

SENIOR LIFE QUALITY IN PARDUBICE

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Abstract: *The contribution is based on current demographics of aging, not only in Europe, but also in the Czech Republic. It is necessary to investigate both economical and social impacts in context of individual policies and to implement them into upcoming conceptions. Within the frame of the community plan of social and related services, The City of Pardubice has a concept of work with seniors that will be changing with respect to the results of the upcoming research.*

Keywords: *Seniors, Process of Ageing, Social Work, Social Care, Community Planning, Life Quality, Demographic Development*

1. Introduction

The existing international experience goes in line with the rule that no individual can be refused the opportunity to participate in social life and to take part in economic and social development. Seniors run greater risk of being declined this opportunity and thus, it is necessary to fight all forms of discrimination and secure the full enjoyment of human rights and basic freedoms. The combination of many factors, e.g. geographic mobility, urbanisation, economic development as well as differentiating the availability work and social institutions depending on age, brought about age segregation and prevents successful integration of seniors into the society. One of the crucial tools preventing social isolation and marginalisation of seniors is the economic, civic and cultural involvement. It also increases senior life quality and contributes to the functioning of communities and society as a whole. Seniors play a crucial role in families and the society even though their contribution is often overlooked and the social capital, which they represent, is rather commonly unused. The knowledge gained by the seniors through their life experience represents an important asset of the economic and social development. Seniors are active in many important ways, which are economically immeasurable, i.e. mainly care for family members, provision of their own food, maintenance of their own household, voluntary social work etc.

The main factor in the provision of full integration and involvement of seniors is the positive view of aging and senior age. It is important to emphasise the view of seniors as active participants. Increasing the economic, political and cultural participation of seniors should be based on the awareness that senior contribution exceeds the level indicated by their economic activity. It is thus necessary to recognise, promote and support their work provided for the family and the whole society. Participation on social, economic and cultural activities plays an important part in the prevention of social exclusion.

Extending human life extends also the life standard demands of the productive age into the period of life, when a person gradually becomes more dependent on the

support of others. That leads to the increase of costs compensating for the growing dependence of external help and, at the same time, leads to searching for new forms and the transformation of social services. Based on the recommendation of the Vienna International Action Plan for Ageing, many European countries, including the Czech Republic, set up national committees for seniors. Their task is to secure dynamic and coordinated national reactions to the ageing of the population as well as the protection of seniors. One of their goals is also the support of increasing senior life quality, assessment of individual policies and adjustment of all programs and policies to the seniors.

2. Demographic development in Europe

The Eurostat states that by the year 2040 the demographic development in most European countries will result in the portion of persons older than 65 – 79 let in the overall number of inhabitants increasing from less than 15% in 2005 to about 20%, and the persons older than 80 increasing from less than 4% to about 9%.

In spite of territorial differences, this represents a common trend, which can cause problems in many European countries. So far, the necessary care was provided by families, but the recent years connected mainly with greater female participation in the labour market, labour migration and growing number of single-member households; have changed the framework of socio-economic conditions. This development reflects also higher costs of senior care. Specialists point out that this trend is reflected in increasing costs of long-term care. They have estimated that the costs of long-term care from public sources will double by the year 2050. This trend will become most evident in the countries with currently low offer of social care. The individual demographic indicators show regional and local differences reflecting the standard of development, health state and life quality of the local inhabitants as well as other factors. “The age” of population can thus be to some extent considered an overall indicator of the society’s development.

Extending human life, transferring the life standard demands of the productive age into the period when a person is gradually more dependent on the help of others and the respective costs of compensation for the growing dependence on external help have led and still lead to the search for the transformation of social services.

Demographic ageing is often incorrectly seen as a negative phenomenon and the issues of demographic ageing are frequently reduced to reforming the pension system. The society, however, needs to do more in order to secure quality senior life and to utilise the potential of the growing number of seniors. It is necessary to make changes in many areas, mainly in the negative approach to the ageing of population, which is often connected with biased even atheist view of senior age. Such view gives rise to fears that corrode the inter-generation unity and provides space for discrimination. At the same time it overlooks the potential of seniors, as well as the outcomes and possibilities of scientific, technical and economic development.

Providing all people with the opportunity of self-fulfilment, education and active life is necessary for the improvement of senior life quality and the support of ageing population’s prosperity. The linear model “education, work, retirement” is becoming

more flexible and less sharp. Seniors are entitled to be evaluated as individuals on the basis of their capabilities and needs regardless of their age, sex, race, disability or other characteristics. Seniors with their knowledge and experience should stand at the centre of the changes taking place in the context of ageing population. People of any age should play an active role in determining the quality and type of services provided for them.

3. Demographic development in the Czech Republic

The VÚPSV institute team led by Doc. L. Průša carried out a study titled “The projection of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic to the year” (Průša, L.; 2009). This material serves as the basic starting point for building all social systems. The impacts of the ageing of population on the social services is discussed only marginally and so far, no complex studies quantifying the impact of the ageing of population on the need of social services in the country have been provided. The prognosis is determined by many factors together with the current difficulty of quantifying such factors as the change of legal state, philosophical concepts and approaches to the provision of social care and also the development of economic indicators. The above-mentioned projection also shows that the portion of persons older than 65 will be increasing significantly practically throughout the whole period (from 1556 thousand in 2009, or from 14.8 % to 33%). The data prove that the number of persons dependent on the help of others will be significantly increasing in future years.

The reaction to the above-stated fact of the ageing of population came in the set up of multi-area working group. It was set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and one of its tasks is to create the concept of long-term care and handicapped-senior care in their home environment. The change of the current system will require, among other things, also new qualifications such as community workers, home assistants, service managers etc. Creating the information and communication systems between the service providers and the clients represents one of the crucial tasks. The new system of long-term care should, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, should include not only doctors, institutes, long-time wards etc., but also physiotherapy, ergo-therapy, clinics for memory disorder treatments and cognitive rehabilitation, nutrition counselling, palliative care, sheltered housing, camera-monitoring and other forms of care reflecting the individual needs of seniors (MPSV;2010).

Long-term care should be a part of the reform of social services. It is thus necessary to anchor the system of senior care in the legislation. Also the overall approach to seniors must change together with the education of the caring professions, the reorganisation of service and personnel structure. In its programme the government declared as one of its priorities to pay greater attention to senior life quality. That is the reason for making necessary conceptual changes and taking a number of different measures. Conceptual and preventive steps are always less costly and more effective.

In order to achieve conditions for healthy, decent and active senior age, the government and administration must function in a strategic and long-term partnership. Local and regional administration has a great impact on the accessible transport, housing, health and social services, cultural and social opportunities, free-time

activities, safety and other services and conditions needed for quality life. Administration should play the main part in creating the senior-friendly activities and conditions increasing quality on local level. The government should support the administration and strive for cooperation in achieving the set goals on the state level. At the same time, the government should take into account the specific needs of individual regions. It would be suitable to support the development of age-integrated communities. The organizers of such activities must be motivated to offer varied events, which will reflect the needs of all age-categories and will generate incentives for homogenous interest groups across age-categories. It is necessary to stress the importance of voluntary work to increase inter-generation communication also in this area. In terms of local politics it is important to systematically create senior-friendly environment. The enforcement of positive, active and development-focused view of ageing may also result from the activities of seniors themselves. In this respect, it is crucial to motivate seniors to participate actively in creating positive and realistic Fig. of senior age.

Thanks to the increasing education and improving health of the population, the ageing and increasing number of seniors represent an enormous potential for the social and economic development of the society. It is the interest of the Czech Republic to create enough opportunities for its senior population to lead active and quality life and to live in the society accommodating for its needs and priorities.

4. Demographic development in Pardubice

Municipalities play and will keep playing an irreplaceable part in the system of social and health services for seniors. It means that the municipalities have to base their policies on the European and state policies and programmes and project these facts into their own concepts. From the point of view of the administration's and town's social work we mean mainly the managerial perception of social work (Kappl, M.; 2008). In case of the senior target group, we encounter the dilemma of whether to take the way of social control or help (Kopřiva, K.; 2006).

Currently, the basic conceptual material in Pardubice is still the Strategic Plan of Development of the Town of Pardubice, which includes the Community plan of developing social and other related services up to the year 2011 (Community Plan of Developing Social and Related Services for 2008 – 2011;2008). As a part of the community planning, the 9 working groups (according to client target groups) meet once a month. These meetings are followed by the negotiations of a coordination group. One of the most numerous and most active groups is the senior group, which regularly analyses social and other services provided for the seniors within the town's territory. The high degree of conceptuality of their work is proved by the fact that they see one of their main tasks in analysing the needs of seniors in relation to quality of their life. The gathered data will serve as the basis for the concept of social and other services for the town's seniors in order to achieve the maximum satisfaction of seniors

as well as maximum cost-effectiveness.

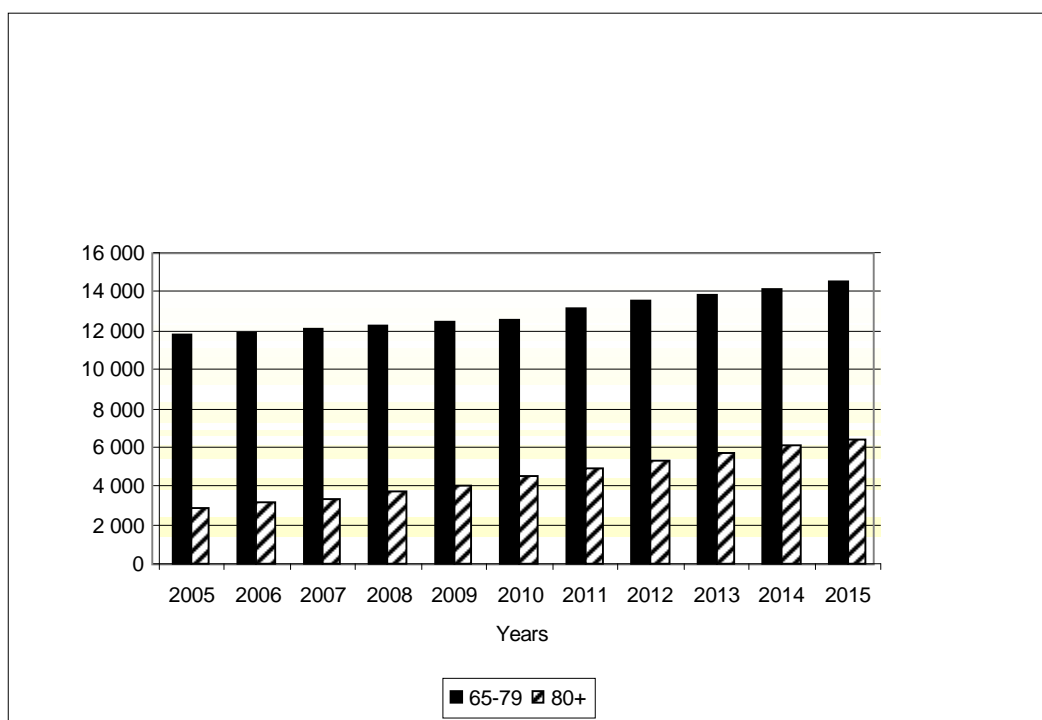


Fig. 1: Quantity of seniors

Source: Pardubice City Hall, Community Services Department of 2010

4.1 The development of the number of seniors in Pardubice in 2005 – 2015

The above Fig. shows the development of the number of seniors according to the prognosis of the number of inhabitants. It clearly displays the growing proportion of seniors aged 60 – 79, which should reach at the end of the assessed period more than 14 thousand persons, i.e. grow by 22 % of the value from the year 2005. The development of the number of persons older than 80 years of age is, however, more serious. Throughout the assessed period, this group will increase by more than 120 % of the value from the year 2005, i.e. from the original 2,895 persons to approximately 6,400 persons older than 80. This development will bring about greater demand for social services used mainly by this senior group. The demand will concern not only the capacity of institutions, but also the quality and scope of services.

4.2 Number of seniors in Pardubice January 1st, 2010

Total no. of inhabitants on 1. 1. 2010:	90,298 persons
Of which seniors above the age of 65:	16,922 persons (6,925 men, 9,997 women)
Per cent of seniors:	19% (18.7%)

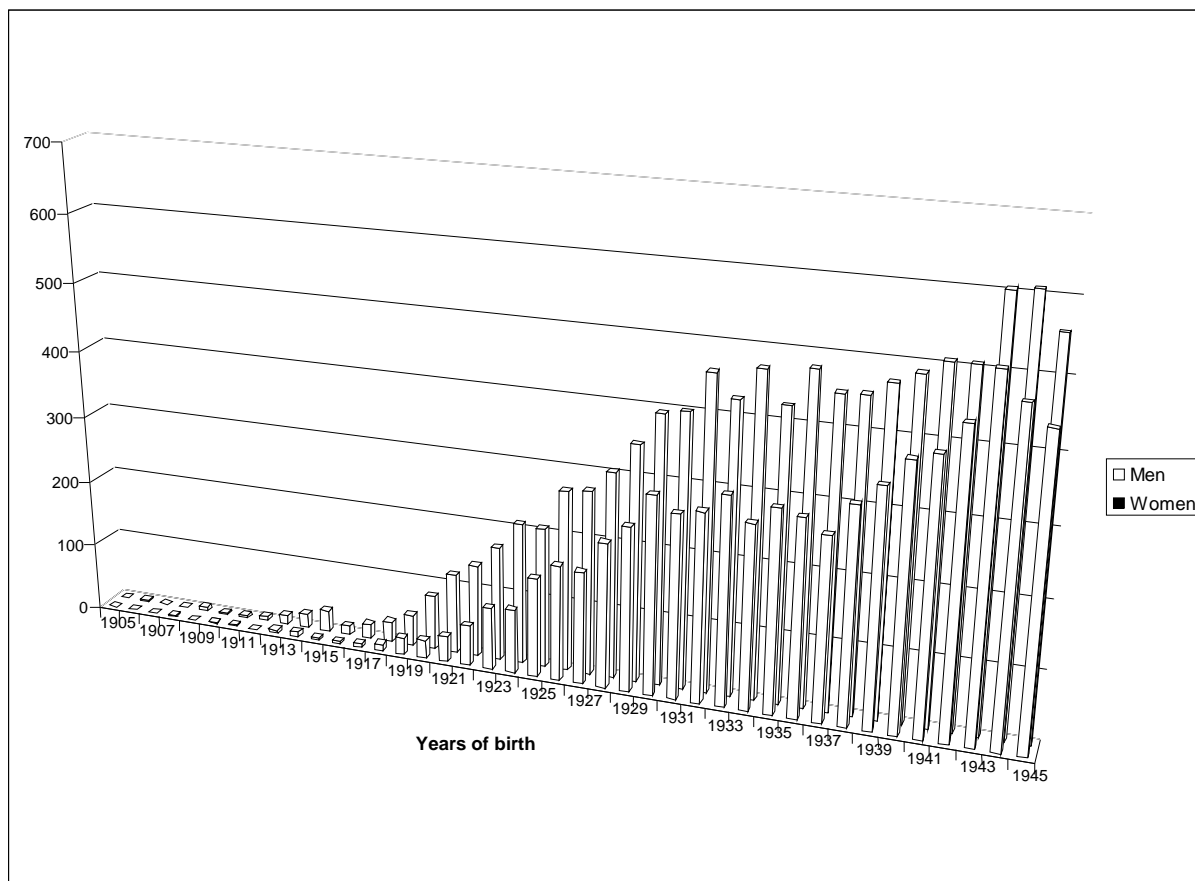


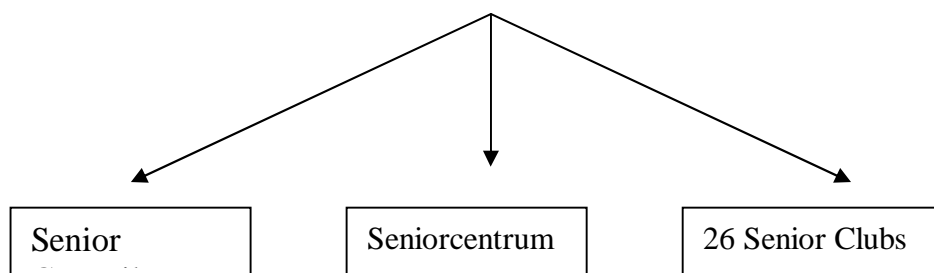
Fig. 2: Quantity of seniors in Pardubice

Source: Pardubice City Hall, Community Services Dept.2010

The statutory town of Pardubice through the Pardubice City Council and the Community Services Department provides senior care within its Community Plan of Developing Social and Related Services. The following activities of the town form an irreplaceable part of working with seniors:

4.3 Working with Seniors in Pardubice

The work with seniors is based on 3 pillars: Senior Council, Seniorcentrum and 26 Senior Clubs.



4.3.1 Senior Council

The Senior Council was founded in 1999. It is a 7-member counselling body of the Pardubice City Council. The Council members are suggested by the Senior Clubs and named by the Pardubice City Council for the period of two years. Senior Council deals with issues connected with the protection of the environment, traffic, town's development, housing, health care, safety,... Senior Council meets monthly.

4.3.2 Seniorcentrum

Seniorcentrum is open 5 days per week and was founded in April 1998 as an institution for creating conditions for healthy ageing of Pardubice seniors. The activities of Seniorcentrum helps seniors lead quality life, participate in full and active social life. It strives for a lifestyle respecting the objective requirements of senior age and in its results helps seniors extend the age lived in full health, without problems and with overall life-satisfaction. The activities of Seniorcentrum are run by Seniorcentrum Council based on voluntary work.

Throughout the year, Seniorcentrum organises lectures on different topics (health, travelling, legislation etc.). Each month has their own programme and contains weekly, monthly and other regular events. The annual programme contains five basic areas: interests (lace making, dance group, tourism..), healthcare (yoga, exercises for women, rehabilitation exercises, fitness exercises, memory training.....), education (music and literature programmes, language courses, lectures and discussions, safety courses...), social (concerts, social events, anniversary celebrations, accordion evenings, week of events for seniors titled "Age Is No Obstacle") and counselling (free-of-charge legal counselling).

4.3.3 Senior Clubs

The town of Pardubice offers its seniors the use of 26 senior clubs (970 members). Every club has its chairperson, who is responsible for the club's activity, attends regular monthly chairperson meetings. Every club meets as required, at least once a month, but often more frequently. The clubs organise lectures, walks, gallery visits, cultural events and trips as required by its members.

5. Conclusion

The municipalities, regions and the state face demanding tasks in connection with the ageing of population and they cannot fulfil them well without a high degree of coordination and without concepts, which will be created to reflect these demographic changes. In the following months, Pardubice Town Council will carry out a research focusing on senior life quality in Pardubice in the context of the Law on Social Services. It will map real needs of the seniors and the gained data will be reflected in the concept of social work and other policies of the town of Pardubice.

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