

Age friendly goods and services – an opportunity for social and economic development (Warsaw, 29-30 October 2012)

Innovative approach to demographic ageing – an opportunity for social and economic development ¹

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

1. Introduction – demographic challenges

The population of Poland, just like the population of other EU Member States, is aging. This will require planning and organisation of suitable measures aimed at assuring various needs of that age group. At the same time, one should take into account the disparities in the demographic situation in individual regions of the country.

By 2013 Poland will prepare the assumptions to a long-term senior policy, which will allow for applying a horizontal approach towards ageing in State's public policy.

The changes in the age structure in Poland by 2035 are presented in the chart below. The persons born in the baby boom of 1950s will contribute to a great extent to the 75+ group whereas the persons born during the baby boom of 1980s will enter the non-mobile age. It should be pointed out that there are no further (younger) groups similar in terms of quantity after those two largest groups. When the cohort of persons from the 1980s enters the post-working age, we can expect a considerable burden to be imposed on the social insurance system and the healthcare system.

At the end of 2010², the number of persons in post-working age (60+/65+) amounted to 6.44 million. The CSO forecasts that this number will equal 9.62 million in 2035 (increase by 49%), and the largest increase will take place between 2015 and 2020 (1.0 million people). However, it should be remembered that the CSO's forecast does not take into consideration the new retirement age for men and women. Therefore, the increase in the number of persons of post-working age will be slightly postponed.

With the changes in the population structure of Poland, the structure of working age persons will change as well. Until 2035, as compared with 2010, the percentage of persons in the following age groups will increase: 60/65-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85-89, 90+, and the highest growth rate will take place among the persons aged 90+ (a ca. 2.5-fold increase), 85-89 (a twofold increase). The number of persons aged 75+ will equal ca. 4.5 million in 2035 (in 2010 it will amount to 2.4 million).

¹ Prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission.

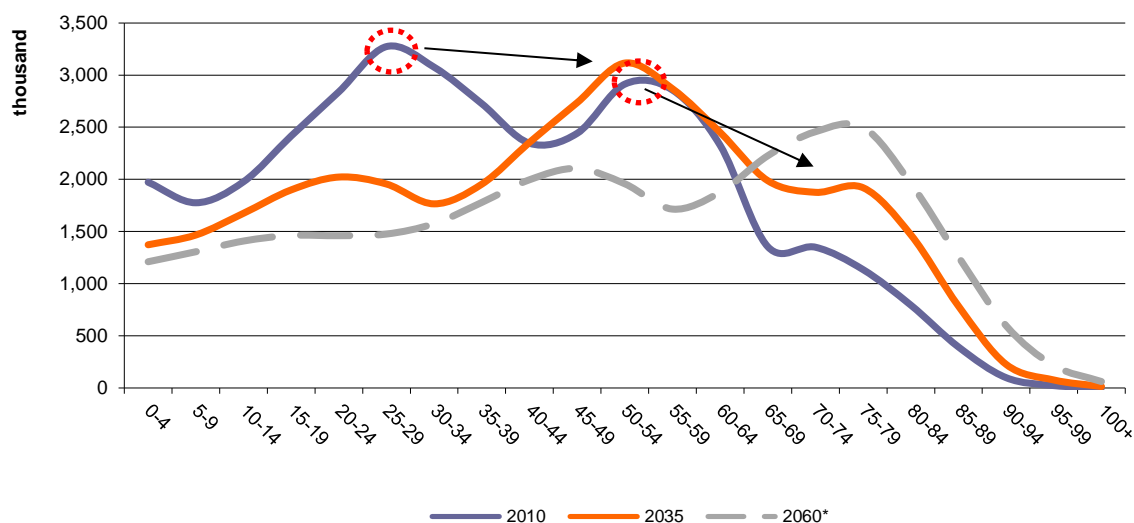
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² Stan i struktura ludności oraz ruch naturalny w przekroju terytorialnym [Size and structure of population and vital statistics by territorial division]. As of 31.12.2010, Central Statistical Office (CSO).



The demographic change results in the necessity to take measures that influence the State's social and economic sectors.

Chart 1. Number of persons in five-year age groups in 2010, 2035, 2060*



* N.B.: The data for 2060 come from the European Commission forecasts, the data for 2010 and 2035 come from the CSO's demographic forecast for 2008-2035 (the forecasts are not fully comparable). Such a comparison was used in order to illustrate the demographic situation in a long-term perspective.

Source: own study on the basis of the data from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the European Commission.

2. Silver economy – as an opportunity for the economy arising from the aging population

The concept of silver economy³ assumes that social policy of a State should be focused not only on building a positive image of the elderly in the society, but also on improvement of their social status and availability of all cultural and social life goods at all levels. The silver economy concept relays on a positive approach to natural consequences of population aging and maturation that result from the decreasing number of births, decreasing fatality rate and increasing average life expectancy.

Furthermore, the concept of silver economy is focused, on the one hand, on the needs and demands of the older population whereas, on the other, on the features that can and should be taken advantage of for increased activation and self-reliance of the elderly. It is also assumed that increased activity and social integration of the elderly are a prerequisite for better satisfaction of their needs, conducive to increased quality of lives not only for them, but also for the entire population.

Implementation of the silver economy concept represents one of the greatest economic challenges faced by Poland. Aware of the advantages and opportunities related to silver economy, the government of Poland includes that term in the strategic documents, e.g. in the Human Capital Development Strategy.

³ An economic system that addresses the areas such as occupational, social, cultural, educational and physical activity of persons aged 50+. Besides, its importance also covers the development of the market of services for the elderly.



When analysing the silver economy in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), the following issues can be indicated from the Polish perspective:

Strengths:

- Better use and targeting of the healthcare system that provides an opportunity for autonomy and integration of the elderly (highly-skilled social assistance personnel prepared for community and institutional work),
- Development of the social infrastructure,
- Social awareness of the effects of demographic changes,
- Targeting social support at the field of policy for the elderly,
- Building a full image of an elderly person with particular focus on the potential on the labour market and in social life,
- Public space – infrastructure adjusted to the needs of the elderly,
- The idea of support for combating the poverty and social exclusion among the elderly,
- Contribution to economy's stability (active preparation of the economy to new demographic proportions represents an opportunity to improve the quality of living and economic growth).

Weaknesses:

- A new and not popularised way of procedure in the private, public and non-public sector,
- No co-ordinated measures to be implemented by various entities,
- Targeting certain solutions only at the elderly groups instead of designing universal solutions tailored to the needs of the entire population.

Opportunities:

- Increased social activity of seniors by means of:
 - increased participation of the elderly in organisations and associations and other forms of activity for local/regional communities,
 - increased availability of diverse sports activities adjusted to the needs of the elderly,
 - increased availability of cultural events in which the elderly are not only the recipients, but they can also actively take part in their creation.
- Increased level of occupational activity by means of:
 - adaptation of the workplaces to the needs of the elderly,
 - enhancement of competences and qualifications at all life and career stages.
- Appropriately and efficiently conducted policy towards seniors gives them a sense of confidence by assuring "a stable tomorrow";
- Improvement of social cohesion and solidarity between generations;
- Building a coherent adult education system oriented at flexibility and development of competences that are necessary in the social life;
- Economic growth by means of development of services aimed at the elderly.



Threats:

- Concentration not only on a closed and strictly defined social group without simultaneous horizontal policy-making,
- Unwillingness of employers to invest in adaptation of the workplaces to the needs of the elderly or delaying the implementation of such solutions.

It seems that the current social awareness of seniors' problems and needs in Poland is not sufficient, and the entrepreneurs are not always convinced about the positive aspects arising from the opportunity of employing the elderly. In addition, there is no good practice base that could be used by the employers to exchange their experience and solutions aimed at taking advantage of the entire potential of the elderly employees.

3. Social involvement of the elderly – towards system solutions

Currently, the persons over 60 years old, who are classified as being born in the baby boom in Poland of 1950s, will contribute in the coming years to the group of persons that are not active.

They are the persons with specific qualifications who bring their occupational activity to an end, and could commit themselves to a considerable degree to social life if a suitable offer was made.

It can also be a significant opportunity for that numerous group to remain active, independent and self-reliant also in the next years of old age. Such a message formed the grounds for the creation of solutions that are being implemented in stages in Poland as part of the active aging policy.

The concept of active aging assumes that an individual is provided with an opportunity to remain socially productive for as long as possible. The social productivity is defined as any activity that generates goods and services, irrespective of whether it is paid or not, including activities such as home work, childcare, volunteering, assistance to family and friends.⁴

On 24 August 2012 the Council of Ministers adopted a Government Programme for Senior Citizens Social Activity 2012-2013. The Programme budget amounts to PLN 60 million; in 2012 – 20 million, in 2013 – PLN 40 million. One-year and two-year programmes are planned (financial support from PLN 20,000 to 200,000)

This programme is aimed at the senior environment, organisations and institutions that operate for the activity of the elderly.

According to its assumptions, the Programme addresses only one of the main areas of functioning of the elderly – social activity, so as to preserve the good health condition of the elderly as long as possible, and to prevent social isolation of the elderly who bring their occupational activity to an end and have the potential and time to be used for the development of local communities.

Furthermore, the Programme points to the need of integration and co-operation between generations, which forms a basis for the creation of an activity model for old age.

In the Programme duration, twin-track measures will be taken:

- Preparation of assumptions of a long-term senior policy by September 2013;

⁴ P. Szukalski: Aktywność zawodowa [in]: P. Błędowski, M. Mossakowska, A. Więcek: Aspekty medyczne, psychologiczne, socjologiczne i ekonomiczne starzenia się ludzi w Polsce (PolSenior), Termedia Wydawnictwa Medyczne, Poznań 2012.



- Calls for proposals for the organisations that operate for the activity of the elderly. The first call for proposals edition has been launched on 5 September 2012, and the main beneficiaries thereof include the organisations that operate in the field of public benefit.

Four Priorities are provided for in an open call for proposals:

- Priority 1. Education of the elderly
- Priority 2. Social activity conducive to integration within and between generations
- Priority 3. Social participation of the elderly
- Priority 4. Social services to the elderly (external services)

The tasks implemented under the Programme involve subsidies to employers with a view to accomplish the following objectives:

- Expand and improve the quality of learning opportunities for the elderly;
- Create the conditions for the integration of older people within and between generations using the existing social infrastructure, e.g. broadening the knowledge about biological, health and social changes that take place with age as part of preparation of the population for aging;
- Develop different forms of social activity for the elderly, including the promotion of volunteerism, participation in decision-making processes in society, including the participation of the elderly in public policy-making;
- Increase independent living of the elderly, improving the quality of social services and helping to promote self-help and self-organisation:
 - development of support systems that make it possible to satisfy the needs that are specific for the old age, in particular by the elderly with limited self-reliance,
 - development of social services in the field of sports, tourism, recreation and culture.

The Programme enabling to finance projects that support social activity of the elderly will be continued in 2013 under a new call for proposals.

The results evaluation of Programme measures in 2012 will make it possible to use that experience and knowledge in the development of a long-term policy, which will refer in many aspects to the potential of older persons and the needs of senior environments.

