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Senior Policy in Hungary, Poland and Russia



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The number of elderly has multiplied, but our societies are not organised well enough to make room for them, with proper respect and practical consideration for their frailty and their dignity.

(Pope Francis audience, 4 March 2015, as quoted at https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek_i/audiencje/ag_04032015.html (accessed: 10 Aug. 2019).


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Introduction

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The writing of this monograph was inspired by discussions at the Joint Workshop of the EAST Research Network¹ on ‘Silver Economy in Central and Eastern Europe’, which was held at the Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Łódź, between 22 and 23 June 2018.² The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to present different aspects of the silver economy, such as active ageing, public-private partnerships in the silver economy, and the lifelong workplace, and to discuss national ageing policies and the role of governments and other actors in shaping the living conditions of ageing populations in selected countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia.

The workshop meetings prompted the idea of producing a work that specifically analyses policies on seniors in two EU countries (Poland and Hungary) and, in more general terms, in Russia. The research assumption was that while the global nature of population ageing implied the probability of all three countries using similar senior policy measures, their different history, culture, the course of ageing processes, and legal solutions justified collecting their policies on older citizens in a single volume to enable comparisons and the identification of best practices.

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¹ EAST is the Central and Eastern European Research Network of the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing ‘for information exchange between its members, numbering almost 200 individuals and institutions who research migration and population ageing in Eastern European countries’ – for more information: <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/research/regions/east/> (accessed: 20.06.2019).

² <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/events/view/348> (accessed: 20.06.2019).

The resultant monograph considers the notion and scope of senior policy vis-à-vis similar policies, such as social policy on ageing, social policy on old age, and social policy on the elderly. Although retirement policy is unrelated to senior policy, it is also covered in the monograph because of its influence on the financial situation and well-being of the elderly and older adults. A brief review of the demographic situation and main population trends in EU-28 countries is followed by a presentation of senior policies in Hungary, Poland and Russia, and the impact of their retirement policies on the economic situation of older people.

The chapter by László Patyán opens with a review of international guidelines on ageing policies. The author uses the review to explain the main assumptions underlying the ageing-in-place concept, the age-friendly environment principle, active ageing policies, care policies, the main directions of care-related policies, and retirement policy requirements that national governments should consider when designing their ageing policies. The presentation of senior policies in Hungary starts with a brief discussion of the country's demographic situation and population projections to the year 2080. Then, the state and municipality planning levels and the decentralised approach to changes in social services, social care and the pension system are discussed. In Hungary, the ageing policies are developed in the framework of the National Senior Strategy 2034. In Central European Countries, including Hungary, the preparation of documents on active ageing measures was prompted by the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, but the long-term impact of the event on national senior policies in the region proved to be limited.

The Hungarian government has taken on the responsibility for creating age-friendly environments and implementing an employment policy for older people. Its special focus is on care policy. Social is organised following the EU concept, but activities in this area are carried out in an irregular manner. In his chapter, László Patyán gives special attention to municipal policies, which are discussed based on two programmes aimed at seniors: 'Újbuda 60+' and 'Nyíregyháza gives more...'.

As a non-EU country, Russia does not have to comply with the EC's directives or recommendations in designing its policies

on seniors. Nevertheless, its initiatives in this field reflect the ideas of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA 2002). The aim of the initiatives, like in other countries affected by population ageing, is to protect the interests of older citizens. In her chapter on senior policy in Russia and Moscow, Yaroslava Evseeva discusses its development from the historical perspective of social policy evolution and gives a comprehensive presentation of social services, social care, the pension system, labour policy, and educational and cultural policy. While emphasising the dominant role of the central government, she also points to the growing number of NGOs focused on the needs of older people, especially those related to social care.

Bogusława Urbaniak's chapter on Poland's policy on seniors is based on two key strategic documents prepared by the government. These are 'Założenia Długofalowej Polityki Senioralnej w Polsce na lata 2014–2020' (Long-term Senior Policy in Poland 2014–2020) and Social Policy for Older People 2030. SECURITY-PARTICIPATION-SOLIDARITY. As in Hungary, policy planning in Poland also takes place on two levels – central and regional/local. The chapter shows the scope of responsibility of the central government and local authorities in creating senior policy. The retirement policy in Poland is discussed more at length because of ongoing reforms which will influence the living standard of future pensioners. In making comparisons between Russian, Hungarian and Polish senior policies, it is important to remember that Russia has a population of 144,500,000 (its capital city alone has 12,500,000 inhabitants) (World Bank 2017 data) whereas Hungary and Poland have populations of 9,800,000 and 38,000,000, respectively. Nonetheless, comparing Russia and the other two countries is rational because all three countries share a similar communist past.

Hungary, Poland and Russia are experiencing population declines. Between 2000 and 2008, the population of Hungary decreased by 4.3% and the Russian and Polish populations by 1.4% and 0.7%, respectively. Worse still, population projections for the next few decades are not optimistic for any of the three countries. In 2018, the share of the population aged 65 and above was 19% for Hungary, 17% for Poland, and 15% for Russia (World Bank 2018 data, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/tables> (accessed: 30.07.2019)).

The scale of demographic problems in Russia is well illustrated by comparing the average life expectancies for men and women in Russia, Poland, Hungary and the EU28 in 2015. According to the data in Table 1, the life expectancy at birth for Russian men is lower by 11.4 years compared with the EU 28 average.

Table 1. Life expectancy at birth in EU28, Hungary, Poland and Russia (2015)

Countries	Men	Women	Difference in favour of women
EU28	77.9	83.3	5.4
Hungary	72.3	79.0	6.7
Poland	73.5	81.6	8.1
Russia	66.5	77.0	10.5

Source: based on Eurostat data (online data code: TPS00205), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (accessed: 16 Jun. 2019) and the chapter by Yaroslava Evseeva.

The difference in life expectancy at birth between Russia and the other two countries shows the scale of challenges confronting Russian social policy.

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