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Russia Remains an Uncomfortable Place to Grow Old

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An elderly couple walking through an underpass in Moscow.

Moscow's metro will celebrate the United Nations' International Day of Older Persons by handing out souvenirs to its elderly passengers and playing popular old tunes on the subway, but international rankings released during the holiday indicate that Russia remains an uncomfortable place to grow old.

HelpAge International's Global AgeWatch Index, released on the UN holiday Wednesday, ranked Russia 65th among 96 countries around the world on the quality of later life.

The rating placed Russia behind such former Soviet republics as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, Georgia and Armenia in the Caucasus Mountains, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Baltics, and Belarus just to Russia's west. Ukraine ranked 82nd.

In an attempt to put some smiles on the faces of elderly Russians during the UN holiday,

established in 1990 to raise awareness of the problems facing the elderly, Moscow subway will hand out more than 1,000 souvenirs at stations along the central Ring Line, a metro spokesperson said, Interfax reported.

Moscow's metro will also broadcast popular old tunes at its stations throughout the day, the spokesperson was quoted as saying.

The HelpAge International index ranked countries based on four indicators: income security, health, "capability," such as education levels and availability of employment, and "enabling environment," such as support for friends and family, and the safety of neighborhoods.

Norway topped the index, with Western Europe, the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan and Israel also ranking highly, while Afghanistan came in last. Among former Soviet republics, Estonia ranked the best, in 20th place.

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