement of the living standards can be achieved without incorporating vulnerable people into labour force. Therefore, they must be supported to overcome such difficulties and have equal chances with others who do not face such difficulties.

On the other hand, according to TURKSTAT Child Labour Survey (2012), 5.9 % of children between the ages 6-17 are working, mostly in agriculture. 49.8 % of the working children continue to education whereas 50.2 % of children drop out of school. The working decision is

not a decision made by children themselves but in the direction with the parents' needs, and in general the low educational level and the poverty of the family.

1.2. What policy action is your country taking to address the challenges and increase social cohesion particularly for the following groups?

The situation of vulnerable people is also referred in the documents prepared within in the process of Turkey's accession to EU. Ministry of Labour and Social Security, together with its affiliated institutions, is the responsible body of the harmonization of the Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment. Social Policy and Employment chapter aims at increasing employment, improving working and living conditions, establishing social protection mechanisms at appropriate level, promoting dialogue with social partners, developing human resources in order to ensure sustainable employment, combating poverty and social exclusion and providing equal opportunity for men and women. In this context, the Ministry is responsible for the policy areas such as labour law, occupational health and safety, equality between women and men, anti-discrimination, social dialogue, employment, social inclusion and protection.

Turkey has been preparing and implementing some national strategy documents dealing with employment and social policy including vulnerable people. The "National Employment Strategy" which was prepared under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has been approved in 2014. National Employment Strategy has been prepared in order to solve structural difficulties in Turkish labour market and to provide permanent solution to employment by increasing the contribution of growth to employment. In the National Employment Strategy 2014-2023, priority axis for increasing the employment of the vulnerable people. These groups also include women, youth and people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. In the Action Plan of this strategy, there are some actions on job and vocational counselling for these groups, facilitating their access to labour market as well as decreasing discrimination against them. Removing the obstacles on participation to labour force and employment of the vulnerable people primarily as women, disabled, youth and long-term unemployed is aimed.

Another national document is the Tenth Development Plan of Turkey which covers 2014-2018 period. It is the fundamental policy document that includes economic, social and cultural areas in an integrated approach. Within this document, "Qualified Individuals, Strong Society" is determined as one of the main objectives. In this context, importance of accession to public services and integration into society for disadvantaged groups like children, youth, women, etc. is emphasised. Participation to education and labour market for these groups is addressed as one of the main issues about equality of opportunities.

On the other hand, in 2005, "National Policy and Program Framework for the Prevention of Child Labour" including 2005-2015 was prepared and implemented by our Ministry with the contributions of all relevant institutions and organizations in accordance with the Convention No. 182. The policy and program framework, which was completed in 2015, was updated in the manner that it includes the 2017-2023 period and the National Program for Combating with Child Labour (2017-2023) was prepared. In the National Program for Combating with Child

Labour (2017-2023), the primary target groups were determined as “Working on Streets, Working in Heavy Duties and Dangerous Works in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Working in Mobile and Temporary Agricultural Works for a fee except the Family Works in Agriculture”. This program aims to carry out activities for the elimination of child labour, which have serious adverse effects on the physical, corporal, mental, social and moral development of children, within the framework of a holistic and participatory national program. Within the framework of the program, basic strategies and activities for preventing child labour and the institutions and organizations to implement them have been determined. With this program, it has been determined as a basic objective to prevent child labour, especially the worst forms of child labour, with comprehensive measures such as eliminating the poverty, increasing the quality of education and accessibility, increasing social consciousness and sensitivity, which are the main reasons for children to take part in the working life.