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on Demographic Issues

Population Ageing in the Countries of the Former Soviet Union: Concerns and Responses

by Alexandre Sidorenko

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Population ageing in the countries of the former Soviet Union: concerns and responses^{*}

Alexandre Sidorenko^{**}

Introduction

One of the common designations of the Eastern European and Central Asian (EECA) countries of the former Soviet Union emphasizes the transitional nature of their societies. In recent years, reference to transition has been made less frequently as it is no more applicable to all the fifteen ex-Soviet states. Indeed, after the Great Split of 1991, these states have traveled their individual paths. Even within the more “homogeneous” subgroups of countries, such as Baltic States, numerous differences could be detected. There is however one type of transition that is common to all the fifteen EECA states and that is not going to wane any time soon: all of them are undergoing the process of demographic transition towards ageing societies, albeit at different pace and in diverse range. Similarly, EECA countries follow different approaches in responding to the challenges of population ageing.

This article analyzes similarities and differences in population ageing and policy responses to its challenges among the EECA countries. The analysis is based on the data of the two studies conducted by the secretariat of the United Nations. The first study is an ongoing monitoring of national population policies, and the second one is the first (2007-2008) review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The author has also used his personal observations made in 2007-2009 during advisory missions to several EECA countries. Those missions were undertaken at the request of governments by the United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development where the author was serving as the head of the UN Programme on Ageing.

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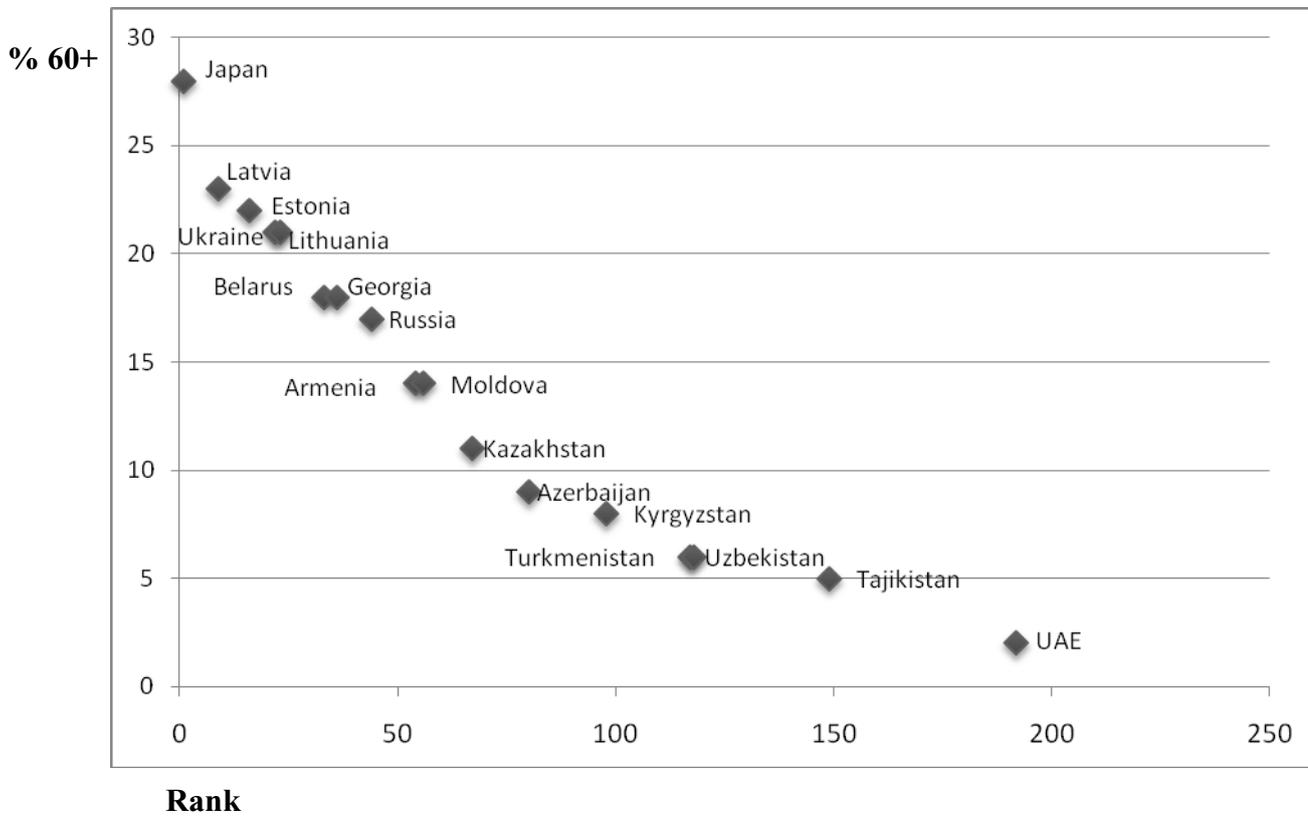
Demographic diversity

The EECA countries belong to different stages of demographic transition. Some of them, namely Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine, are already among the oldest countries of the world, along with the majority of the European countries. By the percentage of population aged sixty years and above, Latvia was ranked in 2007 seventh, Estonia sixteenth, Ukraine twenty-second, and Lithuania twenty-third on the global scale (see Figure 1). Meanwhile, the position of Tajikistan by this index was one hundred forty-eighth, Uzbekistan was at the one hundred nineteenth position, and Turkmenistan was at the one hundred seventeenth position among the one hundred ninety-two member states of the United Nations. By the median age index, Latvia, Ukraine and Estonia in 2007 were among the twenty five world oldest countries, while Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were among the fifty youngest countries of the world (see Figure 2).

Thus in terms of population ageing analyzed by the above two indexes, the EECA countries occupy a wide space in a continuum of demographic transition between the oldest (Japan) and the youngest world states (OAE, in case of the proportion of 60+ population, or Uganda, in case of the median age). At the same time, by the criteria of median age, one can group the EECA countries in three clusters: the “older countries” with the median age above 35 years (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Ukraine); the “middle age countries” with the median age between 25 and 35 years (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Moldova); and the “younger countries” with the median age below 25 years (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

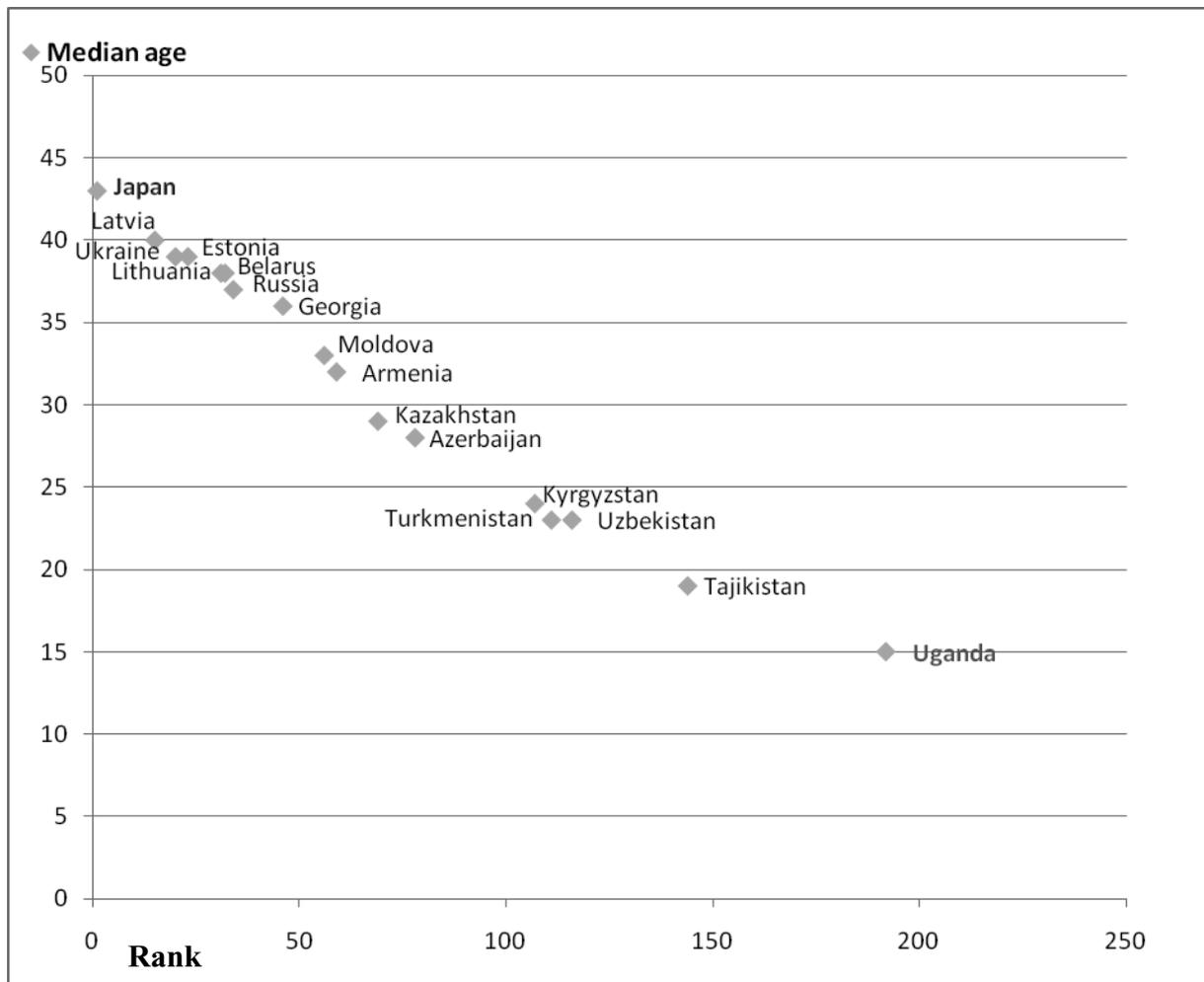
Significant differences between the EECA countries can also be noted in the relative numbers of presumably non-working persons – young (0 to 14 years old) and older (65 years old and above) – per the population of the working age (from 14 to 64 years old). The indexes reflecting this proportion are the so called “youth dependency ratio” and the “old age dependency ratio”. For a society at large and particularly for a national economy the above indexes are of great significance as they are often used to analyze the situation

Figure 1. Country ranking by percentage of population aged 60 or over years, 2007



Source: World Population Ageing 2007, United Nations, New York, 2007

Figure. 2 Country ranking by median age, 2007



Source: World Population Ageing 2007, United Nations, New York, 2007

at the labour market and to make projections of the economic growth and the financial sustainability of social security systems.

The variations in these two indexes between the EECA countries are quite apparent (Figure 3). The highest youth dependency ratio is in Tajikistan (64) followed by Uzbekistan (50) and Kyrgyzstan (47) and the lowest values of this index are in Belarus, Latvia and Ukraine (20 in each country). Predictably the highest value of the old dependency ratio can be found in Latvia (25) followed by Estonia and Ukraine (24 each), and the lowest (7) – in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Azerbaijan and Estonia have practically the same value of the total dependency ratio: 45. However, the composition of this index in these two countries is different: in Azerbaijan, with its relatively young population, the youth dependency ratio equals 35 and the old dependency ratio equals 10, while in the demographically older Estonia the corresponding figures are 21 and 24. Without going into details of the socio-economic situation in Azerbaijan and Estonia, one can assume that these countries would have different social concerns and different priorities in their social policy and programmes. For instance, one can expect that Azerbaijan has high concern for social situation of youth, while the focus of policy action in Estonia would be on behalf of older persons.

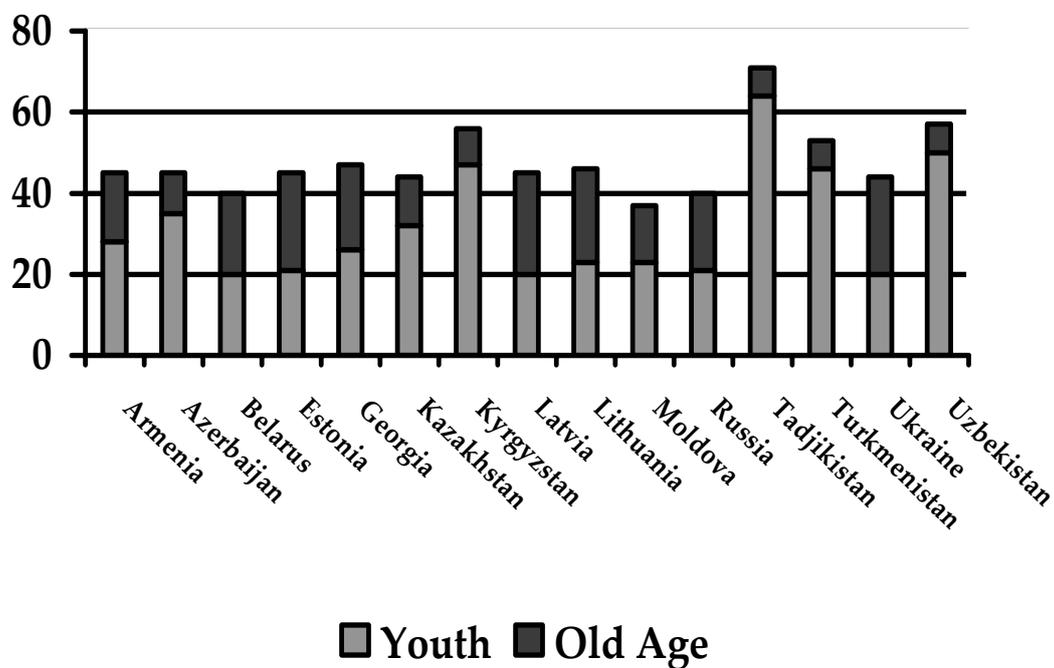
Convergence of concerns of ageing

In spite of demographic diversity, the majority of the EECA countries consider population ageing an important policy issue. That was the finding of the two surveys undertaken in 2007 and 2009 within the ongoing monitoring of national population policies by the United Nations Population Division¹. The results of the most recent, 2009

¹ World Population Policies 2007, United Nations, New York, 2008, ST/ESA/SER.A/272, Sales Number E.08.XIII.8.

World Population Policies 2009, United Nations, New York, 2010. Accessible at: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2009/wpp2009.htm> (Assessed on 22 February 2010)

Figure 3. Youth Dependency Ratio and Old Age Dependency Ratio in the EECA countries, 2007



Notes: Youth Dependency Ratio is the number of persons 0 to 14 years per one hundred persons 15 to 64 years old. Old Age Dependency Ratio is the number of persons aged 65 years old or over per one hundred persons 15 to 64 years old. The sum of the Youth dependency Ratio and the Old Age Dependency Ratio constitutes the Total dependency Ratio.

Source: World Population Ageing 2007, United Nations, New York, 2007

survey, revealed that all the EECA countries are concerned with ageing of their populations (see Table 1). Out of the fifteen countries of the former Soviet Union, eleven consider population ageing to be a major concern and other four countries consider population ageing to be a minor concern. It is worth noting that in a short period of two years between the previous 2007 survey and the most recent 2009 survey, the governments of two countries, namely, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, have raised the level of their concern of population ageing from “no concern” to “minor concern”.

The designation of high national priority to population ageing seems to be independent of the proportion of older persons in a country, or, in other words, independent of the stage of demographic transition. Indeed, among the eleven countries that assigned high priority to population ageing, along with the “older” countries there are several “younger” countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Four countries – Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – consider population ageing to be a minor concern.

Several other population indexes are closely related to the process of population ageing, including the life expectancy at birth, the size of the working age population, the rate of population growth and the level of emigration. The governmental views on these issues are also presented in Table 1.

Twelve out of fifteen EECA countries consider the level of life expectancy in their countries unsatisfactory, and only three – Armenia, Lithuania and Uzbekistan – were satisfied with their life expectancy indexes. Armenia declared the “acceptable” level in 2009 survey as by that year it had achieved the highest level of life expectancy for men (70 years) among the EECA countries, and, along with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had the highest level of female life expectancy at birth ranging between 77 and 78 years. Lithuania declared the “acceptable” level of both male (66 years) and female (78 years) life expectancy at birth in both 2007 and 2009 surveys. The third country whose government is satisfied with the life expectancy of its citizens is Uzbekistan where the values of this index are rather modest: 65 years for men and 71 years for women.

Table 1. Views of EECA governments on selected population issues (2009)

State	Ageing (% 60+)	Life expectancy at birth (M/F, years)	Size of working age population (15-60 years old, %)	Population growth (annual growth rate, %)	Emigration (% of total population)
Armenia	Major concern (14%)	<i>Acceptable</i> (70/77)	<i>Minor concern</i> (66%)	Too low (0.2%)	<i>Too high</i> (10.5%)
Azerbaijan	Major concern (9%)	Unacceptable (68/72)	<i>Minor concern</i> (67%)	<i>Satisfactory</i> (1.1%)	Satisfactory (3%)
Belarus	Major concern (18%)	Unacceptable (68/75)	Major concern (67%)	Too low (- 0.5%)	<i>Too high</i> (11.4%)
Estonia	Major concern (22%)	Unacceptable (68/78)	<i>Not a concern</i> (63%)	<i>Satisfactory</i> (- 0.1%)	Satisfactory (13.6%)
Georgia	Major concern (19%)	Unacceptable (68/75)	--- (64%)	Too low (-1.1%)	<i>Too high</i> (4.0%)
Kazakhstan	Major concern (10%)	Unacceptable (59/71)	Major concern (66%)	Too low (0.7%)	Satisfactory (19.5%)
Kyrgyzstan	<i>Minor concern</i> (7%)	Unacceptable (64/72)	<i>Minor concern</i> (64%)	<i>Satisfactory</i> (1.2%)	Satisfactory (4%)
Latvia	Major concern (22%)	Unacceptable (67/77)	<i>Minor concern</i> (64%)	Too low (- 0.5%)	Satisfactory (15%)
Lithuania	Major concern (21%)	<i>Acceptable</i> (66/78)	Major concern (64%)	Too low (-1%)	Satisfactory (4%)
Moldova	<i>Minor concern</i> (16%)	Unacceptable (65/72)	--- (67%)	Too low (-1%)	<i>Too high</i> (11.4%)
Russian Federation	Major concern (18%)	Unacceptable (60/73)	Major concern (67%)	Too low (-0.4%)	<i>Too high</i> (8.7%)
Tajikistan	<i>Minor concern</i> (5%)	Unacceptable (64/69)	Major concern (58%)	Too high (1.6%)	Satisfactory (4%)
Turkmenistan	<i>Minor concern</i> (6%)	Unacceptable (61/69)	--- (65%)	Too low (1.3%)	<i>Too high</i> (4%)
Ukraine	Major concern (21%)	Unacceptable (63/74)	Major concern (65%)	Too low (- 0.7%)	Satisfactory (11.6%)
Uzbekistan	Major concern (6%)	<i>Acceptable</i> (65/71)	Major concern (65%)	<i>Satisfactory</i> (1.1%)	Satisfactory (4.2%)

Source: World Population Policies 2009. Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York 2010.

The EECA governments' views on the relative size of the working age population appear rather diverse: seven out of fifteen countries expressed major concern about the size of their working age population; four countries expressed minor concern; and four countries had either no concern or no view on this issue. Interestingly, the countries that expressed the same level of concern belong to different stages of demographic transition: the major concern was expressed by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan; the minor concern was expressed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Latvia; and Estonia, Georgia, Moldova and Turkmenistan had either "no concern" (Estonia) or "no view" on this population issue.

The size of population is a result of contribution – either positive or negative – of various demographic factors such as fertility, mortality, longevity and migration. Eleven out of the fifteen countries under consideration view their population growth as "too low". Among these eleven countries, seven countries have registered annual decline of their populations in 2009: Belarus (by 0.5 per cent), Georgia (by 1.1 per cent), Latvia (by 0.5 per cent), Lithuania (by 1 per cent), Moldova (by 1 per cent), Russian Federation (by 0.4 per cent), and Ukraine (by 0.7 per cent). Negative population growth has a significant political connotation in these countries, fueling the debates on the threat of depopulation and prompting policy measures aimed at raising fertility rates.

Three countries among those who viewed their population growth as "too low" have actually positive growth of their populations (Armenia by 0.2 per cent, Kazakhstan by 0.7 per cent, and Turkmenistan by 1.3 per cent) with positive dynamic in the recent two years in case of Turkmenistan, yet these countries ascribe that growth as "too low".

Four EECA countries view the annual growth of their populations as "satisfactory". Three countries out of four declared positive annual growth rates of population: Azerbaijan (1.1 per cent), Kyrgyzstan (1.2 per cent), and Uzbekistan (1.1 per cent). Estonia, the fourth country with a positive view of its annual population growth, saw its population declined by 0.1 per cent in 2009, even if the decline was smaller than that in 2007 (0.3 per cent).

Tajikistan, the youngest EECA country, viewed its 2009 population growth rate at 1.6 per cent as “too high”.

One of the most significant contributors to population decline in the EECA countries is emigration. Emigration is also among the driving forces of the “accelerated ageing” in some EECA countries (for instance, Ukraine). Nine EECA countries consider the level of emigration from their lands as “satisfactory” and six countries as “too high”. Similarly to the EECA governments’ views on various ageing related population issues, views on emigration – either positive or negative – are not related to the level of emigration itself expressed as a proportion of citizens living abroad. Indeed, among the countries with a positive view are Azerbaijan with 3 per cent of emigrants and Kazakhstan, with 19.5 per cent; while among the countries with negative views are Georgia (4.0 per cent) and Moldova (11.4 per cent).

An important point is to be made here: it appears that the governments’ views on the ageing of their countries’ population and some other “ageing related” population issues are disconnected from the demographic analysis. It is hardly possible to detect an apparent correlation, or simply relation, between the value of an index pertaining to a particular population issue and the government view of it. One possible explanation of this contradiction is that governments’ views are influenced by political considerations. Indeed to distinguish between “policy” and “politics” in many ex-Soviet countries is a daunting task as the practice of evidence based policy action is practically nonexistent, and an opinion based policy approach often prevails.

Beyond concerns: policy responses

In this section we will try to identify what policy responses to the concerns of population ageing are in place in the EECA countries. The analysis will focus on the national

activities of the EECA countries aimed at implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

MIPAA was adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain, in 2002, and since then its implementation has determined the course of global action on ageing². In 2007, five years after the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the United Nations undertook the first review and appraisal of the implementation of MIPAA. The review process focused on national implementation efforts, and the national findings were consolidated and analyzed during the UN regional events. For the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which includes among other fifty-six UN member states all the EECA countries³, the regional event was the Second Ministerial Conference on Ageing that took place in León, Spain⁴.

Eight EECA countries submitted their national reports for the Second Ministerial Conference on Ageing in 2007: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Uzbekistan⁵. All the reporting EECA countries have been engaged in elaboration and implementation of *sectoral* policies and programmes on ageing and older persons (e.g., social security, social services, health and social care for older persons, etc.), while only four countries (Azerbaijan, Estonia, Lithuania and Russian Federation) have developed and been implementing comprehensive *strategic* policies on ageing.

Sectoral policy action on ageing, and particularly its emphasis, varied from country to country. Nevertheless, several policy areas can be identified as priorities in the EECA during the first five year of the implementation of MIPAA (see Table 2), with the three policy areas mentioned most often: health and medical care (seven countries); social protection/income security (five countries); and integration and participation in societal life (five countries).

² <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/> (Assessed on 22 February 2010)

³ <http://www.unece.org/about/about.htm> (Assessed on 22 February 2010)

⁴ <http://www.unece.org/pau/age/mica2007/welcome.htm> (Assessed on 22 February 2010)

⁵ http://www.unece.org/pau/age/mica2007/country_reports.htm (Assessed on 22 February 2010)

Table 2. Areas of policy priorities on ageing in EECA countries, 2007

Priority Area	Number of countries quoted the priority area	Quoting countries
Health and medical care	7	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation,
Social protection/income security	5	Armenia, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation,
Integration and participation in societal life	5	Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
Rights of older persons	3	Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan
Developing (strengthening) institutional infrastructure	3	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russian Federation,
Social care, including long term care	3	Armenia, Latvia, Lithuania,
Social services	3	Belarus, Latvia, Russian Federation
Inter-generational cohesion	3	Latvia, Lithuania, Uzbekistan
Promoting positive image of ageing and older persons in society	2	Armenia, Estonia,
Adjusting labour market [labour market measures]	2	Latvia, Lithuania,
Socio-cultural needs	1	Azerbaijan
Research on ageing	1	Azerbaijan
Adjusting public finance policy to demographic ageing	1	Latvia
Promoting life-long learning	1	Lithuania
Providing secure living conditions in old age	1	Uzbekistan

Source: Country reports on the implementation of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)
http://www.unece.org/pau/age/mica2007/country_reports.htm

The content of policy action varied within each policy area. In the health sector, the policy concerns ranged from the measures to improve the delivery of services (Armenia, Belarus, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan) to the measures of active ageing aimed at preventing old age associated diseases (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). Continuous deterioration of health, particularly among the working age population, and severe under-funding of public health care that forces private out-of-pocket spending are among the most demanding challenges for national health care systems in EECA countries, particularly in low income EECA countries⁶.

Within the second priority area, social protection, policy measures in most of the EECA countries have focused on the parametric reforms of pre-existing defined-benefit pension schemes. Eleven out of fifteen countries of the former Soviet Union have increased the legal retirement age. Similar measures have also been under consideration in Belarus, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, the Speaker of *Duma* (lower chamber of the Russian Parliament), following the earlier assertions of the Russian Prime Minister, has recently stated that increasing the age of retirement under current circumstances in Russian Federation, such as low life expectancy, particularly for men, is inadmissible⁷.

Notable exceptions from the prevailing parametric approach to reforming the social security have been Kazakhstan, which introduced in 1998 a fully funded defined contribution scheme; Estonia and Latvia, where a notional defined-contribution model has been in place; and Kyrgyzstan and Russian Federation, which have also introduced some elements of the notional defined contribution scheme^{8, 9}.

The third priority area implies undertaking measures to facilitate participation of older persons in various spheres of societal life, including national economy (labour market), as

⁶ From Red to Gray. The “Third Transition” of Aging Populations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union”, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2007

⁷ <http://rus.ruvr.ru/2010/01/16/3630070.html> (Assessed on 05 March 2010)

⁸ World Economic and Social Survey 2007: Development in an Ageing World, United Nations, New York, 2007

⁹ Robert Holzmann and Edward Palmer [Eds.] Pension Reform: Issues and Prospects for Non-Financial Defined Contribution (NDC) Schemes. The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2006

well as social, cultural and other spheres. Five EECA countries declared integration and participation of older persons among their policy priorities: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Again, as with two other “champion” priorities, the content and range of measures – either undertaken or planned - vary between the countries. For instance, Azerbaijan, in its *State Programme to Increase Social Protection of Older Citizens* that was approved by the President in 2006, proclaimed that ensuring participation of older persons in socio-economic and political life of society is among the major tasks of the *State Programme*. Belarus, concerned with the growing numbers of “young retirees” (55-60 years old), designed measures to ensure their employment through employment assistance and retraining. The goal of Estonian government has been to change the attitude of the whole population towards ageing, integrate older people into the society and encourage pensioners to participate actively in society. In Estonia, the state has supported the goal of social inclusion of older people via financing the NGOs and voluntary organizations of older people.

In Latvia, as in Belarus, the measures to promote integration and participation of older persons have focused on pre-retirees. Such measures aimed at adjusting labour market and making it more inclusive for various social groups, including people of older ages, by providing training programmes. The Lithuanian National Strategy on Ageing includes measures of adjusting labour market so as to take maximum advantage of the professional skills developed by older persons, promoting life-long learning and offering extensive programmes of adult training. The Lithuanian Strategy on Ageing has strived to create conditions for older persons to live a secure and full-fledged social, cultural and personal life, to seek continuous development, and to enjoy cultural values and opportunities provided by the information technologies and free movement.

While not staying at the top of the list of policy priorities, another policy area – social services – has drawn much of the government attention. The essence of reforms of social services, including those targeting older persons, has been the replacement of categorized benefits by means-tested payments. In many cases, however, this appeared to be a daunting task, primarily for administrative logistics as numerous social benefits are

administered by various government offices with vaguely defined entitlements, poorly monitored payments and weak, if any, inter-office coordination¹⁰.

Many EECA countries engaged in reforming policies on ageing are challenged with the task of making them financially affordable. Hence increasing attention has been paid by some governments to the role of family in care giving and reciprocal income security. The expectations are that this approach in the EECA countries would save financial resources from being spent on much more expensive programmes of institutional care and formal income security. There is also a belief that the traditions of the extended family to care for its older members are still alive or could be revived in the Central Asian and Caucasian countries, and also in Moldova¹¹. At least three EECA countries – Armenia, Kazakhstan and Moldova – are considering possible policy measures focusing on the family as a major provider of services and resources for its members, including older persons¹².

Besides pursuing *sectoral* policies, four EECA countries – Azerbaijan, Belarus, Latvia and Lithuania – have undertaken measures aimed at *mainstreaming* the issues of ageing into national development policy. In addition, the government of Armenia is currently working on integrating the situation of older persons into its national development strategy. Similar efforts are either underway or being considered in Moldova and Kazakhstan¹³. It should be noted, however, that in many EECA countries population ageing is often considered a dimension of population policy rather than a *developmental* priority. Such a view sometimes creates a “quasi-mainstreaming” approach to ageing, when ageing issues are *added* to some policy documents instead of being *integrated* into the mainstream of national strategic planning and actions. In fact, Latvia is the only EECA country that clearly expressed its willingness to address ageing as a developmental priority by introducing changes in the public finance policy to adjust to demographic ageing.

¹⁰ Personal observations made during advisory missions (2007-2008)

¹¹ Personal observation made during advisory mission to Moldova (2008)

¹² Personal observation made during advisory missions to Armenia (2007), Kazakhstan (2008) and Moldova (2008)

¹³ Personal observation made during advisory missions to Moldova (2008) and Kazakhstan (2008)

Meanwhile, several EECA countries are seriously concerned with the ongoing decline of their populations owing to low fertility accompanied by relatively high mortality. The largest absolute population declines among the EECA countries are expected in Russia, followed by Ukraine^{14, 15}. Practically all countries of the former Soviet Union address this challenge through pronatalist policies and programmes. Population cohorts of higher ages, including older people and even people of working age, are traditionally overlooked.

Conclusion

In this article, we have reviewed the differences between the EECA countries in the patterns of demographic transition and the corresponding policy measures of adjustment to ageing societies. We have noted numerous variations in policy responses to population ageing; some of these variations can be explained by the different rates of population ageing; even more explanations lay within political and economic divergences of the EECA countries. There is however one common feature pertaining to most if not all the EECA countries: their national capacities appear insufficient to address the challenges of population ageing.

The overwhelming majority of the EECA governments declare population ageing as their major concern. At the same time, population ageing, with few exceptions, has not been recognized as an over-arching *developmental* priority, hence lack of sufficient budgetary resources – a pattern that has been exacerbated by the ongoing global economic downturn. In spite of “major concerns” assigned to population ageing by the governments of the EECA countries, comprehensive national strategy on ageing in these countries is a rare find while mainstreaming efforts are sketchy. The existing sectoral policy and

¹⁴ From Red to Gray. The “Third Transition” of Aging Populations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union”, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2007.

¹⁵ Kinsella, Kevin and Wan He. U.S. Census Bureau, International Population Reports, P95/09-1, *An Aging World: 2008*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2009.

programmes on ageing are often a legacy of the pre-transitional era with modifications made on an *ad hoc* basis. In some cases, more comprehensive and radical reforms were put aside owing to political uncertainties, lack of societal consensus and financial instability. The continuity of policy interventions could be seen disrupted owing to the unfulfilled process of political transition and associated frequent government reshuffles.

Various elements of national infrastructure on ageing can be detected in EECA countries, again with visible cross border differences. Yet even in countries where those elements used to be prominently present in 1980-s, such as research institutions in Russia and Ukraine, coordination and collaboration networks have hardly survived the recent twenty years of transition. The diminished research capacity in some countries, its practical absence in many other countries, and the weak if any regional cooperation in studies of ageing have made evidence based policy on ageing in EECA states mostly nonexistent. It should be noted, however, that since joining the European Union, the Baltic States have been increasingly involved in research projects and policy processes on ageing undertaken under the aegis of the European Commission.

At the same time, the EECA countries possess a great deal of experience and expertise originated from their pre-transitional past and more recent progression through the transition process. Much of this experience could be assessed and utilized as relevant. Even more important is to engage and support the human resources of practitioners and researchers in the area of population ageing of the EECA countries. If we are serious about promoting international cooperation within and beyond the Europe of twenty-seven, the area of population ageing is a promising one. Viewed as a source, EECA countries can become partners for cooperation based on a twin principle of equity and reciprocity.

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