

Initiating activities for implementation of the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-Generational Approach

Angel Panev

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Macedonia

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Background (I)

- The Republic of North Macedonia is among the most financially deprived developing countries in Europe
- At the end of 2018, The State Statistical Office of RNM - (Drzhaven zavod za statistika), estimated that:
 - the working age population of North Macedonia is **958,000**
 - only **80.6%** of the working age population (772,000) is actively employed
 - this leaves North Macedonia with a **19.4%** unemployment rate, one of the highest in Europe



Background (II)

- According to The World Bank:
 - the youth unemployment rate in North Macedonia is 50,1% and this is the 3rd highest youth unemployment rate in the world
 - the number of retired individuals is 330000, nearly half the size of the working age population (770000)
 - the high elderly dependency rate (42.9%) poses a great strain on the state pension fund
 - as of 2000 the deficit in the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of North Macedonia was 65 million Euros.
 - the deficit has grown to 400 million Euros in 2018



Problem Outline

- Based on this data, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Macedonia (KSS) has concluded that:
 - the challenges of an ageing population and the employability potential of elderly does not receive sufficient attention in public and political discourse
 - presently there is no state-wide strategy for addressing the challenges mentioned before
 - some of the most pressing issues are reducing the high youth unemployment rate
 - the concerning state of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund makes it difficult to resolve debates on how elderly workers (esp. in the public sector) could retire prematurely.



Searching for Solutions

- The problem of an ageing population needs to be discussed between the government, trade unions, and employers, but this is ignored by state institutions
- Trade Unions have frequently alluded to the challenges elderly workers face in the modern workplace, especially concerning new technologies, digitalization, and electronic services
- However, there is currently no organized state strategy to assist elderly workers.
- The responsibility of handling these challenges is therefore left to employers and employment organizations based on the individual circumstances as well as the pressing issues and needs.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

National legislation is based on declarative protection of older workers rights:

- Constitution of Republic of North Macedonia
- Labour Law was adopted in 2005 and several times was amended.
- Law on employment and insurance in case of unemployment Consolidated Text officially published in 2014
- Law for pension and disability insurance of Republic of North Macedonia



Work Rights of the Elderly according to Labour Relation Law

- According to the national Labour relation Law there are legal provisions that protect the rights of elderly workers :
 - the retirement age is 62yrs for women and 64yrs for men
 - at least 15yrs of full-time work experience is required to be entitled for state pension
 - an employee can request for their work right to be extended until the age of 65 for women and 67 for men
- Furthermore, according to this law:
 - an “elderly worker” is anyone above the age of 57 for women and 59 for men
 - these employees are entitled to certain rights and benefits
 - ✓ they must not be requested work night shifts or extended working hours without their consent
 - ✓ they have the right to an additional three days of vacation
 - ✓ they are put in “high risk categories” (together with pregnant and disabled workers) for health and safety policies and exposure to work hazards (e.g. toxic agents)
 - ✓ freedom from age- or sex-based discrimination



Training and Mentorship

- The practice of using elderly workers as mentors is conducted by individual institutions independently, based on their needs.
- Primarily this practice exists in the health and educational sector, and institutions offering technical services
- In addition to this, occasional training programs are offered by the Macedonian Employment Service Agency
- Programs are mostly focused on offering qualifications, pre-qualifications and advanced qualifications for jobs that are currently in high demand on the job market
- However, elderly workers have limited access to these programs and there are very few programs that are specialized for the needs of elderly members of the workforce.
- The situation is very similar for male and female elderly workers, with the only exception that female workers are allowed to enter retirement two years earlier than male workers



CONCLUSIONS

- Although North Macedonia has very well developed legal system on protection of labour rights there are no existing provisions that concretely protect working rights of elderly workers.
- Increased number of elderly people in total population, at the same time means increased number of pensioners, while increased life expectancy means longer usage of pension benefits.
- Lacking strict provisions in protection of the rights of elderly workers will automatically increase the rate of unemployment and need of using the state unemployment benefits making additional burden of the pension and social funds of the state.
- National Labour Relation Law has only one provision which generally is defining the special protection of elderly workers, otherwise there is no other legal frame which strictly defines the kind of protection of working rights of elderly persons.



The Autonomous Framework Agreement

- State social services have not taken action to implement the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-Generational Approach
- There is currently no official translation of this agreement in Macedonian nor is the original agreement published on any of the official state webpages
- Our trade union has taken up the responsibility of translating this agreement to Macedonian and publishing it on our official website.



Thank you for your attention! Questions?

Contact details:

Angel Panev

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Macedonia

St.50-ta Divizija 25 1000 Skopje

Phone +389 2 2466 238

E-mail: contact@kss.mk

international@kss.mk

www.kss.mk

