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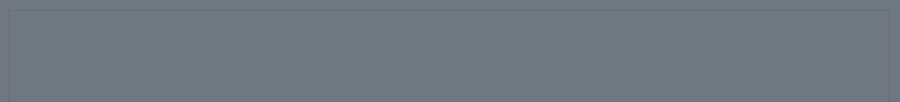
Social Policy in the CIS+ Countries: the Area of Ageing

Alexandre Sidorenko

Senior Advisor at the European Centre for Social Policy and Research

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UNRISD, Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 9173020
Fax: +41 (0)22 9170650
info@unrisd.org
www.unrisd.org

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Alexandre Sidorenko

European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

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1. Introduction

This article attempts to reveal the major features of social policy in the CIS+ countries¹ and identify available, prevailing policy approaches, including policy innovations. The policy area of ageing has been chosen for a focused exploration. More detailed attention is paid to the Russian Federation and Ukraine, including drawing the examples of policy actions. These two countries have been chosen within the CIS+ grouping for several reasons: they are among the most advanced CIS+ countries in terms of demographic ageing; they possess a relatively developed national capacity on ageing; and the issues of ageing, including policy responses, in these countries have received a rather extensive coverage in both scientific and popular publications.

The article begins with a *contextual* outline of social policy in the CIS+ countries, including demographic characteristics related to population ageing, some pertinent parameters of the ex-soviet societies, and a brief overview of social policy process since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the following section, policy *content* in the area of ageing is described within the framework of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The article concludes with the analysis of major features of policy actions on ageing in the recent ten years and strives to mark the unique, if innovative, approaches, as well as to suggest the issues for research exploration. The main conclusion of the article is that the innovations related to social policy in the CIS+ countries should be explored at the grass-root level of individual, family and community, which are adjusting to the difficulties of the ongoing societal transition.

2. Policy on ageing in the CIS+ countries: context

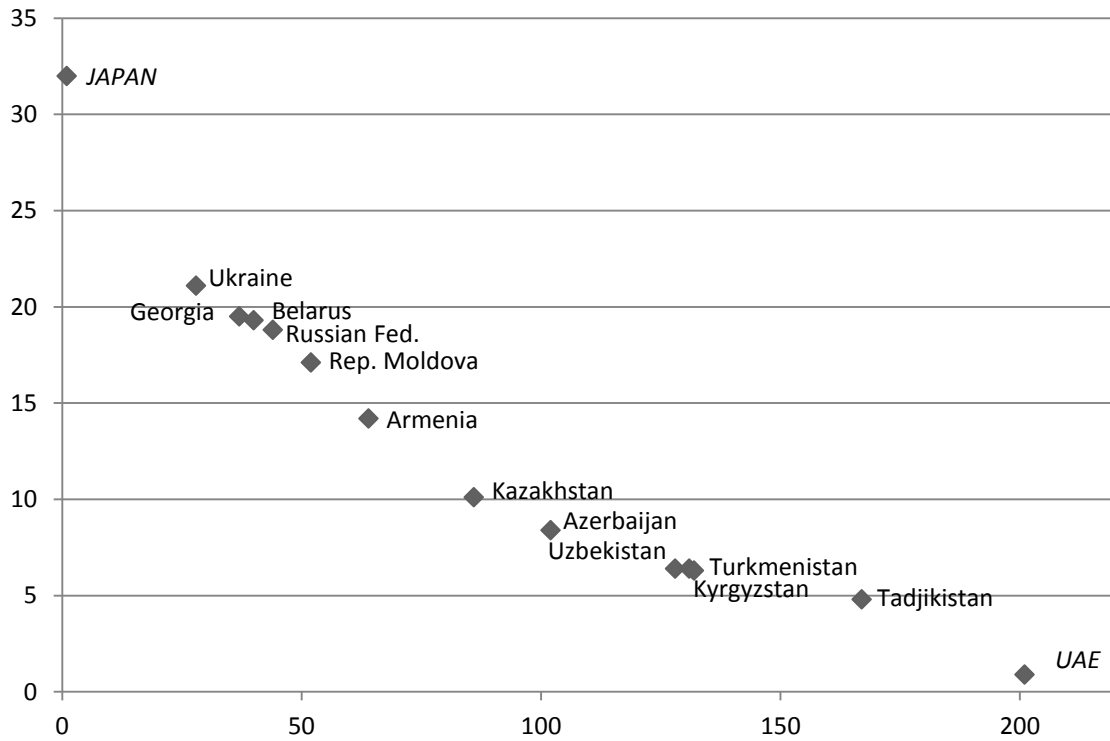
The obvious characteristic of the CIS alliance is its diversity, most prominently cultural, which has survived in many CIS+ countries several centuries of “homogenization” within the Russian empire and particularly the decades of creating “a new civic identity of soviet people” in the USSR.

¹ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) initially included 12 countries of the former Soviet Union. Georgia left the grouping in 2006; thus an acronym CIS+ refers to the 11 countries currently forming the grouping *plus* Georgia.

2.1 Demographic ageing

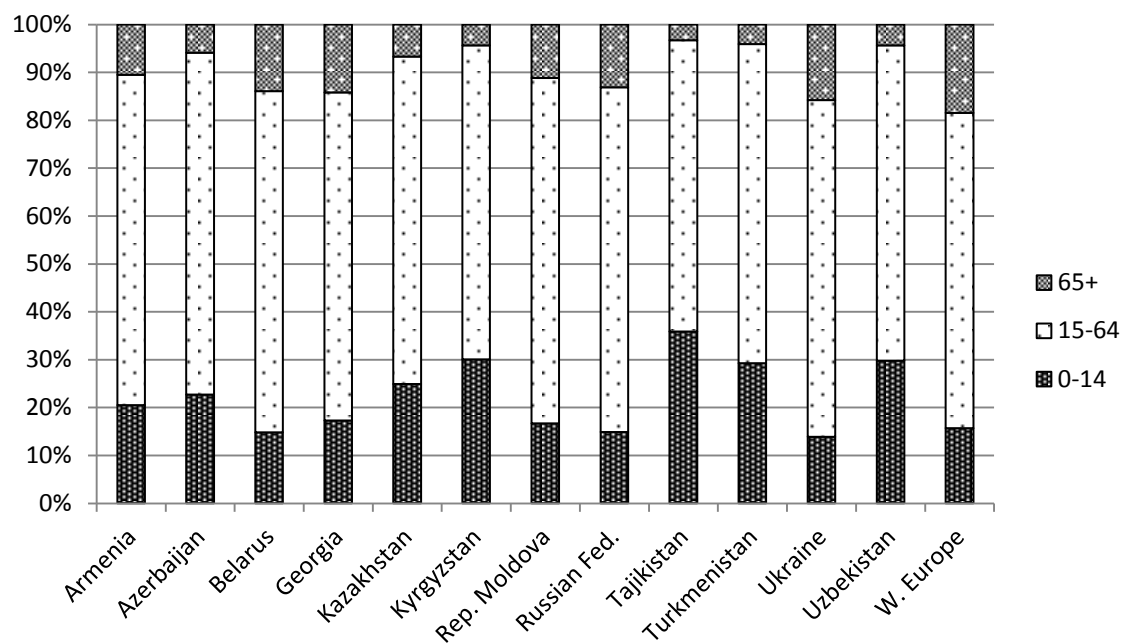
The diversity is clearly seen in the demographic characteristics of the eleven countries of the alliance plus Georgia. Concerning population ageing, the CIS+ countries belong to

Figure 1 Ranking CIS+ countries by percentage of population aged 60 or over years, 2013



Source: World Population Ageing 2013, United Nations, New York, 2013

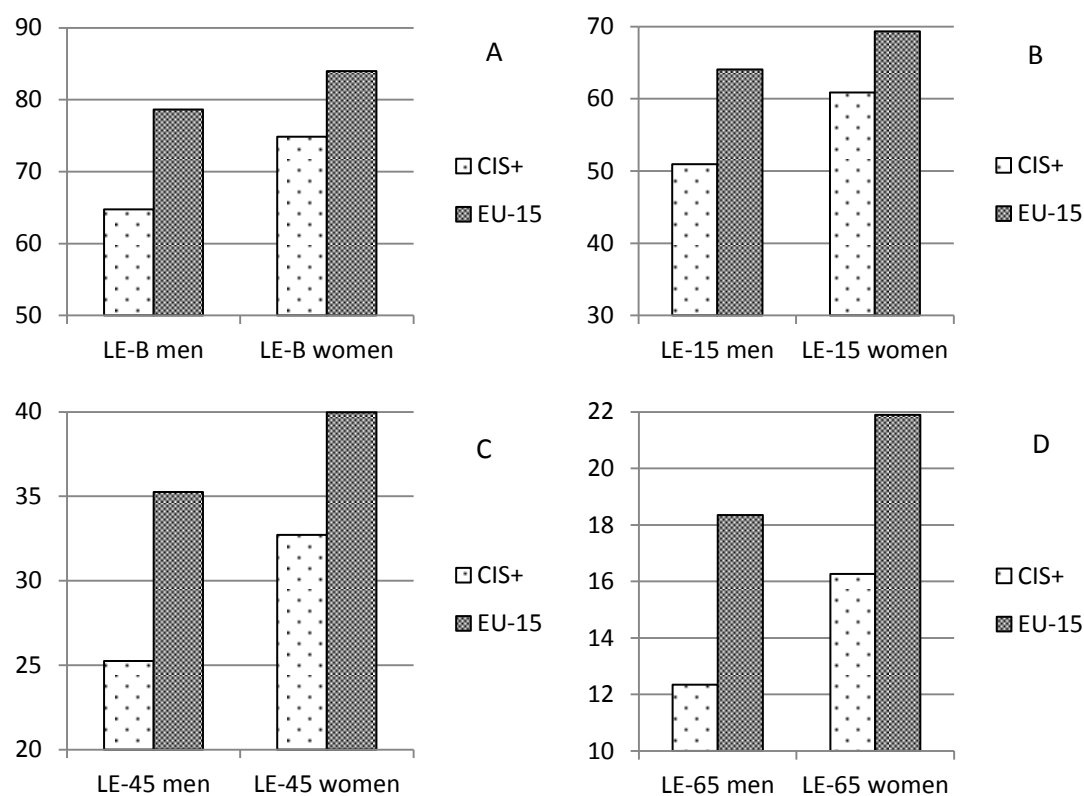
Figure 2 Age structure of population in CIS+ and Western European Countries, 2010



Note: W. (Western) Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein*, Luxemburg, Monaco*, Netherlands, Switzerland* (* - non-EU member)

Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

Figure 3 Life expectancy at birth (A); 15 (B); 45 (C); and 65 (D) years of age in CIS+ and EU-15* countries, 2010



Note. EU-15 – countries, which joined the European Union before May 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe, European health for all database (HFA-DB)

Updated: July 2013

http://data.euro.who.int/hfadb/shell_en.html

Demographic transition in several CIS+ countries, including Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, has had the features of an “accelerated ageing”, caused, in addition to low fertility, by an increased mortality and outmigration among the younger cohorts of “economically active population” [2]. In addition to population ageing, the major demographic concerns in some CIS+ countries include depopulation, outmigration, and high mortality, particularly among the “working age” population (15-65 years of age). It should be noted that the life expectancy in the Russian Federation, as well as in many other CIS+ countries, has substantially increased in 2004-2010; however the sustainability of this increase remains uncertain [3].

2.2 Ongoing transition

In spite of the mentioned diversity, the CIS+ countries share many common features in the structure and functions of their societies. Notwithstanding national specifics, many of these features can be attributed to the mutual ex-soviet legacy. A brief overview of the societal features in the CIS+ countries, which can be most powerful in impacting the social policy process, is given below.

In most general terms, the societal context in the CIS+ countries can be described as an *incomplete transition* [4, 5] from the centrally planned economies and totalitarian political regimes to a seemingly market economy and a declared democracy. While the starting point of the transition is well known, the point(s) of destination, particularly in political sphere, is vague, controversial and sometimes unpredictable. The volatile state of the political climate in the CIS+ countries can be illustrated by the recent developments in Ukraine where the earlier asserted course aimed at establishing an association with the European Union was abruptly reversed and redirected towards a closer connection to the Custom Union². An aggravated pressure of the global financial and economic crisis, which has been felt in many CIS+ countries, can be attributed at least in part to the unfinished process of transition to a market economy and persistent economic and political uncertainties.

One of the common political and social features of the CIS+ countries is *low legitimacy of political institutions*, which often leads to *political alienation* of citizens. The power struggle between and within the political “elite groups” in seeking the political rent has dominated the public life in many ex-soviet states at practically every governance level – from central to regional local (municipal). As a consequence, the political institutions are often failing to be engaged in elaborating the strategic approaches for transition to a post-soviet society, while the electoral promises are not being fulfilled. The political situation in Ukraine is quite illustrative of these features [6], which have been accentuated during the current political crisis in the country.

Post-soviet societies often remain the object of social manipulation by the intrinsic and extrinsic political powers; the process of transformation of people into the subjects of social and political life and their involvement into the state building and state governing has been slow. Combined with the widespread *corruption*, these have led to societal fragmentation, moral deregulation and even *anomie* [6, 7, 8, 9].

In spite of the prevailing conditions of social disengagement, the unaddressed roots of societal grievances have prompted political awakening and even political unrest in some

² The Custom Union consists of the three CIS countries: Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, with the latter country playing a central role in this trade and economic grouping.

CIS+ countries. The most prominent cases include the Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003); the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (2004); the Kyrgyz Tulip Revolutions (2005 and 2010); the Russian protests in 2011-2013, and the ongoing Euromaidan movement in Ukraine.

2.3 Social policy in transition

The social policy processes in the CIS+ countries also have their specific features, which might be attributed to the incomplete societal transition. The CIS+ states have been slow in developing the strategic frameworks and principal approaches in the social sphere. Since 1990-s, the social policy in the CIS+ countries has been focusing on the neutralization of already existing or newly emerged social tensions in the society [8], thus promoting “*a palliative form of social policy as remedial action against the adverse social effects of economic policies aimed at stabilization and adjustment, or at market-led growth*” [41]. Protracted and incomplete *ad hoc* policy responses have been associated with the lack of consistency and continuity. On some occasions a new controversial, often *populist*, legislation is introduced during the election campaigns and later abandon. Quite often the new regulations contradict earlier adopted norms, and/or they lack budgetary provisions [8, 9]. Enduring changes in the social and medical services are often difficult to follow not only by clients, including older persons, but also by the medical and social workers, which elicits resistance to reforms [8]. Another important reason of public resistance to social policy reforms is the lack of confidence by citizens caused, as noted above, by low legitimacy of political and government institutions. The widely spread public distrust also jeopardizes social contract and social cohesion and makes problematic an introduction of social policy innovations.

The societal transition in the CIS+ countries has been accompanied by the diminishing role of *welfare state*. Liberalization of social welfare provision along with gradual withdrawal of state [10] has not been compensated by measures supporting the emergence of civil society and the engagement of private sector, consequently inducing a *social welfare gap*. Meanwhile, the predominance of state sector in the provision of social services persists. Notable exceptions can be found in few CIS+ countries, particularly in Armenia, where the government has commissioned various social services, including long-term care, to several NGOs [11]. In the Russian Federation, a newly adopted federal law on the bases of social services of citizens in the Russian Federation identifies, along with the state organizations, the non-state organizations and private providers of social services [43].

The post-transitional welfare state has been emerging very slowly owing also to an excessive reliance of citizens on the state provision of social support which has

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