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Editorial Development of seniorial policy in Poland – analysis

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1. Introduction

The ageing population is a challenge for the whole of Europe. In 2025, about one third of the inhabitants of this continent will be aged 60 years or more [1]. The ageing of the population is accompanied by an expansion of the sphere of social exclusion and poverty. Active and healthy ageing (AHA) [2] was identified by the European Commission as the most important project to limit the negative effects of a negative phenomenon related to the ageing of the population in Poland. Therefore, the promotion of health and remaining active for as long as possible have become integral elements of the Europe 2020 Strategy [3]. Implementing the policy of active and healthy ageing in all age groups, with special regard to the youngest [4], is of fundamental importance for the future of the EU.

According to the data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in the next quarter-century, the number of people in productive age will be reduced by about 4 million, and the population will be reduced by 2.1 million. In an analogical period, a significant increase in the number of citizens aged over 65 is expected, which means that for every person aged over 65 there will be only two working persons. In 2010, the population aged 65+ was 5.1 million (13 percent of the Polish population). In 2035, the population 65+ will amount to 8.35 million (23 percent of the population). Simultaneously, the participation of people in advanced old age (80+) in the population will rise significantly – from 3.5 percent of the population nowadays to over 7.2 percent (2.5 million) in 2035. This trend poses a threat to the condition of the Polish economy as it will lose one fifth of its human capital and will have to bear the expenses of medical and social care of the growing number of seniors.

According to GUS (Central Statistical Office of Poland), for every Polish person over 70 years of age, there are 3 to four chronic diseases. The multiple morbidities phenomenon in senior age poses a significant problem for the patients and the health care system. Such people often require frequent hospitalizations and changes in pharmacological treatment. Polypharmacy, i.e. the use

of multiple medications simultaneously, which come into interaction – with each other and that – are harmful for the patient, is also dangerous. This problem in Poland, as in Europe [5], is a consequence of the lack of coordinated care for the patients; they are treated by many specialists, who do not cooperate with each other. The population of seniors in Poland has also a very low level of physical activity, high percentage of smokers and overweight people [6]. Also, the seniors participation in preventive screening and immunization programmes is not satisfactory, compared to other European countries [7].

In the group aged 65+, over one third of the Poles express discontent with regards to their health condition, and less than 20 percent have a positive opinion. Regardless of age and their own living conditions, 73 percent of the respondents, when considering their old age, are mostly concerned about disease, disability and memory loss [8]. According to the PolSenior study, 36 percent of people aged 65 or more are in need of help [9].

The problem of population ageing requires a cross-sectoral approach as it relates to different aspects of citizens' life and national policy. In Poland, the pioneers in this field are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and the Ministry of Health. Both coordinate the work of the government in this field.

2. Development of the seniorial policy in Poland

The authors of this article have analysed the key events and documents that have led to the creation of seniorial policy in Poland. They are presented in chronological order in Table 1 and then described in detail.

2.1. 15 May 2007 – Publication of the National Health Programme 2007–2015

On 15 May 2007, the National Health Programme for 2007–2015 was published [10]. It laid foundations for the health policy of Poland. Additionally, it mapped, in a very modern way, the most important health priorities within the government policy for almost a decade. The government health policy for the population aged 60+ in Poland was formulated by the operation objective no. 9: “Creating conditions for the active and healthy life of seniors”. The expected results for 2015 were:

- promoting the idea of active ageing;
- achieving the feeling of full health, security and active participation in the economic, cultural, social and political life;
- decreasing the occurrence of disability, chronic diseases and premature deaths in the population aged 60+ as well as

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Table 1

Key events and programme documents for the seniorial policy in Poland, 2007–2014.

Key events and programme documents ^a	Date
Publication of the National Health Programme for 2007-2015	15 May 2007
Healthy ageing as a priority of the Polish Presidency in the EU	1 July 2011
2nd Demographic Congress Publication of reports: “Public Health and Population Policy” and “The situation of the Elderly”	March 2012
Publication of the results of the “PolSenior” study	
Forming of the Coalition for Healthy Ageing	11 July 2012
Adoption of Government Programme for Senior Citizens Social Activity for 2012-2013	24 August 2012
Publication of a monograph: “Strategies of action in an ageing society. Theses and recommendations” by the Human Rights Defender	October 2012
Declaration of the Pact for Seniors by Universities of the Third Age	19 November 2012
Establishment of the Council for Senior Policy attached to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy	18 February 2013
Publication of the “White Paper on Healthy Ageing” and a national debate in the Polish Parliament	27 February 2013
Publication of governmental package of seniorial documents The assumptions of the long-term Senior Policy in Poland for the period 2014–2020 Solidarity between Generations Programme – measures to increase labour force participation of people aged 50+ Government Programme for Senior Citizens Social Activity for 2012–2013 (ASOS)	24 December 2013
1st Congress of Healthy Ageing	30–31 January 2014
Appointment of the Seniorial Policy Commission in the Polish Parliament	9 May 2014
First meeting of the Seniorial Policy Commission – overview of the current situation of seniors in Poland	28 May 2014

Own work.

^a As of July 2014. In chronological order.

- decreasing the spread of risk factors related to non-infectious diseases in the senior population.

The expected results should be:

- decreasing the number of disabled people in the population aged 60+;
- decreasing the number of deaths in the population aged 60+;
- decreasing the number of people with non-infectious diseases in the population aged 60+;
- prolonging the amount of years free from any health problems (HALE indicator) and;
- prolonging the average further life span.

2.2. 1 July 2011 – Healthy ageing as a priority of the Polish Presidency in the EU

On 1 July 2011, Poland became the head of the Council of the European Union. As part of the Polish presidency, the measures related to health policy were guided by a motto, coined for the first time by the Health Minister at that time, Ewa Kopacz: “Healthy ageing starts in childhood”. The motto was a quintessence of the Active and Healthy Ageing concept. It emphasised the importance of preventive treatment and promoting health for the future of the EU.

2.3. March 2012 – Publication of the PolSenior study results

In March 2012, a document summarising the research programme “The medical, psychological, sociological and economical aspects of population ageing in Poland (“PolSenior” [9]) was published. For the first time in Poland on such a scale, a population of 5700 respondents aged 65+ and 716 subjects aged 55–59 (reference group) was studied in the period 2007–2010. The cooperation of all centres and specialists from different fields helped to create a multidisciplinary project covering a wide range of issues related to the ageing of Polish society. The main objective of the PolSenior programme was to determine the health and

physical condition of seniors and to analyse their socio-economic status. On the basis of the obtained results, recommendations for the country’s social, economic and health policy were produced. It was concluded that the changes should relate to prevention, health care system and social help.

2.4. March – November 2012 – 2nd Demographic Congress.

Publication of reports: “Public Health and Population Policy” and “The situation of the Elderly”

The 2nd Demographic Congress was held in the period 22 March – 23 November 2012 under the title “Poland in Europe – Demographic Future” [11]. The President of the Republic of Poland took honorary patronage over the event. The subjects of discussion were:

- the experiences of the European Union countries in shaping population policy and the problem of migration;
- society’s health condition as well as the role of education and demographic studies in shaping the policy for development;
- the social policy and;
- the labour market.

In the published documents (“Social Health and Population Policy” [12]; “The Situation of the Elderly” [13]), four main objectives of population policy were adopted. Together with creating favourable conditions for starting families through marriage and fulfilling procreational plans, as well as determining the direction and principles of the Polish migration policy, there seemed to be a call for creating conditions for integration in the ageing society, improving health conditions of the population and limiting the mortality rate.

2.5. 11 July 2012 – Forming of the Coalition for Healthy Ageing

“The Coalition for Healthy Ageing” was established on the initiative of Prof. Bolesław Samoliński on 11 July 2012 at Warsaw Medical University. Right from the very beginning, it obtained

approval from the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. A number of prominent figures became partners of the coalition and supported it with their knowledge and authority. It was a response to the growing needs related to demographic and lifestyle changes, and rise of social expectations concerning the quality of life at advanced age. The aim of the coalition is to develop and promote all types of legal, administrative and social solutions for laying the foundations of healthy ageing in Poland and to make active and healthy ageing one of the priorities of the government. The members of the organisation include: prominent experts, social activists, the media and many institutions that take action for seniors as part of their mission. Ewa Kopacz, Marshall of the Sejm, took honorary patronage over the actions of the Coalition for Healthy Ageing and expressed her appreciation for the undertaken initiatives. Others that decided to take patronage over the Coalition's actions include: Human Rights Defender, Irena Lipowicz; Minister of Sport and Tourism, Joanna Mucha; Marshall of the Mazowieckie Voivodship, Adam Struzik; the President of Warsaw, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz and the Lech Wałęsa Institute. Furthermore, other supporters of the Coalition are: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of National Education, Warsaw Medical University and the Rheumatology Institute in Warsaw.

2.6. 24 August 2012 – Adoption of the Government Programme for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for 2012–2013

The Government Program for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for 2012–2013 [14] was a response to the challenges of demographic and social processes in Poland. Its main objective was to create conditions for the development of the social activity of seniors, who, owing to the population boom of the 50s, are, or soon will be, entering the 60+ age group. These people may be ending their professional activity, but they remain in good psycho-physical condition, have a potential, qualifications, life experience and free time that can and needs to be utilized with an appropriate social activities offer. Activity is one of the indispensable elements of healthy ageing. A pivotal role in this process is also played by cooperation and integration, in as well as between generations. The Programme assumes simultaneous actions in four areas of senior social activity. It is based on the following priorities:

- priority I: education of seniors – this includes actions for the development of educational offers aimed at seniors, the use of the potential of mutual learning, the development of innovative forms of education, informal and non-formal, promoting the so-called competence volunteering;
- priority II: social activity promoting integration in and between generations – this assumes the development of different forms of senior activity, with the use of the existing social infrastructure (e.g. public libraries, cultural centres), and includes the younger generation to create a mutual understanding and development of social skills;
- priority III: social participation of seniors – measures for a greater involvement of seniors in public, social, economic, cultural and political life, which will contribute to the growth of civil society. A particularly important role in this field is played by organisations that represent the interests and needs of the elderly, and that encourage their commitment in the life of local communities, e.g. senior boards attached to local governments;
- priority IV: social services for seniors – actions for the development of different forms of support through an increase in availability and quality of social services for seniors.

The formation of local support networks built on volunteers' actions is fundamental in order to create a self-help environment. The programme was financed by the state budget. The funds for its

implementation amounted to 20 million zlotys in 2012 and 40 million zlotys in 2013. The programme included the contest and system components. The contest component assumed financial support of the projects implemented by public benefit organisations in the four aforementioned priority fields for seniors. The first edition of the open offer contest was resolved in October 2012. It was met with great interest as evidenced by an impressive number of 1400 submitted projects. The majority were related to priorities I and II; however, no limits were established for individual priorities in the choice of the projects to be co-financed. In the end, over 420 best projects were chosen. The majority were planned to be realised in a 2-year time frame (409 continued in 2013). The first edition of the open offer contest showed a tremendous potential of local organisations that act for senior social activity. The financial support enabled the implementation of numerous innovative ideas for including the elderly in the actions of local communities.

2.7. October 2012 – Publication of a monograph: "Strategies of action in an ageing society. Theses and recommendations" by the Human Rights Defender

In October 2012, the Human Rights Defender published a monograph: "Strategies of action in an ageing society. Theses and recommendations" [15]. The authors presented the primary measures to improve the situation of seniors in Poland: the formulation of the National Health Care Programme for Seniors; appointment of a party coordinating senior health policy; gerontological education of future doctors; introduction of general attendance insurance. The report indicated how great a challenge it is to counteract discrimination of the elderly in social and public life and to pursue a positive senior image in the media.

2.8. 19 November 2012 – declaration of the Pact for Seniors

"The Pact for Seniors" [16] was a final declaration of members of Universities of the Third Age (UTW) conference. Universities of the Third Age provide the most popular form of senior education in Poland. There are about 100 thousand graduates in 400 centres. "The Pact for Seniors" included recommendations, principles and directions of senior policy of the country. The participants of the UTW Conference recommended the principles and directions of senior policy of the State mentioned below. They advised the creation of a government administration division called "seniors" and assigned it with the task of developing consistent senior policy of the State as an integral part of country development and sector strategies. UTW and other senior organisations should participate in forming senior policy nationally, regionally and locally with the use of its achievements and experiences as well as its functioning legislative tools, and good parliamentary and self-government practice. Constant education of the elderly ought to be acknowledged as a legitimate part of the national education system and as a centre of gerontological prevention. This would enable the elderly to remain in good psycho-physical condition, and would provide a feeling of social security. It would also act as an inspiration for citizen activity, for solidarity in and between generations and for social integration. The pact recommended the development of a public-private partnership for creating hospitable public space for seniors on the central, regional and local level, including citizen rights, consumer education, services as well as financial and legal consulting. The declaration emphasised the significance of counteracting social, information and financial exclusion, and all instances of discrimination by age in public life, healthcare, economy as well as the labour market. It suggested supporting the rise of senior social capital in Poland, particularly by creating conditions for education throughout the whole of life. The family was recognised as the optimum care facility for the seniors.

2.9. 18 February 2013 – establishment of the Council for Senioral Policy

On 18 February 2013, the Council for Senioral Policy was established [17] as a subsidiary body of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The entities invited to permanently participate in the Council's work were:

- the representatives of ministries, central public administration authorities and central bodies of public administration;
- the representatives of organisations of territorial government units, organisations of the third sector and;
- experts delegated for work in the Council. Its shape corresponds to the assumption of developing senior policy in a participation form.

The assumed form of the Council is a reflection of its consulting and opinion forming character in shaping the principles of long term senior policy in Poland.

2.10. 27 February 2013 – Publication of the “White Paper on Healthy Ageing” and a national debate in the Polish Parliament

During a debate in the Polish Parliament devoted to the problem of healthy ageing in Poland, the results of the work on “Coalition for Healthy Ageing” were presented. The effect of over six months of the Coalition's actions was an execution of an interdisciplinary document, the “White Book on Healthy Ageing” [18]. It includes recommendations concerning the method of developing a healthy and active old age as well as improving the Polish care system of the elderly. Conclusions and recommendations comprised in the White Book were a starting point for discussion with the invited guests: politicians, decision-makers and opinion leaders on the subject of system solutions with regard to healthy ageing of the society in Poland and an opportunity to summarise the European Year of Senior Activity and Solidarity between Generations. The debate included experts who were involved in the preparation of the “White Book” and institutions such as: the Human Rights Defender, the Lech Wałęsa Institute, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of National Education, Warsaw Medical University, the Agency for Health Technology Assessment, representatives of non-governmental organisations and self-governments as well as the media. The honorary patronage over the debate was taken by the Sejm Marshall, Ewa Kopacz.

2.11. 24 December 2013 – Publication of the governmental package of senioral documents

On 24 December 2013, a package of documents that present the assumptions of the government senioral policy in Poland was published and implemented. It consists of three key documents:

- “Assumptions of the Long Term Senioral Policy in Poland for the period 2014–2020” [19];
- “Government Programme for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for 2014–2020 (ASOS)” [20];
- “Solidarity between generations – Measures to increase labor force participation of people aged 50+ for the period 2014–2020” [21].

2.11.1. The document “Assumptions of the Long Term Senioral Policy in Poland for the period 2014–2020”

The document “Assumptions of the Long Term Senioral Policy in Poland for the period 2014–2020” is the first national programme for seniors. It assumes, among others, active ageing in good health, an increased participation in social life and solidarity between generations. The aim of the government is to support seniors in leading more self-reliant, independent and satisfactory lives. Its role is to remove obstacles that nowadays unable seniors to actively

participate in social life. The programme concentrates on eight areas of senior lives – health and self-reliance, professional activity, educational and citizen activity, culture, voluntary activity, silver economy. It defines senioral policy as all of the deliberate actions of all levels of public administration authorities and other organisations and institutions that perform tasks and initiatives that shape the conditions of decent and healthy ageing. The objective of senioral policy in Poland will be to support and provide opportunities for active ageing in health and ability in order to lead a self-reliant, independent and satisfactory life, even with certain functional limitations. The assumptions, though presented as a general outline, constitute a concrete set of necessary measures in the field of senioral policy in Poland targeted at a broad spectrum of recipients. Firstly, at the society, which, with its competences and potential, is a crucial element in the process of building and developing a policy of active and healthy ageing. Secondly, at public authorities at all levels, the private and non-governmental sector and social partners whose actions will enable an accurate employment of assets resulting from life extension. Such defined addressees of action in the senioral policy field and their close cooperation will account for the effective implementation of the principal aim of senioral policy – to improve the situation of the elderly for a decent ageing in good health.

2.11.2. “Government Programme for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for 2014–2020”

The experiences from the implementation of the Government Programme for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for 2012–2013 were the foundation for the design of the Government Programme. It was created as a result of cooperation with organisations that realised projects within the contest component of the Programme and a close dialogue with representatives of the non-government sector, scientific and expert communities, self-governments, central administration, trade unions and employers associations, held, among others, within the activities of the Board for Senioral Policy. A particularly important expression of the new approach to seniors is treating this social issue as a subject matter. In consequence, it led to the adoption of an integrated, horizontal formula of the Programme that refers to a wide range of needs and interests significant in that socially sensitive stage of human life. The Programme, just as its first version for 2012–2013, is a complex endeavour that addresses areas and directions of support that enable the achievement of the main objective, i.e. the improvement of the quality and level of senior life for decent ageing through social activity. The programme assumes practical integration of the non-government sector to the actions for senior engagement. Laying the strategic foundations for the implementation of the social policy for the elderly has profound significance for its future. This was envisaged by the second system component of the ASOS Program for 2012–2013. The rational concept of the long-term policy in this scope can be formulated in the near future only in a participation formula, with the involvement of all stakeholders. The Board for Senioral Policy has become a platform for creating a long-term document that responds to the current and future needs of the country, identified in the field of seniors. The assumptions of the programme can only be implemented through planning, designing and enforcing the long-term measures executing far-reaching objectives. Hence, the Programme is envisaged for seven consecutive years, as only comprehensive and accurately long-term actions have a chance of providing a permanent effect for the social situation of seniors, realised against the demographic challenges of Poland.

2.11.3. The document “Solidarity between generations – Measures to increase labour force participation of people aged 50+ for 2014–2020”

The document “Solidarity between generations – Measures to increase labour force participation of people aged 50+ for

2014–2020” covers a wide spectrum of initiatives. The aim is to utilize the human resources of people aged 50+ more efficiently. One of the most prominent priorities of the document is the maximum use of the potential of people aged 50+ on the labour market. One of the lowest employment rates of people aged 55–64 in the whole of the European Union has been observed in Poland. Prolonging their professional activity has an immense significance for the whole labour market. Preventive actions and promoting healthy lifestyle as well as the development of medical services are to support seniors in keeping good health and independence for as long as possible. In that way, they will be able to continue their professional activity as well as take part in certain forms of social life. Educational offers specifically adapted to seniors’ needs and interests, and, as a consequence, the rise in their participation in numerous courses and educational classes is another of the goals of seniorial policy. One of the means of implementation is to support the development of Universities of the Third Age. Citizen activity and voluntary work are to support seniors’ involvement in the life of local communities and national matters, the use of their skills and potential as well as the acquisition of new competences. Moreover, it is one way of integrating them with the younger generations. Similarly, as up until now, it is assumed that the measures in this field will be taken on many levels, starting with government actions, through initiatives of regional and local authorities and employers. Additionally, the willingness of certain people to prolong their activity as well as encouraging people aged 50+ to prolong their professional activity are crucial. This is of particular importance now, when a substantial part of the funds and, therefore, the actions related to labour market policy is the responsibility of regional authorities. The objective of the “Solidarity of the Generations” Programme is achieving an employment rate of people aged 55–64 of 50 percent by 2020. The primary recipients and beneficiaries of the Programme are people aged 50+. The actions, however, will be aimed at a wider group of people of different ages: those aged 60+ and those who will enter the pre-retirement age in several years (particularly the 45+ group). The addressees of the Programme are also specific groups and subjects, such as businessmen, trade unions, non-government organizations, social economy entities, public and non-public labour market institutions, territorial governments and government administration institutions.

2.12. 30–13 January 2014 – 1st Congress of Healthy Ageing

On 30–31 January 2014, the 1st Congress of Healthy Ageing took place. It was organised by the Foundation and the Coalition for Healthy Ageing. The aim of the Congress was to discuss the objectives, most important challenges and actions necessary to implement the long-term seniorial policy. The meeting acted as an opportunity for a broad discussion on the progress of work on active and healthy ageing. The meeting was opened by the Sejm Marshall, Ewa Kopacz, and summoned leading experts in many fields, representatives of the highest national authorities, the European Commission and government administration as well as self-government, non-government organisations and the media. It was a unique event, not only on the national scale. It revealed the willingness of many entities to engage in seniorial policy and understanding of its multi-sectoral character. The participation of public institutions responsible for financing disability and retirement pensions, healthcare, science, sport and tourism etc., represented by managers of the respective fields, has enabled a broad discussion and a preliminary diagnosis as well as proposals of further work on the aspects of seniorial policy in Poland. Finally, a report with the Congress summary was given to the Minister of Health. Conclusions and recommendations of the Congress concentrate on various aspects of senior life, as defined in

“Assumptions of the Long Term Seniorial Policy for 2014–2020”: health and self-reliance, professional activation, educational and social activity, culture, voluntary work, silver economy. Moreover, they were divided, according to the time of implementation into short (until 2020) and long term.

2.13. 9 May 2014 – Appointment of the Seniorial Policy Commission in the Polish Parliament

On 9 May 2014, the Polish Parliament appointed the Seniorial Policy Commission – a permanent commission dealing with the formation of state policy concerning the elderly. The tasks of the Commission include matters of different aspects of senior life, such as health and self-reliance, professional activity of people aged 50+, education, social and cultural, voluntary work. Furthermore, the commission will discuss the aspect of the so-called silver economy and relations between generations. The appointment of the permanent commission for seniorial policy is connected, among others, with the approval of a package of seniorial documents by the Parliament. What is more, the Commission is meant to coordinate the preparation of the annual Parliament debate on seniorial policy. Michał Szczerba, a member of Parliament, has become chairman of the Commission. On 28 May 2014, the Seniorial Policy Commission discussed the situation of seniors in Poland and the essential results of the PolSenior study.

3. Overview

Taking into consideration the events and key documents described in this article, it can be stated that Poland is at the beginning of a long road to development and implementation of seniorial policy; however, it has already achieved a substantial success. It has provided foundations for the modern seniorial policy. Several years ago, this subject was still marginalized. The 2nd Demographic Congress in 2012 was a turning point. Other milestones were: the appointment of the Coalition for Healthy Ageing and an active approach of the government represented by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy supported by the Minister of Health and other departments. Of special importance was the personal involvement of the key persons in the country: the President, the Sejm Marshall and the Prime Minister. All of the above-mentioned institutions have put the work relating to the creation of Polish seniorial policy on the right track. Building a dialogue platform of all the stakeholders of the system, including the seniors themselves, was the key achievement. An outstanding cooperation between all the interested parties, departments, organisations and a meaningful representation of the media in educating the society played a fundamental role in achieving current results and shaping social awareness. The example of the development of seniorial policy in Poland can be viewed as proof that it is possible to break down the so-called silos policy, where individual stakeholders act in the same area but do not cooperate with each other, and do not perceive the potential benefits resulting from the cooperation.

Very strong foundations for creating seniorial policy in Poland were provided by a regular and close cooperation with DG SANCO and the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA). Especially helpful were the guidelines by the EIP-AHA: “enabling EU citizens to lead healthy, active and independent lives while ageing and improving the sustainability and efficiency of social and health care systems”. All actions in Poland tried to implement the assumption: “bringing together key stakeholders (end users, public authorities, industry); all actors in the innovation cycle, from research to adoption (adaptation), along with those engaged in standardization and regulation”. Good example of cross-country inspiration was MACVIA project [22], which showed, how important for healthy ageing is proper management of chronic conditions.

According to the authors of the elaboration, the factors affecting the living situation of the elderly in Poland can be defined. These are predominantly: economic activity in the productive age, the position of the elderly in the family and the society, the place of seniors in the state and territorial government policy, the accessibility of social services for seniors and the scope, availability and quality of services addressed specifically to seniors.

The authors formulate a recommendation that the goal of senioral policy in Poland is to support and provide opportunities for active ageing in health and ability to lead a self-reliant, independent and satisfactory life, even with certain functional limitations. The most significant areas of senioral policy include: the measures for achieving health and self-reliance, professional activity of people aged 50 and more, educational, social and cultural activity of the elderly, relations between generations and silver economy aimed at utilizing the potential of seniors and fulfilling their needs.

Moreover, the authors have defined the ten most important aspects of senioral policy in Poland:

- the issue of active and healthy ageing should be a priority in the state policy for the coming decades, encompassing pro-health education and development of systemic solutions conducive to forming pro-health attitudes from the youngest age;
- the programme should be concerned with the provision for physical function, eating and social habits as well as fighting addictions;
- the development of instruments promoting such behaviours in work places and including employers in implementing the policy of active and healthy ageing;
- apart from the continuation of the policy, the crucial aspects for the elderly are:
 - development of innovative solutions in pharmacological treatment and technical support as well as programmes concerned with promoting health and activating such people. Of considerable importance is also the introduction of new technologies in e-health that can exist as an alternative for traditional services in certain situations [23],
 - taking measures to eliminate the effects of poverty; improvement of social security to protect against the effects of impairment and disability; formation of appropriate social relations and generation bonds; fighting social exclusion,
 - preparing the health care system for necessary solutions given the growing amount of multiple morbidities and disability in that age group, with particular focus on the development of geriatrics along with its implementation in the practice of first contact doctors,
 - early detection and prevention of chronic diseases by means of screening and prophylactic programmes (inspired by MACVIA experience);
- the multi-sectoral character of pro-health policy has to be acknowledged. All departments should be included (health, labour and social policy, sport and tourism, education and science in particular);
- the programme cannot exist without territorial governments. The substantive, organisational and financial support for the self-government structures by central administration is crucial;
- non-government organisations should be included in the programme as widely as possible;
- a mandatory assessment of legislative acts with their relevance to health should be considered;
- the national public health care programme should be maintained as the basis for senioral policy. Its implementation should be assessed and supervised by the Polish Parliament at least twice per cadence;
- it is desirable to create a road map of senioral policy in Poland.

A long road lies ahead of Poland in developing senioral policy. It relates as much to political as to social and economic fields. Currently, Poland is lacking good practices in age management in companies (with the exception of certain international corporations that transfer the solutions used in other countries to Polish reality). The economic potential of seniors (silver economy) is still not fully utilized. There is no tradition of voluntary work among the elderly. There are, however, positive signs of the ongoing changes. A perfect example includes the Universities of the Third Age and the fact that the senioral policy issues gain importance as well as social and political interest.

The subject of the ageing process in Poland must no longer be perceived as a burden for the society, if the potential of active and healthy ageing is to be fully exploited for the development of Poland. A constant analysis is required to assert whether the process of building senioral policy in Poland is heading in the right direction. The arguments stated above, as well as the actual achievements and conclusions, seem to support the thesis that Poland is implementing the assumed goals to achieve functional and rational state senioral policy. However, the question arises as to whether the assumed changes will lead to actual results. A substantial conclusion of the above-mentioned public debate is the necessity of creating a road map of senioral policy and defining critical success factors to monitor the actual effects of introduced regulations in senioral policy in Poland. Simultaneously, benchmarking will be used for other countries of the EU.

4. Conclusion

Polish presidency in the EU (year 2011) was an impuls for the fast development of senioral policy.

The most important European experiences were utilized in the creation of senioral policy in Poland.

The silos property of senioral policy in Poland acted as the principal obstacle to its development.

The success in building senioral policy in Poland demonstrated that what is of fundamental importance in its development is the involvement of the most prominent persons and institutions of the State.

Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest concerning this article.

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