

Northern Dimension Institute | Policy Brief 14 - February 2021

## Healthy ageing policy in Russia needs to consider gender, age, and territory

The Russian government has adopted various national policies and programs in the last decade in response to population ageing in the country. We analyzed the targets and actions of two ongoing healthy ageing policies, and how their effectiveness could be improved. We suggest the national (Federal) level authorities to take the following recommendations into account:

- **Recommendation 1:** To separate program targets and indicators *by gender*, and to develop different actions for men and women on the national level, taking into account regional differences in demographics across the Russian Federation.
- **Recommendation 2:** To separate program targets and indicators *by age* between the younger and older elderly, and to tailor different supportive activities for each sub-group in the highly heterogeneous category of older population.
- **Recommendation 3:** To create a *mechanism for collaboration* between the social service and health care sectors to enable the development of a comprehensive and long-term care system. In this development work it is important to analyze best practices from the international experience, and to adapt them to the Russian context.
- **Recommendation 4:** To take the *urban-rural* dimension and the urbanization process into account in the program design. Many good practices and successful actions have been developed in large cities, and therefore need to be carefully analyzed to adapt them to the conditions of remote sparsely populated and rural territories in Russia.

## What are the current national policies?

The Russian Federal government has well recognized the upcoming ageing change, the need for health promotion at all ages and for targeted care for older people via enacting a range of strategic documents, legislative acts, and orders and programs which reflect national demographic trends. There are also rich databases on demographic processes and trends available via the Federal State Statistics Service and the Unified Interdepartmental Statistical Information System of the Russian Federation.

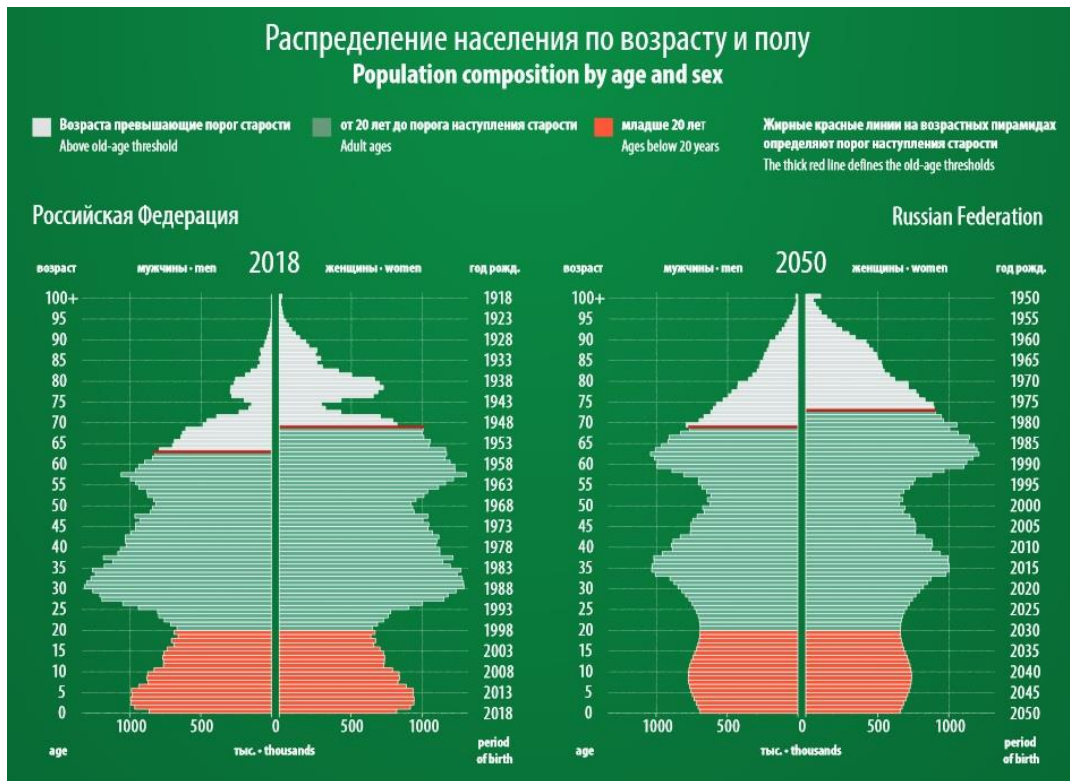
The first comprehensive, enacted document is the **Strategy for the benefit of older people in the Russian Federation** for the period up to 2025. The strategy from 2016, its **Action Plan** and related documents focus on the increase in life expectancy, improving quality of life and productivity in old age, and active ageing (see Picture 1).



Picture 1: Main directions of the Strategy for the benefit of older people in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 (2016). Photo credit: Agency of the city news "Moscow", <https://www.mskagency.ru/>

The second basic governmental document is the **National Project Demography**. It is one of the twelve national priority development projects, addressing the accelerating population ageing. The project has five sub-programs, one of which is the **Older generation program** (2019-2024). The program aims to create conditions for a support system that would extend the period of active ageing and healthy life of people, and improve the older people's quality of life and motivation for a healthier lifestyle. It

specifies strategic initiatives and defines mechanisms and financing for their implementation. The implementation of the program applies an intersectoral approach, and its actions are complementary to the Strategy for the benefit of older people.



Picture 2: Age pyramid in the Russian Federation in 2018 and 2050. Source: Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), and International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). 2019. Russian Demographic Data Sheet 2019. <http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/15652/>

## How to improve the current policies?

1. The longevity gap between sexes is in Russia one of the highest in the world, with male mortality being 2-3 times higher than female (see Picture 2 for the distribution of population by sex and age). Therefore, the authors of policy programs should be aware of the diverse causes of the large differences in the health of older men and women in Russia and take them into account in developing various gender-specific national actions.
2. The current policies emphasize the creation of a long-term care system for the oldest persons, while there is a lack of support activities for younger older adults. The

heterogeneity of the category of older people and the different needs of each sub-group should be acknowledged in the design of support measures.

3. The program “Older generation” is complemented with the programs “Public health” and “Public sport” under the same umbrella of the national project “Demography”. Regarding the healthy ageing, a concerted effort is needed to promote healthy lifestyles, including dietary habits and nutrition, decrease in substance use, and mass sport as important for all age groups, including people in old age.
4. The city of Moscow as a Federal subject has been the most successful in creating conditions for healthy ageing for its citizens, and its experience can be used as an example of good practices for large cities. The Moscow experience is, however, not directly applicable to small towns and rural remote areas, especially in the Arctic and Far East communities of Russia. It is important to encourage and support creativity in settlements of various size to improve the current ageing policies and take into account local conditions.

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Co-funded by  
the European Union