



# ACTIVE AGEING

in V4 countries

Exchange of experiences and  
effective programmes



- supported by
- Visegrad Fund
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Exchange of experiences  
and effective programmes

2023

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# INTRODUCTION

In the European Region the number and the proportion of elderly people (aged 60 years and older) is growing, and the pace of growing is faster than during the previous decades.<sup>1</sup> Ageing population is one of the main challenges of this decade. Referring to this challenge United Nations have declared 2021-2030 the “Decade of Healthy Ageing”.<sup>2</sup> National and local policy documents on ageing are also highlighting the concept of active and healthy ageing as a principle. United Nations’ specialized agency, the World Health Organization has also played a leading role in drawing attention to healthy and active ageing issues by initiating several programmes and developing publications as well as other materials to facilitate the implementation of healthy and active ageing policies. “Active Aging - Policy Framework” is one of the basic documents defining elderly policy.<sup>3</sup> This document was a real breakthrough, and it is still decisive in promoting healthy elderly policies. It approaches health from a broad perspective, thinking about the elderly in their human entirety. It pays attention to the fulfilment of human life and does not narrow it down exclusively to the aspects of social and health care.

An important step forward is the redefinition of elderly age, and as a result public policy thinking has moved from a deficit-oriented approach to the need to preserve activity, and to a resource-based approach to elderly people. The age groups over 60 are different in several ways. Aging and the manifestation of elderly age roles depend on culture, society and personality. Therefore, it is important to focus on the social heterogeneity and characteristics of elderly age beyond demographic factors. Although the biological age and state of the elderly cannot be ignored, it is also necessary to emphasize and raise awareness that participation, activity, and social relationships significantly determine people's quality of life, at all ages. For sustaining the quality of life in elderly age it is fundamental to maintain an active life, which facilitates the maintaining of health and the ability of undertaking tasks and getting involved in work or activities.

The labour market also increasingly needs elderly people as a workforce, and the interest is mutual. The well-being of the elderly is defined in terms of the need for their activity, their possibilities of activity, and the experience of usefulness.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/decade-of-healthy-ageing/final-decade-proposal/decade-proposal-final-apr2020-en.pdf?sfvrsn=b4b75ebc\\_25&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/decade-of-healthy-ageing/final-decade-proposal/decade-proposal-final-apr2020-en.pdf?sfvrsn=b4b75ebc_25&download=true)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

<sup>3</sup> <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/67215>

According to new approaches, the socio-economic demand for the individual and social utilization of the experiential capital of the elderly is increasing. The necessity of broadening these opportunities and the cooperation between generations is becoming more and more obvious.

In the light of demographic processes handling and mitigating new and old social problems cannot be envisaged without the active participation of the growing elderly population. Targeted mapping of the ageing human resources (by research) and the many-folded utilization of the opportunities in them could improve the development in various cities or regions.

Social isolation and loneliness are one of the main risk factors of ill health among elderly people that can be prevented or reduced.<sup>4</sup> Life expectancy at birth has generally increased in the European Region but it is important not only to live longer but also in good health. The whole society can benefit from active ageing programmes as elderly people play important roles in families and in the labour market.

Social capital is very important to health. Participation in cultural, physical activity programmes and other free-time activities, membership in elderly organizations or clubs reduce social isolation and exclusion therefore can reduce the risk of loneliness and its negative health consequences. Social interactions also play an important role in accessing information about health, health promotion, and disease prevention issues. As many elderly people live alone in single-person households even a physically active person can easily become lonely and isolated if does not have regular activities and social interactions.

Therefore, creating age-friendly environments is very important with a strong emphasis on the social environment to provide elderly people and their families with programmes and services which can facilitate maintaining a healthy and active life.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/healthy-ageing/data-and-statistics/risk-factors-of-ill-health-among-older-people>

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin submitted a successful project proposal to the International Visegrad Fund<sup>5</sup> with the title of “Active ageing in V4 countries”. The project has been implemented between July 2022 and June 2023 with three partners: City of Brno (Czech Republic), City of Łódź (Poland), and City of Dunajská Streda (Slovakia).

Beyond the common cultural and historical background of Central European countries, partners has something else in common as they are all members of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network<sup>6</sup> - as a project city and/or as a member of a national network. This can be an added value of the project by incorporating the principles and values of the Healthy Cities movement, such as equity, community participation, intersectoral cooperation, solidarity and sustainable development.

The aim of “Active ageing in V4 countries” is to promote active elderly life, to explore effective methods of involving the elderly, so elderly people have the opportunity and information to maintain an active life, not only physically, but intellectually and mentally as well. The higher number of elderly people leading active life will ease the burden of growing elderly population off local governments.

The main idea has been to collect the best practices in the field of programmes/services for elderly people at the local level.

There are several initiatives (programmes, services) addressing elderly people in most cities but a significant percentage of the elderly population are still in isolation and loneliness which also has been proved to have negative health effects.

An important part of our project has been to involve and to activate elderly people and to give them the opportunity to share their needs and opinion which is essential to carry out an effective program responding to the needs and requirements of the target group. Project partners have learnt about the methods of how to increase community participation and how to use those methods to involve elderly people in the project.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.visegradfund.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/groups/who-european-healthy-cities-network>



It is also necessary to provide local stakeholders (local governmental decision makers, departments of the local municipality, elderly organizations and clubs, and other relevant local institutions and organizations) with a tool (a guidebook) which summarizes the relevant good practices, innovative ideas about programmes, services, activities provided for elderly people as well as the methods of motivating and involving elderly people in maintaining a healthy, active and empowered life.

The main goal of our project has been to foster city environments supporting the elderly resulting in the increased number of active elderly people by:

- Sharing information between project partners on issues and methods relating to improving active ageing and active elderly life;
- Assessing elderly people's needs and opinions about possibilities to improve active ageing;
- Collecting best practices – programmes, services, projects, mechanisms promoting active ageing at the local level;
- Creating a tool (a guidebook) for local stakeholders which can be used to facilitate elderly people to be active;
- Sharing our experiences and develop the best ways to distribute them among stakeholders.

#### **Main activities of “Active ageing in V4 countries”**

- **Workshop I**  
A three-day event with the participation of the project partners. During the workshop participants shared their local and national experiences relating to elderly issues. The first workshop also served as a training on community participation and on methods of involving people in identifying their needs. One of these methods was “World Café” which is a simple and effective tool to work with groups, and to get to know their opinion and ideas about certain issues and topics.
- **Workshop II**  
A two-day event with the participation of the project partners. During the workshop partners finalized the main product of the project – present publication – and discussed the possible methods and ways of distributing the experiences of the project among stakeholders, professionals, NGOs, and civil organizations concerned.

- Local world cafés  
World café events were organized in 4 venues (Brno, Czech Republic; Pécs, Hungary; Łódź, Poland; Dunajská Streda, Slovakia) with the aim to collect information about the needs and the opinion of elderly people about issues influencing active ageing.

During their local work partners also collected the relevant local and/or national good practices, innovative ideas and programmes promoting active elderly life.

- Final press conferences  
At the end of the project each participating partner organized a press conference to inform the public about the experiences of the project and to introduce the guidebook.  
The press conference served as a closing event of the project, summarizing and presenting the results of the project as well as promoting the main product of the project, the guidebook of good practices to facilitate the opportunities for elderly people to remain active and healthy.

### Products of “Active ageing in V4 countries”

- Guidebook  
The guidebook summarizes the experiences of the local world cafés, and presents the selected good practices, innovative ideas and programmes from the participating cities/countries on how to promote active elderly life. The guidebook has been widely distributed among stakeholders, such as local and national decisions makers, related institutions, organizations and civil organizations, as well as the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and its national networks.
- Project website: [www.activeageingv4.eu](http://www.activeageingv4.eu)  
The project website not only contains information about the main events, activities and results of the project, but participating partners also have their own page to share news (in their own national languages) relating to the implementation of the project. The website also has an important role in disseminating the findings of the guidebook.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

### City of Brno (Czech Republic)

Brno is the second largest city with one of the highest life expectancies in the South Moravia Region and the Czech Republic. Over the next decade, the very large cohorts born in the 1970s will start to retire, creating major problems for the health and social care funding system. It is therefore very important that they can live healthy and active lives for as long as possible and that they have the best possible access to health and social services. Brno has been a Healthy City since 1994 and works in the Healthy Ageing Task Force of the European Healthy Cities Network.

Population of Brno	379 391
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Brno (over 60)	27 %
Population of Czech Republic	10 519 913
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Czech Republic (over 60)	16 %

### Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin, City of Pécs (Hungary)

The Hungarian National Network of Healthy Cities had been an active member of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network for 35 years. Since 2022 it has been working as a sub-regional network with 27 member cities – 9 are Hungarian speaking cities from the Carpathian basin. Pécs has served as the centre for the network since its foundation.

<https://www.egeszsegesvarosok.hu/english-pages.php>

Population of Pécs	140 237
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Pécs (over 65)	20.7 %
Population of Hungary	9 730 772
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Hungary (over 65)	19.9 %

## City of Łódź (Poland)

The City of Łódź has been a member of the European Network of Healthy Cities for over 30 years. As a Healthy City, numerous activities are undertaken aimed at improving the environmental conditions and health (understood as the quality of life – well-being) of residents, with particular emphasis on prevention and health education. The City of Łódź has also wide experiences in activities addressed to elderly people organized as part of the Activation 60+ program, which was commenced in 2012.

Population of Łódź	661 329
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Łódź (over 60)	29.2 %
Population of Poland	37 767 000
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Poland (over 60)	21.9 %

## City of Dunajská Streda (Slovakia)

Dunajská Streda has an increasing number of elderly population. As a city of natural values and thermal baths it has always paid great attention to the health of its citizens. In recent years the city has initiated several projects and programmes addressing elderly people referring to the demographical changes. In addition to social and health services the city provides a wide range of activities to elderly people, and also supports the activities of elderly organizations.

Population of Dunajská Streda	23 044
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Dunajská Streda (over 65)	20,8 %
Population of Slovakia	5 449 270
Proportion (%) of elderly people of Slovakia (over 65)	17.05 %

## EXPERIENCES OF THE WORLD CAFÉ EVENTS

Involving the target group is essential for an effective project. The aim of local world cafés was to learn about the needs and the opinion of the target group. As a result we expected to receive information from elderly people and elderly organizations, who could help the project partners to identify the needs of elderly people, and to find the best ways to respond to their needs.

Participants – pensioners, elderly people, elderly organizations, pensioners' clubs, representatives of social institutions, and the local governments of the municipality, research institutes – used the world café method to discuss questions relating to active ageing:

- What makes elderly life active?
- What are the most typical and regular activities of elderly people?
- How do elderly people get information about any activity which facilitates active ageing?
- What are the three best programmes/projects/opportunities in their city facilitating active ageing?

### Brno

The local World Café event took place on 15 November 2022 in the city of Brno, with participants from pensioners' clubs, older people's organisations, as well as pensioners not representing any organisations, a retired journalist, and also a political representative from the City Hall and others from Brno City Municipality.

#### *Overall impression of the event:*

World Café Brno was a very successful event, held in a training café (staffed by mentally handicapped people) where seniors often meet. The café is wheelchair accessible and is located in the centre of Brno.

The guests were very welcoming and complimented the event. They met new people and got inspiration for other activities they can do or recommend. The whole event took place in a friendly atmosphere and many people stayed after the event to chat in the café.

## Pécs

The local world café event was held in the City of Pécs on 27 October 2022 with participants from elderly organizations, elderly clubs, as well as individual pensioners not representing any organizations, and also representatives from social institutes, the Municipality Office and the University of Pécs.

### *Overall impression of the event:*

Participants were very active and interested. They found the opportunity useful and were happy to present their ideas and needs. Experiences of the event proved that world café is not only useful to understand the needs and opinion of a group but it is also a good method of networking.

## Łódź

The local world café event was held in the City of Łódź on 27 October 2022. Participants were representatives of the City Council of Seniors in Łódź, active residents of the city ages 60+, coordinators of the Centres for Healthy and Active Seniors, and employees of the Senior Policy Departments of the City of Łódź Office.

### *Overall impression of the event:*

Thanks to the workshop, employees of the City of Lodz Office had the opportunity to learn about the observations and ideas of seniors and people organizing activities for people aged 60+.

The informal nature of the meeting encouraged openness and free sharing of thoughts. The information collected during the meeting is a valuable source of information that will be used to analyse the current activities of the City and to create new projects for seniors.

## Dunajská Streda

The local world café event was held in the City of Dunajská Streda on 5 November 2022 with the participation of pensioners, and representatives of the Facilities for Elderly, Senior Citizens' Union, Basic organization of Slovak Association of the Physically Disabled, and the Municipality Office.

### *Overall impression of the event:*

The meeting took place in the Club of Pensioners, which is located in the town centre. The overall impression of the participants was very good and every participant had a pleasant feeling about it.

People from different groups, representing different institutions and organizations met. At the beginning, the participants were reserved, but after a while they got relaxed and began to actively think about individual topics. They were creative, not afraid to express their opinions and thoughts.

The information obtained from the World Cafe will be used for the preparation and implementation of various activities, actions and events in the Town of Dunajská Streda.

## Summary of the findings of the world cafés

Social networks are very important in elderly age – the role of the family, friendships, smaller and bigger communities. It is equally important to keep and maintain relationships, as well as building new ones.

It is important for people to have a structured daily routine, goals and tasks even after retirement; to be able to use their skills, knowledge gained through the years, and experiences gathered during their life and work. But besides, lifelong learning is also important.

Physical, mental and intellectual activity is inevitable for a balanced life, as well as preserving and maintaining them, which can be facilitated by participating in programmes and activities organized by pensioners' clubs and organizations.

Some of the elderly would like to work after retirement either as an employee or a volunteer by taking a role in a community or in an elderly organization.

It is important for people to preserve their independence and independent living in their own home as long as possible. Cooperation between generations is also important.

Elderly people are not a homogenised group so there are people who are especially active, taking part in the life of several communities, working as a volunteer, or organizing programmes for others, while others are less active or rather inactive.

Daily activities of elderly people do not differ significantly from the activities of other adult age groups, including housework, tasks related to the family, children and grandchildren, as well as a wide range of leisure activities and community programmes, cultural programmes, physical activity programmes, life-long learning, travelling, programmes of clubs and hobby groups, or smartphone, social media and Internet use.

The wide range of programmes provided by elderly organizations and senior clubs are very popular.

Visiting doctors, going to the cemetery, walking the dog were also frequently mentioned activities of elderly people.

A large number of elderly people can only be reached by paper-based communication means, but there are a few others who regularly use the Internet, social media.

Besides mass media, personal communication and conversations, passing the information on verbally is very common, e.g. in the family, among neighbours, at the doctor's waiting room.

Senior organizations, clubs, libraries, places which are visited by elderly people are also good opportunities to inform them.

Information leaflets, free newspapers of local governments and city institutions are very popular.

Physical activity programmes (both indoor and outdoor activities), cultural programmes, programmes aiming at life-long learning, initiatives facilitating employment, and the wide range of activities provided by senior clubs are equally popular with the elderly.

Lectures, senior academies, dance and music programmes, free programmes and festivals of the city, programmes organized by the local government especially for pensioners are also very popular everywhere.

Long-term care institutions provide special programmes for their residents, adapting the given programme to their health and physical condition.





## SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES, INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND PROGRAMMES

Active ageing requires not only physical activity, but active relationships (family, friends, communities), regular tasks (volunteering, part-time work, family roles), various leisure time activities, and a supportive environment facilitated by the local government. In the following, we would like to present some examples of how to facilitate these issues. Examples have been collected by the partners participating in the “Active ageing in V4 countries” project, and during the local world café events.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is very important at any age as it helps to maintain health and contributes to a good quality of life, and has many benefits for older people as well. An active person who regularly performs some kind of exercise feels better not only physically, but also mentally. In the following we present examples from three cities – Pécs, Brno, and Dunajská Streda.

#### **Fit Granny! – local swimming pool programme for pensioners**

Was initiated by the Healthy City Foundation of Pécs as a pilot programme in 2011. Due to the great success it has continuously operated since then. The aim of the programme is to provide regular affordable possibility of physical activity for pensioners.

The programme includes two types of activities, aqua gymnastics and swimming. Both kinds of activities are supervised by professionals – a physiotherapist and a swimming instructor. One of the advantages of aqua gymnastics is that participants are not required to be able to swim because the sessions are held in a child pool (90 cm of shallow water). Physical activities performed in water are also safe for the joints and ideal for elderly people. Participating in the programme is also an opportunity to build friendships in a community and avoid isolation and loneliness.

The Healthy City foundation of Pécs is the organizer of the programme in cooperation with the Pécs Swimming School. Water surface to this programme is provided free of charge by the local governmental sport company. Swimming instructors are provided by the Pécs Swimming School free of charge. The fee of the physiotherapist is financed from support funds (a national fund supporting civil organizations).

### **Parkour for seniors as a part of the Days without Injury in Brno**

We live in an ageing population, which naturally leads to increased research interest in projects aimed at improving the quality of life of the elderly. One of the limiting factors of quality of life is the fear of falling and falls themselves, which often have fatal consequences both for the elderly themselves and for the entire healthcare system. The aim of the project is to validate the parkour concept for healthy ageing in the context of fall prevention - Senior Parkour aims to train seniors not only to overcome obstacles. The training manuals for the city of Brno were created by In Motion Academy and the project was professionally supervised by the Faculty of Physical Education at Masaryk University.

### **Let's do sports in every season in Dunajská Streda**

The goal of the programme is to offer the elderly sports activities organized by the town throughout the year. In this programme, we plan the following sports activities:

#### ***Gymnastics***

The goal of gymnastics for the elderly is to train the body's motor skills, responsiveness and sense of balance to prevent age-related postural problems and other complaints. Senior gymnastics can also be performed at home while sitting, which means that to a certain extent, even people with mobility problems can do it. For everyone else, there is, for example, the possibility of physical exercise in local gymnastics clubs or with specialized trainers.

#### ***Tourism - Hiking***

This is an activity that can be practiced well in senior age. For this reason, hiking is very popular. It improves endurance, keeps the body and mind flexible and in shape, and ensures quality stay in the fresh air. Even those who are unable to walk long distances should not do without fresh air in the form of shorter hiking walks. We want to implement this activity in various places around the Town of Dunajská Streda.

## ADDRESSING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Loneliness is a serious issue at any age and many studies show that as people are getting older, the number of social relationships decreases and their quality changes as well. Isolation has also negative effects to health. The experiences of the local world cafés show that elderly people think that having company and being a part of a community is very important. Social relationships, preserving relationships and/or forming new ones in elderly age is essential for active ageing. In the following we present some examples tackling isolation and loneliness, two projects from Brno, and an example of peering among elderly people from the City of Győr, member of the Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin.

### **The Seniors Rocks! Project – group activation service for seniors in Brno**

The Seniors Rocks! project was initiated by the Centre for Family and Social Care and is supported annually by the Brno City Council. It helps seniors to stay active and supports their gradual return to normal social life, which has proved to be very important especially after the long isolation caused by the pandemic. It offers seniors the opportunity to travel around the micro-region as part of a group activation service. We want to help prevent their social exclusion and isolation. The target group of seniors already has problems with travelling by public transport (e.g. getting on the train, etc.), so organised group travel is sometimes the only option for them. The project activities are also an opportunity to strengthen intergenerational contacts and togetherness.

As well as travelling around the micro-region, the seniors also meet regularly. At the beginning of each meeting there is always a time for sharing and discussion. The activation service for seniors offers the opportunity to make new contacts and spend their free time in a meaningful way in the company of their peers. The meeting is for seniors who feel lonely and are prevented from participating in social life due to physical limitations, psychological limitations, social isolation or economic reasons. There is no charge for attending or participating in the meetings.

## **Shared housing for seniors in Brno**

The principle of communal living is that several seniors live together in a special apartment, where the tenants share several social facilities, a large kitchen with a dining room, a TV corner, a laundry room, a quiet common area for reading or quiet activities, and other additional rooms – a pantry, a dressing room.

In addition to the common areas, each pensioner or couple has a separate room equipped with a bed, a table with chairs and a wardrobe.

Shared flats are for people aged 60 and over. The person interested in sharing a room is a self-sufficient citizen who does not need regular help from another person and whose health allows him/her to lead an independent life.

Residents can, for example, celebrate Christmas or birthdays together. The first flat was renovated and offered to tenants in 2016 and since then, due to high demand, 6 more newly renovated flats have been added. Shared flats are a good option for those who feel lonely and want to live in the company of other people while maintaining some privacy. Priority is given to older people who are living in unsuitable conditions or who are at risk of losing their home.

## **Let's chat – local network of elderly people in Győr, Hungary**

The programme was initiated by the Healthy Cities Project of the City of Győr in 2009. The aim of the programme is to reduce and prevent loneliness among elderly people reflecting to the outcomes of the elderly health profile prepared in 2006. The results show that a significant proportion of citizens over age 50 are affected by depression to some extent and almost half of the citizens over age 80 lives alone.

Active pensioners (who are volunteers) regularly visit (once a week) elderly people who are lonely and/or cannot be active due to health or other reasons. The purpose is to reduce loneliness and isolation and to provide company with the aim of reducing the risks of depression.

Volunteers are expected to participate in a training programme before starting visits. Health and social institutions are also involved in the project, and they can signal if there is an elderly person who needs a chat partner.

For safety reasons and to avoid any abuse, volunteers only visit a person when it is requested by an official. Volunteers also have a certificate from the local government, and they are accompanied by a representative of the city or a city organization during the first visit.

The programme has been operating since 2009 with a great success. It was started with 18 volunteers and now they have 60 active volunteer visitors. During the past decade they have visited and helped about 600 elderly people.

## PROGRAMMES, LIFE-LONG LEARNING, LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES, EVENTS

### SENIOR ACADEMIES

Senior Academies are very popular programmes in many cities. During a series of lectures participants can learn about a wide range of topics such as health, arts, legal issues, and an insight into the latest results of many sciences. In Brno the Senior Academy focuses on safety issues of elderly people and since 2006 it has been the most successful crime prevention project in the Czech Republic. According to the experiences of the world café in Pécs, Senior Academy is one of the most popular programmes to promote active aging, not only offering lectures in every semester, but also providing courses built on these lectures. In the following we present the details of the Senior Academy of Brno and how Dunajská Streda plans to organize it in their city.

#### **Senior Academy in Brno organised by the Metropolitan Police**

The Senior Academy is a special study programme in the form of lifelong learning (similar to the University of the Third Age - U3V), designed for seniors. The study subjects focus on crime, public order, traffic or fire risks that threaten seniors in today's society. In recent years, the range of educational topics has been expanded to include a number of subjects that raise the awareness of senior citizens in the areas of consumer, health, social, psychological or financial issues. Expert lecturers help the audience to cope with complex life situations and at the same time to communicate effectively, efficiently and understandably with the state or local government.

The system of lifelong learning for seniors includes 4 levels of educational programmes and one level of active volunteering in the community. The basic programme focuses on "How not to be a victim". The advanced programme prepares seniors for their interactions with state and local government and emergency responders.

The graduate programmes are designed for seniors who have already completed the two previous programmes, and are designed to reinforce and supplement their knowledge and skills. Upon completion of the Advanced Programme, graduates have more opportunities to participate in volunteer service programmes that give them the opportunity to actively participate in various social and educational activities in their place of residence.

## Planning Town University/Senior Academy in Dunajská Streda

The aim of the Town University/Senior Academy is to make accessible to a group of citizens - the elderly - new knowledge, knowledge and skills in scientific disciplines in direct connection with their life experiences, interests and abilities, to contribute to increasing knowledge, broadening the horizons and knowledge in the field of science and social life, as well as helping seniors to integrate into society under new, constantly changing conditions that arise during the transition to retirement, as well as in retirement. For collaboration, we plan to approach 3 universities where bilingual studies (Slovakian and Hungarian languages) are offered.

### HEALTHY AND ACTIVE SENIOR CENTRES

Civil centres are operating in many cities. Their tasks are usually to provide infrastructural and professional support for civil organizations, to strengthen community participation, and to serve as a venue for programmes of civil organizations and community groups.

In Łódź we have found a very good example for a “specialized” civil centre for seniors. **Healthy and Active Senior Centres** were established by the City of Łódź Office and operate at city clinics.

The activities of the Centres focus on activating Łódź seniors and promoting healthy ageing. Their offer includes: sports, health, educational and integration activities as well as handicraft workshops. Participation in the meetings is free of charge.

In the Centres for Healthy and Active Seniors there are rooms equipped with computers, projectors and infrastructure to be used for the needs of lectures, workshops, computer classes or sports and recreation. The rooms can be used free of charge by seniors who want to share their passions or skills with others (in the form of lectures or workshops), as well as senior and intergenerational groups that do not have their own headquarters (interest groups, bridge players, chess players, discussion clubs, etc.).

## ŁÓDZKIE SENIORALIA

Another great example from Łódź on how to adapt a well-known and successful type of programme such as health weeks to elderly people. These events are excellent opportunities to give high visibility to issues relating to elderly people.

A two-week event for seniors organized annually by the City of Łódź Office in partnership with non-governmental organizations, institutions and business. The main goal of the project is to encourage people aged 60+ to an active lifestyle, broaden their knowledge, develop their passions, as well as to indicate places where they can develop their potential.

The programme of the event consists of three stages:

- Grand inauguration  
The program includes: handing over the keys to the city gates by the Mayor of the City of Lodz to Seniors, partners' stands, artistic performances, shows and a concert of a well-known artist.
- A series of events for seniors  
The program includes: lectures, trips, workshops, performances, sports activities and many other events throughout the city.
- Official ending  
The program includes: Nordic walking march, partners' stands, games and activities

Łódzkie Senioralia in numbers:

- Partners: 100-150 each year
- Number of events: 500-700 each year
- Number of Participants: 40,000-60,000 each year

## USING THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE

The role of elderly people and pensioners in the labour market is more and more important. Due to the demographical changes in developed countries, the proportions of active employees are decreasing, so the contribution of pensioners to the labour market is more and more necessary. On the other hand, it is very important to have regular tasks and duties in every age, especially in older age, when the number of relationships can decrease. According to the experiences of the local world cafés, pensioners are willing to take a job or some volunteer roles. Voluntary activities promote active life, improve the social perception of ageing which can tackle the stereotypes about elderly people. In the following we present a mechanism from Hungary fostering the employment of pensioners, and the situation of volunteers in Dunajská Streda.

### **Public interest pensioner cooperatives in Hungary to facilitate elderly employment**

Public interest pensioner cooperatives have been working in Hungary since 2017 with the aim to facilitate the employment of pensioners. A significant proportion of pensioners would like to work after retirement and it is important for them to continue using their knowledge and skills, and on the other hand employers need experienced workforce. In Hungary there is a supportive legal and taxation background, and a good mechanism to help pensioners to stay in the labour market.

In response to the above, public interest pensioner cooperatives started to work in Hungary in 2017 to help elderly people to find and get a job as pensioners. They not only provide job placement and full administrative services but also organize programmes, presentations, celebrations for their members to promote the elderly community.

“Neighbours” (Szomszédok) is the largest network of public interest pensioner cooperatives, working in five regions across Hungary with several local offices.

<https://nyugdijas.szomszedok.eu/>



## Volunteers and the elderly in Dunajská Streda

The goal of this project is to create help for the elderly through a network of volunteers. Unpaid work in one's free time spent with other people has its simple rules. It requires dedication and passion for the cause. It is certainly not a one-time thing, and the reward is often the feeling of a job well done and the smiles of otherwise sad or lonely elderly people.

When working with seniors, the biggest currency is time. If a volunteer is willing to dedicate their time to an elderly person, it is the most beautiful gift for all those involved. "It is mainly about spending free time with the elderly. Sharing experiences, keeping them in good mental and physical condition. This type of volunteering should be long-term, continuity is recommended when working with a senior. Volunteers play games with the elderly, talk to them, accompany them on walks.



## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

The local world café events showed that there are many pieces of information, programmes and activities addressing elderly people in every city, but communication is a key issue, especially targeted communication as people over 60 are the hardest to reach through digital communication or social media. In the following we present some effective ideas to inform elderly people about programmes, events, and activities.

### **Tytka Seniora from Łódź**

Tytka Seniora has been prepared for all people aged 60+ looking for information about interesting ways to spend their free time. It is a handy source of information in the form of an envelope containing the current schedule of events such as trips, lectures, workshops, performances, sports activities and many other initiatives organized by the City of Łódź Office, institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The publication is issued cyclically in paper and digital form on the <https://uml.lodz.pl/seniorzy/> website.

Tytka is delivered to 50 points throughout the city - it can be found in city clinics, community centres and information points of the City of Łódź Office.

### **Senior Magazine in Brno**

The Social Foundation, founded by the city of Brno, publishes a Senior Magazine quarterly. The magazine contains information about social services and social care, informative and entertaining articles, and games for the seniors and their family members. It is available free of charge at social service institutions, non-profit organisations, municipal offices, senior citizens' clubs, the Information Centre of the Brno City Hall, the Socio Info Point of the Brno City Hall, the Senior Citizens' Academy and others. It can also be downloaded in electronic form from the following link:

<https://www.socialni-nadacni-fond.cz/seniorzurnal/>

## Senior Publication in Pécs

The Healthy City Foundation of Pécs with the Institute of Interdisciplinary Discoveries of the University of Pécs prepared a publication in which they collected information about cultural and leisure time programmes of pensioners' clubs; senior dance opportunities; programmes provided to elderly people by any organizations in the city; employment of pensioners; social services; and long-term care facilities. The publication was published in paper and digital form.

[https://www.egeszsegesvarosok.hu/files/alapitvany/szepkoru\\_2021\\_pecs\\_02.pdf](https://www.egeszsegesvarosok.hu/files/alapitvany/szepkoru_2021_pecs_02.pdf)



## THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

During the first workshop of the project and our situation analysis we found that there were local and national elderly strategic documents in every participating city or country – such as national, regional and local frameworks, concepts, and programmes.

Beyond these we have also found special strategic documents. For example, in Brno the local government sees the elderly not as an isolated group but as a part of families, therefore senior policy has been a part of **family policy** since 2008.

In Hungary every local government has to prepare a local equity programme for a five-year period that has to be reviewed in every two years.

Local equity programmes have six focus areas:

- *Elderly people*
- Women
- Children
- People living with disabilities
- Roma minority
- People living in extreme poverty

Local governments not only create the strategic frameworks for healthy and active ageing but they have several compulsory tasks, such as providing health and social services. Sharing of knowledge between project partners have showed that the system of health and social services are very similar in our cities and countries. Cities also provide financial support in various ways – such as grants, tax reliefs, or social aids. In the following please find an example from Dunajská Streda and Łódź.

### **Tax reliefs for elderly people in Dunajská Streda**

Dog tax: 50% discount for residents over 65, those with chronic health problems are exempt from payment.

Property tax: 50% discount for residents between the ages of 70 and 79, and property owners over 80 are exempt from payment.

Garbage collections services fee: residents between 70 and 74 get a 20% discount, and pensioners between 75 and 79 get a 50% discount, over 80 are exempt from payment.

## Micro-grants for Seniors in Łódź

The competition is financed from the budget of the City of Łódź Office, providing non-returnable financial support of up to PLN 5,000 (approx. 1,090 EUR) for the implementation of activities dedicated to people aged 60+.

Thanks to the competition formula, not only non-governmental organizations, but also informal groups (senior clubs, neighbourhood groups, intergenerational groups, hobbyists etc.) can apply for co-financing for the implementation of projects for people aged 60+.

Funding is available for the following activities:

- education of the elderly,
- social activation of seniors,
- integration within and between generations,
- sports and recreational activity of the elderly,
- organization of cultural events,
- development of volunteering and neighbourhood help,
- raising the level of social awareness and developing sensitivity to the needs of the elderly.

## Senior bus and travel assistant in Brno

All public transport in Brno is free for senior citizens over 70.

The Senior Bus and Travel Assistant services are operated by the Brno City Transport Company and the Social Welfare Department of the Brno City Council. As the services are in great demand, the fleet is expanded almost every year. The service is intended for ZTP and ZTP/P card holders and senior citizens over 70 years of age with a permanent residence in Brno. The service is provided only in the city of Brno, when trips to the doctor and offices in the morning and trips to cultural events in the evening predominate.

As part of the public transport system, the senior bus service makes everyday life easier for senior citizens and helps to create conditions for them to live in Brno with dignity. This is the long-term goal of the city authorities. The senior bus service is available on weekdays, weekends and holidays from 6:00 a.m. to 22:00 p.m. The fare is €2. The accompanying person is free of charge.

## CONTACTS

If you need further information about *the selected good practices, innovative ideas and programmes* presented above please use the following contacts:

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## CONCLUSION

The project proposal “Active ageing in V4 countries” was based on the idea of looking into the practice of four Central European cities/countries how they deal with elderly issues with the aim of making ageing more active and less lonely and isolated.

When learning more about the situation of elderly issues of our partners in the project we found more similarities than differences in promoting, facilitating active ageing. We also collected basic information about the supporting background documents dealing with the legal, institutional, and policy background of elderly life and with a wide range of local initiatives supporting active ageing.

Probably due to the very similar (and sometimes common) historical past, the range of health and social services did not show much difference. There are very wide solutions of financial support of the elderly in the form of special discounts in taxation, travel, and cultural events. Pensioners’ clubs, organizations, old age centres with day-care could be found in all the 4 cities with various programmes. Senior academies are very popular in keeping pensioners active in their intellectual life and in finding company.

All these findings have proved that ageing population is not a burden but could serve as a potential workforce, a reliable family support, and a supportive volunteers’ group to help social and health services.

Participating partners can use the experiences of this project in their future work. All the partners found “world café” method a very effective tool to discuss different aspects of a certain topic with stakeholders.

Based on their experiences, Dunajská Streda agreed to meet regularly with their senior organizations and representatives of seniors four times a year. Each meeting will be evaluated afterwards.

For Brno, it was encouraging to see seniors talking about their experiences, hobbies and active lifestyles. They learnt that their city supports healthy and active ageing at a relatively high level – however, it is necessary to focus on expanding opportunities for older people who are not actively seeking them.

Łódź found out that this method is a great way to get feedback from the recipients of their initiatives and to gain inspiration for new activities. They plan to expand the network of “Healthy and active senior centres” based on the results of their “world café”.

Pécs and the Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin plans to use “world café” to discuss other health topics as well. Based on the need occurred during the local event in Pécs the local government plans to start a regular column dedicated to the elderly in the local free weekly newspaper.

All the participating partners could realize that other countries are experiencing similar demographic changes in their population with increasing elderly population. So healthy active ageing is getting more and more important. Exchange of experiences with other cities, especially with Central European cities with similar social background and historical experiences, could be inspiring to improve local work supporting healthy and active ageing.

Dunajská Streda was inspired by the “Senior bus and travel assistant” project in Brno and they would like to start a similar project.

Brno would like to improve the communication of elderly issues and they found “Tytka Seniora” from Łódź, which is an envelope containing a wide range of information for elderly people, very useful.

In Łódź many seniors would like to continue to work after retirement to stay active or to earn money for their passions or travel. So they are interested in how “public interest pensioner cooperatives” in Hungary help elderly employment.

Pécs and the Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin is interested in “Łódzkie senioralia” the two-week event for seniors in Łódź and plans to initiate a similar programme in Hungary.

Project partners expressed their wish to continue their cooperation in the future, further exchange their experiences in the field of active and healthy ageing especially on how communication could be improved, how the employment of elderly people could be facilitated, and how inactive people could be reached.



*The participants of the project “Active ageing in V4 countries” have highly appreciated the support of “International Visegrad Fund” for the realization of their collaboration of V4 countries in the field of improving elderly life in Central Europe.*



## Partners

Healthy Cities Association in the Carpathian basin (Hungary)

City of Brno (Czech Republic)

City of Łódź (Poland)

Dunajská Streda/Dunaszerdahely (Slovakia)



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