



**ON IMPLEMENTATION OF
NON-ACCEPTED PROVISIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER**

Report of the Republic of Armenia

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Article 9. The right to vocational guidance

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Law "On primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education", which prescribes the Principles of the state policy in the field of handicraft and secondary vocational education and state guarantees for the rights of citizens, the State shall set conditions for smooth operation and development of the system of handicraft and secondary vocational education.

Pursuant to the aforementioned Article:

In accordance with the number of seats approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, a refund of tuition fee (full or partial (discount)) in the form of benefit shall be granted to:

- (1) the students having been admitted to education institutions under handicraft or secondary vocational education programme, based on the results of competition held, showing high academic performance upon the results of academic year;
- (2) the social groups provided for by laws;
- (3) the students with scores higher than the threshold score for family insecurity, students from borderline communities receiving social assistance, students having participated in combat operations, students who have two or more minor children, students having been admitted to receive targeted learning in the professions that are of priority and importance for the State, according to academic performance, under the procedure and in the amount prescribed by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

At the same time, the institution for professional orientation and career guidance has been set up in the Republic of Armenia for the purpose of solving the problems associated with the choice of profession and advancement. The reforms for the establishment of a National Career Development Support System began in 2012 when the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved the "Concept Paper for the Development of the System of Professional

Orientation in the Republic of Armenia" (Concept Paper). The Concept Paper enshrined for the first time that in the free market economy and a rapidly changing labour market, the career development support system should provide services to a person throughout his or her lifetime, regardless of age and socio-employment status. It was prescribed that the purpose of the system is: "Creating a lifetime opportunity for free and conscious choice of professional activity that to the maximum corresponds to the interests, needs and peculiar characteristics of a person, as well as to the demand for qualified and competitive human resources in the labour market". Taking as a basis the model of a system of support to career development proposed under the Concept Paper, the processes of introducing the Concept Paper continue to this day.

It was only after 2013 that the activities for career guidance for students at primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions began to be implemented systematically. Before this, at the initiative of the directors of optional primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions, reciprocal visits to schools were organised, the professions of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) institution and the terms and conditions for receiving an education were presented, but the overall introduction was carried in 2018-2020 when funds were allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for one position for professional orientation and one position for careers at primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions. For the purpose of institutional introduction, the "Professional Orientation and Capacity Development Center" branch (POCD Center) of the "National Institute of Labour and Social Research" State Non-Profit Organisation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia developed model forms of the rules of procedure for performance and description of position of a specialist which were approved by the management boards of VET institutions. Those specialists receive ongoing training and are provided with the methodology and toolkit for conducting individual and group counselling for students. Currently, there is a relevant staff position in all 96 VET institutions of the republic. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, jointly with the POCD Center, conducts monitoring to find out the involvement of citizens and the level of employment of graduates. More than 90 per cent of

students of primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions benefit from the professional orientation and career guidance services.

In the general education sector, within the scope of introduction of the state standard of general education for professional orientation of learners, the pilot standard and programmes for the "Professional Orientation" course for the 8th-11th grades — approved under the Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia — has been piloted in Tavush Marz of the Republic of Armenia. Starting from the 2024-2025 Academic Year, this will be taught in all schools of the republic. The main purpose of the "Professional Orientation" educational programme is to help learners make a conscious choice of profession, by creating an opportunity to make a conscious choice of profession that to the maximum corresponds to the interests, needs and peculiar characteristics of a person, as well as to the demand of a competitive labour force in the labour market.

The POCD Center, within the scope of the "Services for Providing Methodology of the Professional Orientation System and Specialists' Training" Programme (also with the support of donor organisations) under the State Budget, continues the activities for the overall introduction and development of the professional orientation and career guidance system at all levels of formal education and within the system of social services.

In 2018-2020, the POCD Center carried out the following activities:

1. Developing guides-handbooks:

- The POCD Center developed the following for employment specialists of the territorial centres of the State Agency for Complex Social Services and Employment (currently — territorial centres of the Integrated Social Service):
 - ✓ educational-methodical handbook "Self-Servicing for Career Planning at the Territorial Centres of the State Agency for Complex Social Services and Employment";

- ✓ guide for "Organising the Activities for Professional Orientation and Career Guidance in Community-based Social Services", which is designed for the administrative and service-providing personnel of the Territorial Centres for Integrated Social Services. The proposed modules are aimed at organising the mutually co-operated activities of all interested and engaged parties at the community level for effective implementation of the activities for professional orientation and career guidance for residents of the community (pupil, student, young person, adult).
- ✓ methodical guide entitled "Key Steps for Professional Orientation and Career Planning for Citizens in Territorial Centres for the Integrated Social Service".

2. *Training courses for specialists carrying out professional orientation activities:*

Under the methodology developed by the POCD Center, 486 specialists of the general education institutions, VET institutions, employment institutions and the 24-hour children's care and protection institutions of the city of Yerevan and the marzes of the Republic of Armenia have undergone training.

3. Methodical assistance and counselling for the specialists having undergone training;

Ongoing methodical assistance and professional counselling were provided to 665 specialists having undergone training.

By ensuring fulfilment of the requirements defined under Term 11 of the "Better Qualifications for Better Jobs" EU Budget Support Agreement, a separate staff position of a specialist for professional orientation and career guidance was introduced in 96 primary and secondary vocational education and training institutions (PSVET) in the city of Yerevan and the marzes of the Republic of Armenia.

The POCD Center, within the scope of its functions and in execution of points 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 of the Measures ensuring implementation of the 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, carried out the following activities in 2021-2023:

1. *Developing guides-handbooks:*

- ✓ developed the "Educational-Methodical Guide for Professional Orientation Activities in General Education Schools" handbook designed for the 8th-11th grades; the handbook was approved under Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia No 1287-A/2 of 18 December 2019;
- ✓ developed a guide for high school teachers for the purpose of holding a course on career management based on the project learning technology, taking as a basis the standard and programmes of the "Professional Orientation" course approved under Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia No 1602-A/2 of 24 September 2021;
- ✓ developed a guide for "Provision of Professional Orientation and Career Counselling and Relevant Services for Non-Competitive Persons (including persons demobilised from compulsory military service) by Employment Specialists and Social Workers at the Territorial Centre of the Integrated Social Service";

- ✓ developed a guide for "Organising Professional Orientation Activities at 24-hour Children's Care and Protection Institutions".

2. Training courses for specialists carrying out professional orientation activities:

The training courses are held on the basis of the methodology developed by the POCD Center and provided to the specialists.

- In execution of point 7.1 of the Measures ensuring implementation of the 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, more than 500 pedagogues of the general education schools of the city of Yerevan and the marzes of the Republic of Armenia have undergone training. In the 2023-2024 Academic Year, professional orientation clubs were introduced in the 8th-11th grades of nearly 250 schools of the republic.
- In execution of point 7.2 of the Measures ensuring implementation of the 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, 100 employment specialists of 49 territorial centres of the Central Office of the Integrated Social Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia in the city of Yerevan and the marzes of the Republic of Armenia have undergone training.
- In execution of point 7.3 of the Measures ensuring implementation of the 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, 11 specialists of the 24-hour children's care and protection institutions have undergone training.
- In execution of point 7.4 of the Measures ensuring implementation of the 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, 24 specialists of 22 PSVET institutions have undergone training. For the purpose of qualitative assessment of the career guidance services within the VET system, the model of career guidance excellence has been piloted at an international level, which was guaranteed for worldwide introduction by the European Foundation for Education.

3. Methodical assistance and counselling for the specialists having undergone training:

900 specialists of the general education schools of Yerevan and the marzes of the Republic of Armenia, VET institutions and the 24-hour children's care and protection institutions and the territorial centres of the Integrated Social Service, who have undergone training, have received ongoing professional counselling and methodical assistance.

In the past, the function of professional guidance and career services for young persons, job seekers and the unemployed was carried out by the territorial centres of the State Employment Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia until April 2021.

Starting from April 2021, the activities of the State Employment Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia were terminated (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 251-N of 25 February 2021), and starting from May, the Integrated Social Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia continues to provide the professional orientation and career guidance services through its 49 territorial centres.

The professional orientation services at the territorial centres of the Integrated Social Service are provided in accordance with age-specific characteristics, the needs of target groups, social status, as well as the potential and preferences of a person. In particular, the following are included in the main scope for targeting persons in need of professional orientation, irrespective of age and social status:

- ✓ job seekers and the unemployed;
- ✓ adolescents receiving care at day-care and 24-hour care institutions;
- ✓ the youth;
- ✓ young persons demobilised from military service;
- ✓ persons at risk of dismissal from work, in need of and with the desire for re-

specialisation;

- ✓ young persons dropped out of mandatory basic education who lack a certificate of secondary or comprehensive education or who have left the particular vocational education institution without receiving vocational education;
- ✓ members of a family at risk of migration within the scope of support aimed at mitigating that risk;
- ✓ young persons between the ages of 16-18 and young persons demobilised from fixed-term compulsory military service who are from families record-registered in the insecurity assessment system;
- ✓ novice businesspersons who are in need of training and counselling to implement entrepreneurial activities;
- ✓ other persons.

Assessment of employment needs is conducted by the territorial centre to foster job placement for job seekers and ensure sustainable employment in that way.

At the territorial centres of the Integrated Social Service, the need of a person for professional orientation is identified and services are provided for three main groups of beneficiaries:

- ✓ persons applying to the single reception desk to benefit from the professional orientation services;

- ✓ persons whose need for professional orientation was identified while paying a household visit or managing a social case to solve family-related or other social problems of a particular person;
- ✓ persons referred to the territorial centre through the social co-operation network of the Integrated Social Service.

Visitors are provided with professional orientation services by the employment specialist of the territorial centre of the Integrated Social Service who regularly undergoes training. Professional orientation services at the territorial centres are provided in three main directions — provision of information, provision of counselling and orientation.

The national programme for career guidance — introduced in the high school in Armenia — has been recognised as an example of the best practice and has been included in the list of countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) such as Canada, Finland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States of America.

Amid the global challenges, attaching importance to the implementation of active and innovative policies aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the youth in the labour market, over the past years, the OECD has been attaching importance to the introduction of career guidance systems and has been encouraging governments to take active steps in this direction. For this purpose, within the scope of the Career Readiness project being implemented by the OECD, the best examples of effective career guidance and the successful policy practices all over the world are brought together. As a rule, to this day, the programmes introduced by developed countries have been included in the list. The programmes are published and provided to governments, schools, employers and other stakeholders as counselling, showing how the youth can be best prepared in order to be competitive in a rapidly changing labour market.

Article 10. The right to vocational training

Article 10§1

- 1. to provide or promote, as necessary, the technical and vocational training of all persons, including the handicapped, in consultation with employers' and workers' organisations, and to grant facilities for access to higher technical and university education, based solely on individual aptitude;*

Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia establishes:

"Each citizen shall have the right to education.

Secondary education within state educational institutions shall be free of charge.

Each citizen shall have the right to receive higher and other vocational education free of charge on a competitive basis within state education institutions. The procedure for the establishment and functioning of non-state education institutions is prescribed by law."

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On education", "The Republic of Armenia shall ensure the right to education, irrespective of national origin, race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property status or other circumstances. Restrictions on the right to professional (vocational) education shall be provided for by law."

In accordance with the number of seats approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, a refund of tuition fee (full or partial (discount)) in the form of benefit shall be granted to:

- (1) the students having been admitted to education institutions under handicraft or secondary vocational education programme, based on the results of competition held, showing high academic performance upon the results of academic year;

- (2) the social groups provided for by laws;
- (3) the students with scores higher than the threshold score for family insecurity, students from borderline communities receiving social assistance, students having participated in combat operations, students who have two or more minor children, students having been admitted to receive targeted learning in the professions that are of priority and importance for the State, according to academic performance, under the procedure and in the amount prescribed by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Pursuant to points 7, 14, 15, 18 and 22 of the Procedure "For granting student benefit, refunding tuition fee and establishing scholarship in state education institutions of the Republic of Armenia implementing primary vocational (handicraft) and/or secondary vocational education programmes" approved under Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1784-N of 4 November 2021:

7. In accordance with the number of seats for free education approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, student benefit shall be granted to:

- (1) the student admitted to an educational institution through the procedure for admission to seats for free education based on the results of competition in the first academic year, and starting from the following academic year — the student with higher academic performance in the previous academic year, as a result of rotation;
- (2) children left without parental care and admitted to an educational institution under a primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education programme, as prescribed by Article 7 of the Law "On social protection of children left without parental care";
- (3) persons (children) with disabilities, as well as with severe and deep limitation of functionality, and in the case of children — also with moderate limitation of functionality, as prescribed by the Law "On the rights of persons with disabilities";

- (4) beneficiaries prescribed by Article 7 of the Law "On military service and the status of the military servants".
14. Refund of tuition fee by the State (full or partial (discount)) shall be granted in case of availability of documents regarding on-site training and attesting to the relevant status and according to performance to the below-mentioned:
- (1) students with scores higher than the threshold score for family insecurity;
 - (2) students from borderline communities receiving social assistance; moreover, within the meaning of this sub-point, the students of educational institutions in the settlements included in the list of settlements of borderline communities receiving social assistance, as well as students record-registered in those settlements and permanently residing in those settlements for the recent five years approved by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, shall be deemed to be students of borderline communities receiving social assistance;
 - (3) students having participated in combat operations — participation in combat operations within the composition of the Armed Forces shall be affirmed on the basis of the statement of information issued by the Conscription and Mobilization Service of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia or by the territorial subdivision of the Service for military record-registration of a citizen according to the place of record-registration (military registration office) or by relevant indication in the military record-registration book, and within the composition of other forces — under the statement of information issued by the relevant authorised state body;
 - (4) students with two or more minor children;
 - (5) students having been admitted to receive targeted learning in the professions that are of priority and importance for the State; moreover, other terms and conditions for refund of the tuition fee for students having been admitted to receive targeted

learning may be established under the decisions of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

15. In case of meeting more than one of the terms and conditions prescribed in point 14 of this Procedure, the student shall benefit from any of them upon his or her preference, by submitting the relevant documents along with the application. When determining the amount of refund of the tuition fee of a student, the academic performance in the previous academic year (in the first year — the final results of the previous educational programme) shall be taken as a basis:
 - (1) in case of having only "excellent" and/or "good" grades — the amount of refund of the tuition fee shall make up 70%;
 - (2) in case of having not less than 75% of "excellent" and/or "good" grades — the amount of refund of the tuition fee shall make up 50%;
 - (3) in case of having not less than 50% of "excellent" and/or "good" grades — the amount of refund of the tuition fee shall make up 30%.
18. An educational institution may, at its own expenses, fully or partially refund the tuition fee for up to 10% of the student body studying on a paid basis, taking into consideration the social standing and high academic performance of the particular student:
 - (1) for socially disadvantaged students (from families with the family insecurity score higher than 0, record-registered in the family insecurity assessment system);
 - (2) for students having lost one parent (with single parent);
 - (3) for students having 2 and more minors or 2 and more children that are students;
 - (4) for students from families that have 2 and more student children studying in paid educational system;
 - (5) for students whose parent has disability under the 1st or 2nd group of disability or has severe and deep limitation of functionality;

- (6) for students who are the children of pedagogues of general education schools and educational institutions in mountainous and borderline villages;
 - (7) for students with children under one year of age;
 - (8) students who display high academic standing and are not included in the student benefit system.
22. State scholarship is a state financial incentive that is granted to the following students pursuing their studies:
- (1) students having been admitted on the basis of basic education under the list of professions of priority and important fields approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia every year (hereinafter referred to as "the overriding sector");
 - (2) students of a social group prescribed by the Laws "On social protection of children left without parental care" or "On the rights of persons with disabilities", as well as of educational institutions in borderline and mountainous settlements — in case of excellent academic performance.

The principles of the state policy in the field of higher and postgraduate professional education are prescribed by the Law "On higher and postgraduate professional education", including the following:

- (1) ensuring and protecting the right of a person and citizen to obtain higher and postgraduate professional education;
- (2) access to higher and postgraduate professional education;
- (3) uninterrupted, successive and continuous nature of the educational process;
- (4) competitiveness, transparency and publicity.

The State shall ensure development of higher and postgraduate professional education in the following directions: bringing the educational programmes into compliance with the demands of the labour market, ensuring of financial assistance to educational institutions carrying out

higher and postgraduate professional education programmes and to the learners of those educational institutions, in accordance with the requirements of the State.

Pursuant to part 4 of Article 6 of the Law "On higher and postgraduate professional education":

- "4. In accordance with the number of seats approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the refund of tuition fees (full or partial (discount)) in the form of benefit shall be granted to the students having been admitted to higher education institutions, based on the results of competition held, learners with high academic performance upon the results of academic year, the social groups provided for by laws, as well as, under the procedure and in the amount prescribed by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia according to academic performance — to the students with scores higher than the threshold score for family insecurity, students from borderline communities receiving social assistance, students having participated in combat operations, students having two or more minor children and having been admitted under the Bachelor's or integrated education programme through on-site training and students having been admitted through targeted learning in the professions that are of priority and importance for the State."

The procedure for refund (full or partial (discount)) of tuition fees and granting state scholarship in the form of benefit at higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia was approved upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1183-N of 27 July 2006.

Regulations are also envisaged in the Law "On the rights of persons with disabilities", Article 15 whereof prescribes the following:

- "5. Persons with severe and deep limitation of functionality, and in the case of children — also with moderate limitation of functionality, having scored the minimum passing scores for the paid systems at state primary vocational (handicraft), state intermediate vocational, state and accredited non-state higher education institutions, shall be admitted to the relevant educational institutions through full refund of the tuition fee

from the State Budget (hereinafter referred to as "the refund of the tuition fee").

7. On the ground prescribed by part 5 of this Article, persons with severe or deep limitation of functionality, studying on-site (internal study) with refund of the tuition fee at state primary vocational (handicraft), state secondary vocational, state and accredited non-state higher education institutions, shall continue to receive refund from the funds of the State Budget, where based on the results of functionality assessment during study, at least moderate limitation of functionality has been established for them.
8. Learners in the paid system of state primary vocational (handicraft), state secondary vocational, state and accredited non-state higher education institutions, shall receive refund of the tuition fee from the funds of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia, where based on the results of functionality assessment during study, severe or deep limitation of functionality, and in the case of children — also moderate limitation of functionality have been established for them.
9. On the grounds prescribed by parts 5 and 7 of this Article, persons with severe and deep limitation of functionality, studying on-site (internal study) with refund of the tuition fee at state primary vocational (handicraft), state secondary vocational, state and accredited non-state higher education institutions, in case of passing their regular examinations and tests, shall receive scholarships during the entire period of having severe and deep limitation of functionality, irrespective of other benefits, pensions or other monetary payments."

Current situation regarding students forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh

Pursuant to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1762-L of 12 October 2023 "On approving the procedure for granting scholarship for the purpose of full or partial refund of the tuition fee for students forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh after 19 September 2023 and the maximum amounts of the scholarship to be provided", refund of the

tuition fee has been granted to 2997 students having studied in the higher education institutions and PSVE institutions of Nagorno-Karabakh and having moved to educational institutions of the Republic of Armenia after 19 September 2023. There were 1837 students in the higher education institutions, and 1160 students in PSVE institutions. Refund of tuition fees was also provided to 35 students enrolled in PSVE institutions before 19 September 2023.

The aforementioned Decision clearly prescribes the maximum amounts of the scholarship under the relevant education programmes in the higher education sector, which may be less than the amount of the actual tuition fee established in the higher education institutions, that is to say, not more than AMD 700 000, and not more than AMD 560 000 in Master's education programmes.

Payment of the tuition fees became a serious problem for 850 students of the higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia who were residents of Nagorno-Karabakh prior to the forced displacement of 19 September 2023. The "Procedure for providing refund of the tuition fee for learners of Nagorno-Karabakh enrolled in the paid learning system of educational institutions carrying out primary (handicraft), secondary, higher and postgraduate professional education programmes of the Republic of Armenia before 19 September 2023" was approved under Decision No 2291-L of 21 December 2023. According to this, refund of tuition fee for the 2023-2024 Academic Year was provided to those factually studying in the Bachelor's, continuing and integrated, Master's and clinical residency educational programmes within the on-site paid learning system as of 1 November 2023 and receiving refund of the tuition fee by Nagorno-Karabakh in the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Academic Years, in the amounts as follows and under the following conditions:

- (1) for the 1st semester — in the amount of 100% of the tuition fee for the concerned semester, irrespective of the quality point average (QPA) generated after the previous academic year;
- (2) for the 2nd semester — in the amount of 100% of the tuition fee for the concerned semester, in case of passing 65% of the QPA after the 1st semester of the 2023-2024

Academic Year.

The admission of foreign students to higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia shall be carried out in accordance with Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 700-N of 28 April 2011 "On approving the procedure for admission of foreign citizens, as well as the family members of diplomats working in the bodies of diplomatic service of the Republic of Armenia operating in a foreign country, to higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia". In particular, pursuant to the points of this Procedure referred to below:

4. Foreigners may receive higher and postgraduate professional education under the higher and postgraduate basic and additional education programmes provided for by the Laws of the Republic of Armenia "On education" and "On higher and postgraduate professional education" — through on-site, extramural and distance learning, in accordance with the list of approved professions (except for military and police higher and postgraduate professional education).
5. Foreigners may apply to educational institutions in the Republic of Armenia also on a general basis, that is to say, after an expert examination of the documents of the applicant conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia — verifying authenticity of the information in the documents and checking the availability of consular validation, as well as record-registering and creating a unified databank.
6. Record-registration and expert examination of the documents of applicants shall be conducted by the Ministry.
7. Foreigners who have received at least secondary education in the Republic of Armenia or education corresponding to the level of at least secondary education in the Republic of Armenia and have a graduation document certifying the specified education (graduation certificate, education certificate), may apply to a higher education institution to obtain the Bachelor's qualification degree under this Procedure.

8. Foreigners who have received education corresponding to the qualification degree of at least Bachelor's, certified specialist or Master's in the Republic of Armenia and have a graduation document certifying the specified education (diploma), may apply to an educational institution to obtain the Master's qualification degree under this Procedure, in accordance with the procedure approved under Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia No 1193-N of 6 December 2007 "On approving the procedure for admission and learning of Master's studies in the higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia".
9. Foreigners who have education corresponding to the degree of at least certified specialist or Master's in the Republic of Armenia and have a document certifying the specified education (diploma), may apply to an educational institution to study in the PhD (research studentship) under the educational programme of a researcher under this Procedure.
10. Admission of foreign applicants for receiving an education under the Bachelor's education programme shall be carried out on the basis of consideration of applicants' documents and knowledge assessment (including knowledge of language of future learning). Foreigners lacking the command of language of future learning and the examination subjects envisaged for admission for the relevant profession of the higher education institution must study in the preparatory course of an educational institution in the Republic of Armenia:
 - (1) applicants may be admitted to the first year of study based on the results of knowledge checks;
 - (2) knowledge checks shall be conducted by the higher education institution concerned in accordance with the requirements of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, under the knowledge checking procedure established by the higher education institution and the secondary education programme of the Republic of Armenia. The knowledge checking procedure and the subject-specific programmes

shall be submitted to the Ministry before the start of the time period of accepting the documents of applicants for the given year (the time periods shall be approved by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia).

11. Admission of foreigners having applied to study through the Master's education programme shall be carried out based on consideration of the applicants' documents. Foreigners lacking the command of the language of future learning must study a training course which is part of the preparatory course of an educational institution in the Republic of Armenia.
12. Admission of foreigners having applied to study under the researcher education programme shall be carried out by the educational institution under the procedure approved in accordance with the requirements of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, based on consideration of the applicants' documents, as well as the positive opinion of the given educational institutions regarding the scientific reference paper submitted by the applicant.
13. The time period, course and other terms and conditions for admission of foreigners having applied to receive a second profession through the Bachelor's and Master's education programmes shall be established by the certification commission to be set up for the purpose of considering the applications, which shall be set up in accordance with the procedure approved under Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia No 671-N of 15 August 2006 "On receiving a second profession in the higher vocational education institutions of the Republic of Armenia".
14. In educational institutions, foreigners may study:
 - (1) on a contractual basis (paid);
 - (2) under interstate and inter-agency treaties or agreements — within the scope of the seats provided to foreigners under the full refund of the tuition fee (free) by the State in the form of student benefits;

- (3) within the limits of the seats provided by the Government of the Republic of Armenia — under the full refund of the tuition fee by the State in the form of student benefits — for admission of Diaspora Armenians.

15. This Procedure does not limit the number of paid seats for applicants, unless otherwise provided for by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia and the charter of the particular educational institution.

Within the scope of the admission programme for the Armenian students from Diaspora who are foreign citizens, the tuition fee is refunded exclusively within the scope of the state order for 70 students in the professions of Armenology and culture.

Pursuant to the "Procedure for granting student benefit and state scholarship at higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia" approved upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1183-N of 27 July 2006, where a foreign citizen has been admitted to a higher education institution on a general basis like citizens of the Republic of Armenia, he or she may equally apply for a discount of the tuition fee like students who are citizens of the Republic of Armenia. In all other cases, due to different social or personal matters, foreign citizens may apply for this purpose in accordance with the regulations for tuition fees established by higher education institutions. The applications of foreign citizens may be considered by the rector and, upon necessity and if possible, a relevant decision on discounting will be adopted. Although the regulations established by higher education institutions do not preclude the possibility of discounts on the education of foreign citizens, at this moment, there is no information on the part of the higher education institutions with respect to provision of discounts on tuition fees for them.

With respect to paragraphs 2 and 3 and point "(c)" of paragraph 5 of Article 10 of the Charter, it is necessary to take into account in general that the regulations on the prohibition of discrimination prescribed by Article 3.1 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as "the Code") also concern the cases presented in paragraphs 2 and 3

and point "(c)" of paragraph 5 of Article 10 of the Charter; in particular, pursuant to Article 3.1 of the Code:

1. Discrimination shall be prohibited by the labour legislation.
2. Any direct or indirect distinction, exclusion or restriction on the grounds of sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances, the aim or result whereof is displaying less favourable treatment in cases of emergence and/or change and/or termination of collective and/or individual employment relations or prohibiting or denying the recognition and/or exercise, on equal basis with others, of any right prescribed by labour legislation shall be deemed to be discrimination, except for cases when such distinction, exclusion or restriction is objectively justified by the legitimate aim pursued, and the means used for reaching that aim are proportionate and necessary.
3. In job announcements (competitions) and when establishing employment relations, it is prohibited to establish any condition deemed to be a ground for discrimination other than practical qualities and professional training and qualification, except for cases prescribed by this Code and laws of the Republic of Armenia or when it derives from job-specific requirements.

At the same time, pursuant to part 1 of Article 15 of the Code, the capacity of having employment rights and bearing obligations (labour passive legal capacity) shall be recognised equally for all citizens of the Republic of Armenia. Foreign nationals, stateless persons shall have the same labour legal capacity in the Republic of Armenia as the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, unless otherwise provided for by law.

Article 10§2

2. to provide or promote a system of apprenticeship and other systematic arrangements for training young boys and girls in their various employments;

Certain regulations for the employer organising the professional training of a person being admitted for employment are established by the Code (Article 201.1). In particular, the following regulations are established with regard to the employer organising the professional training of a person being admitted for employment:

- before admitting a person for employment, the employer may, at his or her company or other place (including other organisation) organise the professional training of a person being admitted for employment (hereinafter referred to as "the student") for a duration of up to five months, paying the student remuneration in the amount of at least minimum monthly salary prescribed by law throughout the training. With regard to professional training, the relations between the employer and student shall be regulated by the written contract concluded between the parties (hereinafter referred to as "the contract of the student"), which is subject to record-registration as prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia (*parts 1 and 2 of Article 201.1 of the Code*).
- in case of refusing to be admitted for employment with the employer after professional training or failing, by his or her fault, to fulfil his or her duty to work for the employer in the period provided for by the contract of the student after being admitted for employment, the person having undergone professional training shall, upon the request of the employer, be obliged to compensate the employer an amount not exceeding the actual expenses related to organising his or her professional training under the procedure and conditions provided for by the contract of the student (*part 3 of Article 201.1 of the Code*).
- during professional training, the requirements related to the maximum duration of working time, as well as the minimum durations of the break for rest or eating,

daily (inter-shift), weekly uninterrupted rest shall apply to the person being admitted for employment (*part 4 of Article 201.1 of the Code*).

At the same time, it is necessary to refer to the peculiarity prescribed by the Code, according to which, if persons having undergone training with the employer or at the initiative of the employer — in other place are admitted for employment, pursuant to part 3 of Article 91 of the Code, a probation period may not be envisaged (pursuant to part 1 of Article 91 of the Code, a probation period may be set upon concluding an employment contract upon consent of the parties. It may be set upon the wish of the employer to check whether the employee is suitable for the envisaged job (position) or upon the wish of the person being admitted for employment to check his or her suitability for the offered job (position).

On 22 May 2024 the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted the drafts of the Laws **"On vocational education and training"**, **"On making amendments and supplements to the Law "On education"**", **"On making supplements and an amendment to the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia"**, **"On making supplements and amendments to the Law "On state non-commercial organisations"**", **"On making amendments to the Law "On state duty"**", **"On making amendments and supplements to the Law "On licensing"**", **"On making a supplement to the Law "On foundations"**" and **"On making supplements to the Law "On trade and services"**" at the second reading and fully.

Parts 9-16 of Article 15 of the draft Law **"On vocational education and training"** (Organising of vocational education and work-based learning) prescribe the legislative grounds and mechanisms for organising the vocational education and training — work-based dual learning, for persons under the age of 18, as well as the guarantees for their involvement in work; in particular, part 12 of the Article prescribes that work-based dual learning shall be organised based on the contract establishing the scope of co-operation for organising work-based learning concluded between the VEI and the employer, while part 15 prescribes that the employer (including the VEI, if the employer is a VEI) shall give the dually learning student a remuneration equivalent to the actually worked time or the work actually done, and this time

period shall be deemed to be professional experience and shall be calculated in the work record. During dual learning, the provisions of the Labour Code shall apply to employment relations.

Within the scope of co-operation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the pilot introduction of the system of dual training in Armenia has been launched since 2017. As of 2023, the model of dual training is introduced in 20 institutions of Armenia, in nearly 24 professions (agriculture, information technology, winemaking, tourism, precision engineering, logistics).

In 2023, a system of dual training in 4 agricultural professions was developed and introduced by piloting. The process is ongoing.

In 2022, the programme "Modernising VET in Armenia in 2021-2030" was launched through co-ordination of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia, within the scope of which the following is being carried out:

- ✓ development and expansion of work-based learning (WBL) models, implementation of WBL based on that;
- ✓ improvement of the quality of programmes taught by VET colleges in the agriculture sector;
- ✓ support to modernisation of the legislation of VET, mechanisms for legal regulation, including financing and policies.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia submitted an application for accession to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, which was approved by the European Commission.

Article 10§3

3. *to provide or promote, as necessary:*

- (a) adequate and readily available training facilities for adult workers;*
- (b) special facilities for the retraining of adult workers needed as a result of technological development or new trends in employment;*

The Code contains the following regulations with respect to instruction or training of employees:

Pursuant to point 6 of part 1 of Article 138 of the Code, the working time shall also include the period necessary for the training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification of an employee at the workplace or at educational institutions, except for the period for training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification at the initiative of an employee when remuneration is not provided for.

It should also be noted that the period for training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification at the initiative of the employee when remuneration is provided for, shall also be included in the working time of the employee.

At the same time, pursuant to point 4 of part 2 of Article 138 of the Code, the period of "leave" shall not be included in the working time, but shall be calculated in the work record.

In this case, it is necessary to touch upon the institution of study leaves. Thus:

Article 174 of the Code prescribes the regulations regarding the study leave (moreover, the study leave, pursuant to point 3 of Article 171 of the Code, shall be deemed to be a type of special purpose leave during which the employee's position shall be retained, except for the

case provided for by point 1 of part 1 of Article 113 of the Code (that is to say, the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit before the end of the validity period, liquidation of the employer (termination of activity), removal from state record-registration, and in case of an employer being a notary public— in case of being dismissed from the position)). In particular, pursuant to parts 1-3 of Article 174 of the Code:

1. Employees shall be granted a leave in order to prepare for examinations for admission to educational institutions carrying out vocational education programmes, three working days for each examination.
2. Employees studying at general education, educational institutions carrying out vocational education programmes shall be granted a study leave upon the motion of the educational institution:
 - (1) to prepare for and take current examinations — three working days for each examination;
 - (2) to prepare for and take credit tests — two working days for each credit test;
 - (3) for laboratory work — as many days as envisaged by the curriculum;
 - (4) to prepare and defend a graduation paper — thirty working days;
 - (5) to prepare for and take each state (graduation) examination — six working days;
 - (6) for internship periods — as many days as envisaged by the curriculum.
3. The time for arriving at and returning from the educational institution shall not be calculated in the study leave.

At the same time, part 4 of the same Article prescribes that study leave may be granted to an employee for the entire period of study, but not more than two years for raising the level of his or her professional qualification or gaining or enhancing new knowledge directly regarding

fulfilment of employment duties at foreign educational institutions upon the consent of the employer.

The conditions of remuneration for study leave are prescribed by Article 200 of the Code, parts 1 and 2 whereof prescribe that:

1. Employees studying at general education institutions, educational institutions carrying out vocational education programmes shall be paid for his or her study leave by the employer, in the amount not less than the average daily salary of the employee for each working day, in case the employee was sent to receive education by the employer.
2. The issue of payment for the study leave of employees taking entrance examinations or studying on their own initiative at general education institutions, educational institutions carrying out vocational education programmes may be regulated by a collective agreement or upon consent of the parties.

Pursuant to part 7 of Article 164, annual leave for employees studying without interruption of their employment shall be, at their request, adjusted with the time of their examinations, tests, preparation of the thesis or graduation works and laboratory activities, in accordance with the internship periods provided for by the curriculum.

It is necessary to also touch upon the regulations prescribed by Article 201.2 of the Code with respect to additional professional training of employees, according to which:

1. The employer may, upon consent of the employee, organise additional professional training of the employee at his or her workplace or other place (including in a foreign country) for acquisition or betterment of professional skills or for training of employee.
2. A contract on professional training shall be concluded between the employer and employee with regard to additional professional training of the employee.
3. During additional professional training of the employee, his or her job (position) and remuneration shall be retained, except for the case prescribed by point 1 of part 1 of

Article 113 of the Code (that is to say, the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit before the end of the validity period, liquidation of the employer (termination of activity), removal from state record-registration, and in case of an employer being a notary public — in case of being dismissed from the position).

4. Additional professional training prescribed by this Article shall not be deemed to be secondment for the employee within the meaning of Article 209 of the Code.
5. After additional professional training, in case of failure, by his or her fault, to fulfil the obligation of working for the employer during the period provided for by the contract on professional training, the person having undergone additional professional training shall, under the procedure and the conditions provided for by the contract on professional training, be obliged to compensate the employer an amount not exceeding the actual expenses related to organising his or her additional professional training.

In the context of Article 10§3 of the Charter, it is also necessary to touch upon the regulations prescribed by Article 201 of the Code, pursuant to which: Employees having received notification about rescission of employment contract in cases provided for by point 1 (that is, the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit before the end of the validity period, liquidation of the employer (termination of activity), removal from state record-registration, and in case of an employer being a notary public— in case of being dismissed from the position), point 2 (the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit before the end of the validity period, the reduction of the number of employees and/or staff positions in case of changes in volumes of work and/or economic and/or technological and/or work organisation conditions and/or by production needs) and point 3 (the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit before the end of the validity period, in case the employee is not suitable for the position held or work performed) of part 1 of Article 113 of the Code may be sent to learn a profession that meets the demands of the labour market

or to raise the level of qualification. The procedure for professional training or raising the level of qualification is defined by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

Article 10§4

4. to provide or promote, as necessary, special measures for the retraining and reintegration of the long-term unemployed.

Pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On employment", an unemployed person shall, besides the rights prescribed for a job seeker (part 1 of Article 21), have the right to be included in state employment programmes as prescribed by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in the following directions:

- (1) professional training;
- (2) support for gaining professional work experience for persons entering the labour market for the first time with their profession (part 2 of the aforementioned Article).

At the same time, pursuant to the criteria for determining non-competitiveness prescribed by the Law "On employment", in the case of long-term unemployment (unemployment for a period of 1 year or more), the person shall be deemed to be non-competitive in the labour market (point 4 of part 1 of Article 22). The person shall have, by order of priority, the right to be included in state employment programmes being carried out.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has continued to carry out the following programmes for organising professional training and gaining work experience:

- The programme "Organising professional training for the unemployed, persons at risk of dismissal from work, as well as job seekers with six months left before the end of punishment in the form of imprisonment", the aim of which is to support the unemployed in finding a convenient job through the acquisition of new capacities and

skills in line with the demands of the labour market, reduction of the risk of dismissal from work, as well as involvement in entrepreneurial activities.

During 2018-2021, 1478 unemployed persons were engaged in the programme.

- The programme "Providing assistance to the unemployed in acquiring professional work experience in their professional field", the aim of which is to ensure stable employment for the unemployed, entering the labour market for the first time with an acquired speciality, through assistance provided for getting professional work experience relevant to his or her professional qualification, becoming more competitive in the labour market and finding an appropriate job.

During 2018-2021, 1575 unemployed persons were engaged in the programme.

At the same time, during 2018-2021, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (hereinafter referred to as "the MLSA"), among other programmes for coordination of employment, also carried out the programme "Organising professional training with employer for mothers who are non-competitive in the labour market and lack profession", the aim of which is to ensure stable employment for non-competitive persons in the labour market by providing opportunities to acquire skills and abilities at the workplace. During 2019-2021, 518 women were engaged in the programme.

In 2021-2022, the programme "Providing assistance to unemployed citizens of the Republic of Artsakh displaced as a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan on 27 September 2020 and factually located in the Republic of Armenia, to gain work experience", in which 706 persons were engaged during the mentioned period.

Currently, the programmes for professional training and gaining work experience being implemented by the MLSA are carried out for the following target groups: unemployed persons having participated in the military operations unleashed by Azerbaijan in 2016, 2020 and 2022, as well as unemployed persons demobilised from compulsory fixed-term military service after 2020, as well as unemployed persons forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh

in 2023. The programmes carried out for the specified target groups have components of organising professional training, organising work experience and job placement. The aim of the programmes is to support unemployed persons of the aforementioned target groups to acquire professional skills and capacities in line with the demands presented by the employer in order to fill the vacancy that the employer has. To date, 1923 unemployed persons have received assistance through the mentioned programmes.

Currently, the activities for development of the 2024-2030 Employment Strategy are in the final stage, which has established, as a primary goal, promoting employment by generating competitive and employable workforce and expanding high-productivity job opportunities. As a result of in-depth analyses conducted, citizens of working age from communities encompassing cities of marzes, young people between the ages of 18 and 29 not studying or working, unemployed women of middle age (30-40), beneficiaries receiving family and social benefit and with working capacity without limitations, have been defined as target groups for implementation of the sector-specific state policy. In particular, in the upcoming years, it is envisaged to gear the sector-specific state policy towards:

- the growth of non-agricultural, high-productivity employment in the communities encompassing the cities of marzes;
- the growth of employment of 18-29-year-old young people not studying or working, through the ongoing development of their skills, expansion of the opportunities for realisation of the skills and increase of productivity. The Strategy envisages the creation of mechanisms that will help this target group to conduct internship (including within state institutions), as well as the use of models of public-private partnership;
- the growth of women's employment for the purpose of full and long-term realisation of their potential, as well as for boosting women's entrepreneurship, by particularly promoting the employment of middle-aged (30-40 years old) women;
- maximally effective integration in the labour market of beneficiaries with working

capacity without limitations receiving family and social benefits, for the purpose of increasing effectiveness of the system of social benefits.

Article 10§5

5. *to encourage the full utilisation of the facilities provided by appropriate measures such as:*

(c) including in the normal working hours time spent on supplementary training taken by the worker, at the request of his employer, during employment;

"Pursuant to point 6 of part 1 of Article 138 of the Code, the working time shall also include the period necessary for the training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification of an employee at the workplace or at educational institutions, except for the period for training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification at the initiative of an employee when remuneration is not provided for.

It should also be noted that the period for training, requalification, professional training or raising the level of qualification at the initiative of the employee when remuneration is provided for, shall also be included in the working time of the employee."

At the same time, pursuant to point 4 of part 2 of Article 138 of the Code, the period of "leave" shall not be included in the working time, but shall be calculated in the work record. With regard to this, see also the information on study leaves presented with information regarding Article 10§3, particularly regarding the terms for retention of the position of an employee during study leave and the remuneration prescribed by Article 200 of the Code.

See also the regulation prescribed by part 3 of Article 201.2 of the Code with regard to additional professional training of employees as presented in the information regarding Article 10§3, according to which, during additional professional training of the employee, his or her job (position) and remuneration shall be retained, except for the case prescribed by point 1 of part 1 of Article 113 of the Code (that is to say, the employment contract concluded for an indefinite time limit, as well as the employment contract concluded for a fixed time limit

before the end of the validity period, liquidation of the employer (termination of activity), removal from state record-registration, and in case of an employer being a notary public — in case of being dismissed from the position).

Article 15.1 The rights of persons with disabilities

Pursuant to Protocol Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of 18 February 2016 "On approving the Action Plan and the Timetable for introduction of the system of universal inclusive education", as of the end of 2021, all marzes of the Republic of Armenia and the city of Yerevan made the transition to the universal inclusive general education. In the 2023-2024 Academic Year, there were 7 operating special schools, and 545 learners were enrolled in those schools.

During 2023, there were 10501 children receiving pedagogical-psychological support services at preschool and general education institutions.

By Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 598-N of 15 April 2021, the "Action Plan and the Timetable for introduction of the system of universal inclusive education in the preschool education sector in the Republic of Armenia" were approved. In 2022, the system was introduced in Tavush, Lori and Syunik Marzes of the Republic of Armenia and in the city of Yerevan. 1742 pedagogical workers have undergone training. In 2023, preschool inclusive education was introduced in the whole territory of the Republic of Armenia. Training courses were held for the pedagogical workers of preschool education institutions. As of the first semester of 2024, nearly 40 per cent of them have undergone training.

By Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1169-N of 15 July 2021, the "Procedure for financing preschool education institutions from the State Budget per one learner, including setting the increased amount of financing required for ensuring the special conditions for education and development" was approved. Pursuant to the Procedure, financing per learner of an institution for children in need of special conditions for education and development has been provided since 1 September 2022. As preschool education institutions are under the subordination of the community, except for preschools operating as part of general education institutions, since 2022 the State has been allocating funding to vulnerable groups, including children in need of special conditions for education.

The Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Center and the 22 territorial pedagogical-

psychological centres operating in all marzes also conduct assessment of preschool-age children. In the first semester of 2024, 601 children in need of special conditions for education were enrolled in preschool education institutions.

On 22 May 2024, the new Law of the Republic of Armenia "On vocational education and training" was adopted, by part 2 of Article 4 whereof the Republic of Armenia declares universal inclusive education as a guarantee for ensuring the right of every student to education, and work-based learning — a guarantee for ensuring competitiveness in the labour market. Part 3 of the same Article enshrined that one of the principles of the state policy in the field of vocational education and training shall be inclusive and quality vocational education and training for everyone and the promotion of opportunities for lifelong learning. The new Law also prescribes the provision of micro-qualifications, which will help learners in need of special conditions for education to receive qualification of a certain degree.

Information about the state policy and target programmes for protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and for their social inclusion is presented below:

On 5 May 2021, the Law "On the rights of persons with disabilities" was adopted. Pursuant to the Law, the State shall assume a guarantee aimed at the creation of conditions and equal opportunities necessary for independent life and community inclusion of persons with disabilities equally with other persons. For the purpose of ensuring accessible and equal conditions for persons with disabilities, the Law has prescribed provisions with regard to prohibition of discrimination based on disability, ensuring access to the physical environment, information and communication.

On 25 January 2023, the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force for the Republic of Armenia.

By Decision No 943-L of 8 June 2023, the "2022-2027 Complex Programme for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" was approved. The Complex Programme has established the

priorities for the upcoming years for exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion. Within the scope of each priority, measures fostering the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and the fight against stereotypes about and discriminatory attitude towards them, have been envisaged.

For the purpose of ensuring accessible conditions for persons with disabilities at the workplace and educational institutions, Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1265-N of 11 August 2022 "On establishing the procedure for reasonable accommodations" was adopted. The Decision entered into force on 1 January 2023. Pursuant to point 3 of the Decision, anyone may receive reasonable accommodations who:

- (1) has a limitation of functionality conditioned by disability which, pursuant to the individual plan on services, limits proper fulfilment by the person of his or her employment duties or participation in the learning process equally with others;
- (2) in case of ensuring reasonable accommodations, will be able to sufficiently perform the actions that he or she is obliged or is expected to perform:
 - a. when being admitted for employment — in the case of having equal opportunities with others;
 - b. for fulfilling his or her employment duties provided for by the employment contract;
 - c. for participation, equally with others, in the admission to an educational institution and in the learning process.

For the purpose of ensuring social inclusion of persons with disabilities, within the scope of individual expenditure measures of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia care and social rehabilitation services are provided for persons with disabilities for their social inclusion and development of skills for independent life.

In particular, white cane training is carried out for visually impaired persons, enhancing the independent life skills of persons with disabilities, ensuring the right to independent living,

movement and use of transport.

Social rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities are implemented in the day-care centres which are targeted at their social inclusion and formation of their independent life skills. Monthly services are provided to nearly 435 persons with disabilities in approximately 11 day-care centres.

Round-the-clock care is organised for persons with intellectual and mental issues in 5 small group homes.

For the purpose of promoting the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, supporting means are provided from the state budget funds, based on the state certificates. The organisations providing supporting means are qualified by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs under the prescribed procedure. In 2023, supporting means were provided by nearly 21 organisations that provide services in different marzes of the republic in around 54 service areas. Around 25000 supporting means are provided annually.

Article 23. The right of elderly persons to social protection

The Republic of Armenia considers the ensuring of the right of the elderly to social protection and implementing the measures aimed at exercising this right as one of the key components of its state policy. In the Republic of Armenia, there is a system of social support that ensures the traditionally high social status and significance of the elder generation. Presently, more importance is attached to the issues of promotion of social activity, increase of the level of participation of the elderly and consequently recognition of the social standing and role of the elderly in public life. Over the past years, activities sufficient to improve the life quality of the elderly and increase their social activity, both at the level of betterment of the legislation and at the structural level, have been carried out in the Republic of Armenia.

The following principles lie at the core of all the legal documents related to the exercise of the right of the elderly to social protection:

- (1) **respect for human rights;**
- (2) **autonomy;** enables the elderly to lead independent lives and make various decisions;
- (3) **participation and inclusiveness;** ensure the voice of the elderly to be heard at all levels: micro-level (personal), meso-level (group or community), macro-level (policy development). Existence of a society that respects the rights of the elderly, for the establishment of which it is necessary to work simultaneously with the elderly, their immediate social environment and the entire society;
- (4) **recognition, evaluation and use of the potential of the elderly;**
- (5) **equal opportunities:** ensures the activity of the elderly in various fields;
- (6) **non-discrimination;**
- (7) **solidarity of generations:** ensures a harmonious society through mutual assistance;
- (8) **inter-subject and inter-sectoral cooperation:** ensures a diverse response to the needs of

the elderly, which requires sustained cooperation between different responsible units, as well as sectors.

By Decision No 1744-N adopted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on 10 November 2022, the forms and types of services provided to elderly persons were specified and distinguished according to groups and statuses of beneficiaries, the care provision procedure was simplified. The Decision prescribes the criteria required for care and other social services provided to the elderly and the number of staff units of service providing specialists. All the services have become more targeted and purposeful.

In the Republic of Armenia, there are four state and two private social protection institutions operating and providing 24-hour care services to the elderly in need of care, and 1340 elderly persons receive care at those institutions; there are also organisations providing home care services for 1300 elderly persons and persons with disabilities, there are day-care centres and cafeterias visited by 1300 persons. In 2024, the home care services were expanded in all the marzes of the Republic of Armenia, including also daily care services for the elderly in need of bedside care or with mental health problems.

We attach importance to the gradual and non-turbulent transition from institutional care services to community services, placing emphasis on the role of family and community in the life of an elderly person, as well as ensuring active participation of the elderly in community life and decision-making, and delegating the services for the elderly to non-state organisations on a competitive basis, provision of state support to them under a grant contract and provision of various kinds of support to the elderly by the non-state organisations. Non-state organisations primarily provide services to the elderly residing in communities, by engaging them and increasing their social activity and participation in community life, organising their social, cultural and sport life, providing them with social and healthcare assistance and consulting, based on individual social needs assessed.

The process of ageing with dignity implies the introduction and development of a wide range of community-based services for the elderly, which will enable to ensure the self-realisation

and employment of the elderly, their participation in various spheres and levels of society, inclusion in public life, participation in decision-making, ongoing development of their social, physical and mental abilities etc.

It has already been nearly two decades since the social housing fund (including seven social homes) has been introduced in the Republic of Armenia, which provides lonely elderly persons with dwelling premises and some social support, particularly medical aid, and if necessary, care; over the past years, the programme for compensating the expenses for utility services has also been carried out.

Activities are being carried out for the establishment of small community-based care houses for the elderly, which will further contribute to the social inclusion of the elderly, ensuring of their active and healthy lifestyle and meeting the socio-cultural needs more completely and effectively.

One of the challenges in the sector of pension security is the low level of pensions and benefits. The key objective of the policy being led in the policy sector is to pay decent pension to pensioners (including elderly pensioners) located in the Republic of Armenia. The 2021-2026 Action Plan of the Government was approved by Decision of the Government No 1363-L of 18 August 2021. Pursuant to point 4.6 of the Action Plan of the Government, the Government will take actions to make the average amounts of the minimum pension and pension equal to the values of the food and consumer baskets, respectively, and eliminate extreme poverty by the year 2026.

By the pension legislation of the Republic of Armenia, age-specific retirement pension shall be granted to a person having attained the age of 63, where he or she has a work record of at least 10 calendar years, and age-specific pension a year earlier than the age entitling age-specific retirement pension shall be granted, where the person has a work record of at least 35 years and is unemployed.

A person not entitled to receive pension shall have the right to old-age benefit in case of attaining the age of 65.

Disability retirement pension shall be granted to the person with disability by the commission assessing functionality of a person, where the person had a work record prescribed by law when applying for determination of disability or granting of pension.

The disability benefit shall be granted to a person with disability not entitled to receive pension.

The disability pension, as well as the disability benefit is established for the entire period of disability.

The amount of age-specific disability retirement pension depends on the duration of the work record, the basic pension, the value of 1 year of the work record (established by the Government), while the amount of disability retirement pension also depends on the degree of limitation of functionality (disability group). The amount of the old-age benefit and the amounts of disability benefit, according to the degree of limitation of functionality (disability group), shall be established by the Government.

Starting from 1 July 2023, the Government established the following amounts:

- amount of minimum pension: AMD 36000 (instead of AMD 31600);
- amount of basic pension for calculating the amount of the retirement pension: AMD 24000 (instead of AMD 21000);
- amount of old-age benefit: AMD 36000 (instead of AMD 31600);
- for person with disability with deep limitation of functionality (1st group disability): AMD 39000 (instead of AMD 31600);
- for person with disability with severe limitation of functionality (2nd group disability): AMD 37500 (instead of AMD 31600);
- for person with disability with moderate limitation of functionality (3rd group disability): AMD 36000 (instead of AMD 31600).

Article 3.1 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia enshrines that discrimination shall be prohibited by the labour legislation. At the same time, it is prescribed that any direct or indirect distinction, exclusion or restriction on the grounds of sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances, the aim or result whereof is displaying less favourable treatment in cases of emergence and/or change and/or termination of collective and/or individual employment relations or prohibiting or denying the recognition and/or exercise, on equal basis with others, of any right prescribed by labour legislation shall be deemed to be discrimination, except for cases when such distinction, exclusion or restriction is objectively justified by the legitimate aim pursued, and the means used for reaching that aim are proportionate and necessary.

In May 2023, within the scope of extensive amendments made to the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia, the following regulation was repealed, which:

- enabled an employer to dismiss a person having attained the pension age,
- stipulated that the pension age persons should be employed only under an employment contract for a certain period.

Article 31. The right to housing

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to housing, the Parties undertake to take measures designed:

1. to promote access to housing of an adequate standard;
2. to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination;
3. to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.

Article 31 of the Charter: With a view to ensuring effective exercise of the right to housing, we present that

With the view to ensuring the unified social policy on housing, it is envisaged to develop a concept paper, by which mechanisms for providing insecure families and other vulnerable groups with permanent or temporary shelters will be envisaged (alternative mechanisms for acquisition of shelter — issuance of certificates for purchase of an apartment, mortgage servicing from the State Budget funds, partial reimbursement of rent payments, etc.), as well as implementation of the unified policy will be ensured. Within the framework of the measure implementation, it is envisaged to create mechanisms for expansion of the social housing fund. It is also envisaged to work out programmes for having permanent or temporary shelters for insecure families and other vulnerable groups.