



State of Israel

Ministry of Justice

**RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT
ON THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS BY OLDER PERSONS
ON BEST PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LAW
RELATED TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS
OF OLDER PERSONS**

February 2016

Preface

We have the honor to respond to your questionnaire concerning best practices in the implementation of existing law related to the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons, pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 24/20.

We hope you will find this information useful.

Adequate Standard of Living for Older Persons

Public Call Center

One central difficulty in the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons is that of the non-exhaustion of rights or benefits to which they are entitled by law. This stems in part from a lack of knowledge of the rights or benefits, uncertainty as to which authority to approach and difficulty coping with the required bureaucracy.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the Ministry for Social Equality operates a public call center for older persons and their families. The call center, established in 2008, serves as the central address for obtaining information regarding all rights, services and benefits available to older persons generally, as well as specifically for each individual caller.

The call center offers callers a rights assessment procedure. This procedure includes an assessment of the caller's personal background by means of a questionnaire, classification of the caller and referral for assessment by the relevant authority (such, for example, as the National Insurance Institute, the Ministry of Health, local authorities, etc.) which includes a recommendation as to the handling of the matter. The call center also performs periodic follow-ups concerning each application and reminders are sent to the relevant authorities, where necessary. The callers are notified of the referral of their case and, after the examination of their matter is complete, the callers receive a reply in respect of the rights to which they are entitled, as approved by the relevant authority. Note, that the reply is examined by experts employed by the call center.

In addition, the call center also performs outreach activities whereby it approaches older persons regarding unexercised rights, sends representatives to locations of older persons' gatherings in order to suggest that they undergo a rights assessment procedure, and more.

In answer to the Independent Expert's specific questions, this is a nationwide program, involving older persons and their families, and national and local authorities that grant rights and benefits to older persons. It serves all groups of older persons and promotes the full exhaustion of the rights and benefits offered to them. The Call Center receives approximately 100,000 calls per annum.

The Call Center is inspected and supervised annually by the Tender Committee of the Ministry for Social Equality.

The Ministry for Social Equality is constantly working to create additional means of communication with the call center, such as a newsletter, facebook, etc.

Rights by Law Booklet

The *Senior Citizens Law 5750-1989* requires public authorities to provide the Ministry for Social Equality with an annual summary of rights or benefits under law or agreement, provided by that public authority to older persons, including the conditions for receipt of such rights or benefits, as of July 1st of each year. The authorities are required to provide general information about rights and benefits, as well as details as to how the public may attain additional information. The Ministry for Social Equality collates this information into a booklet which is posted to every older person upon reaching retirement age. It is also provided to older persons who call the Call Center, at their request.

In answer to the Independent Expert's specific questions, this is a nationwide program, involving older persons and national and local authorities that grant rights and benefits to older persons. It serves all groups of older persons and promotes the full exhaustion of the rights and benefits offered to them. The rights booklet is updated annually and reaches approximately 100,000 persons each year.

Project to Promote Paid Employment of Older Persons

The aim of this project is to locate employers who may be interested in offering paid employment to older persons and older persons who are interested in such employment, to place them appropriately, hold employers' fairs and networking fairs where employers and older persons may meet and workshops for those who are eligible to attend them. The program includes the creation of an infrastructure accessible and adapted to job-seeking older persons and employers, based on a simple and convenient internet portal.

This is a nationwide program, involving older persons, private sector employers and local authorities. It serves all groups of older persons and is aimed at battling discrimination at the work place on grounds of age. The program is assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee and is also to be reviewed by a Governmental Steering Committee.

Promoting the Employment of Older Persons in the Civil Service

In accordance with a recent Government Resolution, the Civil Service Commission and Government Ministries are to run a pilot program for the employment of older persons in a designated route within the Civil Service. This designated route will offer auxiliary roles of up to 120 hours per month, limited to a period of three years.

The first stage of this pilot program will be open to sixty (60) older persons. It will be reviewed by the Steering Committee which was established in accordance with the aforementioned Government Resolution.

Participation

Student Program for Older Persons

The Ministry for Social Equality recruits approximately 500 students, who receive a scholarship, in order to run various activities for older persons, such, for example, as creating community theaters, giving lectures to groups of older persons, ascertaining the rights of older persons residing in retirement homes, running computer courses, and more. This program also serves to enhance the intergenerational relationship between older persons and students.

This is a nationwide program, involving older persons, students, local authorities and community centers. The program is also assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee.

Consumer Club

The Ministry for Social Equality established a Consumer Club for older persons that campaigns for offers and discounts to club members on various products and services. The aim is to benefit from the economies of scale in order to obtain reduced prices from suppliers, as well as by means of subsidies through the budget which is to be invested in this program by the Ministry for Social Equality.

This is a consumerist initiative but it also has the additional aim of encouraging older persons to venture outside their homes and be active, which affects their physical and mental health. A long term goal of this program is to encourage businesses to understand the potential embodied in older persons and to target them with designated offers. The program is assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee.

As far as improving this program is concerned, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services is considering the benefits of focusing this program on leisure and cultural activities, and less on the consumer aspect.

Education, Training and Lifelong Learning

Older Persons Classes

As of September 2014, the Ministry for Social Equality, via the local authorities, has opened classes for older persons in junior highs or high schools, during school hours. This program aims to maintain learning and enrichment frameworks for older persons while strengthening intergenerational relationships. Classes take place twice a week for four hours.

This program is run within the local authorities that are interested in participating in it. To date, twenty-nine classes for older persons operate within schools. The Ministry of Social Equality is currently assessing whether additional local authorities are interested in joining the program.

The program is assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee.

Care

Operating a National-Civic Service for Older Persons

The goal of this project is to create a socially supportive environment for lonely older persons by means of the national-civic service volunteers who act vis-à-vis older persons in their residences, community centers and elsewhere. Each one of the volunteers in this project assists approximately five older persons and the volunteers are integrated in community activities in dozens of community centers. This project takes place among the general population as well as among the ultra-Orthodox population and amongst other minority populations.

The scope of this project is nationwide. It involves older persons, the Authority for National-Civic Service, national-civic service volunteers, local authorities and the voluntary sector. Currently, 551 national-civic volunteers are participating in this project, visiting the homes of 2,050 older persons and 110 community centers.

The program is assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee.

Full Exercise of Rights in Hospitals

The Ministry operates the "Units of Virtue" program in about eleven hospitals nationwide. This program aims to aid older persons who are hospitalized and may be unaware of the rights and benefits to which they may be entitled, upon their discharge from hospital, due to the deterioration of their health. In order to assist this population and provide them with access to the relevant information, the Ministry of Social Equality has established centers in hospitals across the country. Volunteers from these centers approach the beds of hospitalized older persons in order to inform them and their families of the health rights for which they may be entitled, such as nursing benefits, rights and benefits for holocaust survivors, foreign care workers, etc.

This is a nationwide program involving hospitals. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services is seeking to encourage all hospitals to participate in this project.

The program is assessed annually by the Ministry for Social Equality's Tender Committee.

Should you have any further queries, we would be pleased to assist.

Sincerely yours,

Adv. Danielle Marx