

## **Preparing for an Aging Population**

**EUROSAI President and SAI Israel, Mr. Matanyahu Englman, opening remarks at the kick-off meeting for the parallel audit on "The Preparedness of Governments for an Aging Population" (7.11.2024)**

Dear distinguished colleagues, participants, and friends,

It is a great honor to welcome you all to this important Kick-Off meeting for the parallel audit on *"The Preparedness of Governments for an Aging Population."*

As we embark on this collaborative and impactful journey, I would like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to each of you for joining us in this unique endeavor. Your willingness to engage in this multinational audit is a testament to the strength and unity of the global public sector auditing community.

As we all know, the issue of an aging population is one of the most pressing challenges facing our societies today. The demographic trends we are witnessing worldwide – with populations growing older and life expectancies rising – will have far-reaching implications for healthcare systems, social services, pension systems, and overall economic and social stability.

It is essential that our governments not only recognize these challenges, but also take proactive, informed actions to address them.

For example, in Israel, at the end of 2022, the population of elderly citizens aged 65 and over reached approximately 1.2 million, making up around 12% of the country's total population. Notably, 42% of these elderly citizens are aged 75 and above. Life expectancy at age 65 has been steadily increasing, rising by 2.9 years for men and 3.2 years for women between 2000 and 2019. Furthermore, the population group growing most rapidly in recent years is that of people aged 80 and over.

These statistics emphasize the urgency of addressing the challenges and opportunities that come with an aging population, not only in Israel, but across the world.

As we move forward, I am reminded of the timeless Jewish imperative of "*Vehadra't Pnei Zaken*" – You shall honor the elderly. This principle calls upon us to recognize the dignity of older individuals and ensure that their needs are met with respect and care. This ancient wisdom guides us as we explore the crucial policy areas related to elderly care and the preparedness of our societies for the demographic shift we are witnessing.

This parallel audit, which brings together the Supreme Audit Institutions of more than 10 countries, represents an extraordinary opportunity to share knowledge, exchange best practices, and collaborate on effective solutions to the complex issues related to an aging population.

I firmly believe that through our collective expertise and commitment, we will produce a report that will have a meaningful impact on how governments prepare for this demographic shift.

Over the course of this audit, we will be addressing several critical areas, including:

1. **Comprehensive Governmental Plans and Budgetary Aspects** for an aging population, including national strategic plans, current and future budget allocations, and evidence-based policymaking.
2. **Preparing the Health System for an Aging Population**, including the readiness of health systems, healthcare infrastructure, the training of healthcare professionals in geriatric care, and the quality of care provided to elderly individuals in hospitals and communities.
3. **Community-Based Elderly Care**, focusing on the effectiveness of community health services, preventive care, and the importance of keeping elderly individuals in community settings to improve quality of life.
4. **Preparing the Welfare System for an Aging Population**, with particular attention to programs addressing the loneliness of the elderly, the impact of aging on the labor market, and initiatives to encourage active participation of older individuals in society.
5. **The Pension System**, including an evaluation of the sustainability of pension systems and the preparedness of insurance systems to address the challenges posed by an aging population.

6. **Technological Integration in Elderly Care**, such as the adoption of assistive technologies, telemedicine, and remote monitoring, to enhance the independence and quality of life of the elderly.
7. **Legal and Policy Frameworks**, ensuring that legal protections and policies exist to safeguard the rights and inclusion of older citizens.

The collaborative, parallel approach of this audit will allow us to assess these issues across different countries, enabling us to share best practices and develop actionable recommendations that will improve how governments prepare for and respond to the challenges of aging populations.

For the State of Israel, it is a privilege to lead this important audit. As the State Comptroller of Israel and as the President of EUROSAI, I am deeply committed to strengthening international cooperation in the field of public sector auditing.

By sharing our insights and challenges with each other, we can learn from one another and develop solutions that are both innovative and effective.

At this stage, we will explore a broad range of topics reflecting the diverse challenges we face across our countries.

I encourage you all to think critically and creatively about the issues we are tackling. The success of this audit will depend not only on the quality of the work we do together, but also on the innovative ideas and new approaches that each of us brings to the table.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this is only the beginning.

As we progress, we will have several opportunities to engage in discussions, share findings, and refine our audit questions.

I encourage you to actively participate in all stages of this process and collaborate closely with your colleagues from other countries.

Together, we will ensure that our collective voice as auditors is heard and that we contribute to positive change in how our governments respond to the challenges posed by an aging population.

The team of the Israeli State Comptroller's Office and I look forward to working with each of you and to the fruitful discussions we will have today.

Thank you, and let's get started