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Educational Activity of Seniors in Rural Areas of Selected Central and Eastern European Countries in the Context of Active Ageing

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Abstract

The global demographic problems of today focus on population ageing. The process is far from uniform; some continents, their regions and countries age faster and at a larger scale than others. This is the case in Europe. The dynamic process of population ageing in former Eastern Bloc countries, such as Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia, which were investigated here, is relatively new because it was identified about a decade ago. The present article is founded on pilot surveys in these three countries. The results of this research concern the educational activity of the rural population aged 60 and over. Rural areas were chosen for the study because, despite the general abundance of learning opportunities for older people in Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia, rural areas have much less to offer in terms of education, including for seniors. It is, therefore, important to find out the opinions and needs of the older rural population. Educational activities are an important leisure option for seniors. At the same time, it plays an important role in increasing their social participation and enhance the social and cultural capital of local communities. It also helps combat ageism,

i.e. stereotypes associated with senior citizens. Participation of older people in any form of education is a critical component of the active ageing concept.

Keywords: educational activity, ageing, activity of seniors, rural areas, concept of active ageing.

Introduction

Global population ageing is one of the most relevant demographic problems today. Its relevance lies mainly in the social and economic repercussions for developed countries and the Global South as well (United Nations, 2020). Recent forecasts of global population structure by age indicate that the number of people aged 60 and over will continue to grow. In 2080, it will surpass the population of people aged 20 and under for the first time. The evidently declining share of young people is particularly alarming. It can reach a little over 20% of the global population in the late 21st century. In contrast, people aged 20 and less constituted almost half of the global population in the early 1970s (Murkowski, 2020, p. 10).

It comes as no surprise that Europe is the fastest and most extensively ageing continent. The process began in the early twentieth century and is characterised by the lowest natural increase (GREEN PAPER, 2021). On the other hand, life expectancy at birth has grown significantly by about ten years for men and women alike over the last several decades (Eurostat, 2022). All this makes Europe the oldest continent in the world. Note that the ageing process is not uniform across its territory (Janiszewska, 2017). It also varies within regions and countries. The process is the most dynamic in the former Eastern Bloc countries today, which is highly relevant to the topic of the present article. It is mostly because the demographic processes driving population ageing have been in place in Western and Northern European countries for decades.

In contrast, it is a relatively new problem for Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, the more significant dynamics of population ageing were fuelled by the sociopolitical transformation and lower level of development and wealth, which increase the risk of depopulation (Żołędowski, 2012). Even

though indicators for these countries suggest younger populations than in Western or Southern Europe, the ageing process is more dynamic there. It is corroborated by forecasts for countries like Poland or Czechia, where the share of people aged 60 and over will be above the European Union's average in the decades to come. The main reasons for this are low fertility and emigration, primarily among young people (GREEN PAPER, 2021; Raport ESPON, 2021).

The concept of active ageing

The concepts of successful and active ageing have made their way into social sciences, health sciences, and social policy research. They differ insofar as the former focuses mostly on a satisfactory life in as many aspects as possible, while the latter urges to create conditions for everyday self-reliance and activity.

The term “successful ageing” was coined by Havighurst and Albrecht, who used it for the first time in 1953. It was then disseminated by Rowe and Kahn (Janigova & Kowalska, 2020). J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn (1987) were the ones to propose the most classical perspective on successful ageing based on medical and gerontological models.

Active ageing emerged, in a way, from successful ageing. This concept is founded on the improvement of the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals. This attitude makes sense because wellness can affect senior's social life. Importantly, “applying a concept of active ageing will create an infrastructure that allows people to become responsible for their own process of active ageing” (United Nations, 2012, p. 1). Being a component of the social policy, the concept of active ageing “can be seen as part of a wider change in the way the meanings of ageing are constructed and how the position of old age in an individual biography is interpreted”, according to Barbaccia et al. (2022, p. 4).

One of the best-known definitions of active ageing is the one proposed by the World Health Organization: “active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the

quality of life as people age” (WHO, 2002, p. 12). In this approach, active ageing is primarily about prolonging life and ensuring its optimal quality (Sttener et al., 2001; Kalache et al., 2003; Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., 2020). Moreover, the wellbeing of older people is considered not only on the level of individuals in this case but also in society, concerning increased professional activity or lower healthcare expenditures (United Nations, 2012).

Active ageing, defined as “the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age” is also consistent with the context of quality of life (Rahman et al., 2018; Barbaccia et al., 2022, p. 2). In this discourse, an active person is not only (relatively) physically fit but also active in the labour market and involved in social, economic, civil, cultural, and spiritual activities. On the other hand, L. Foster and A. Walker (2021) proposed a comprehensive approach to active ageing. They believe it should be one of the milestones of policy strategies not only in old age but throughout the entire life. This approach would be “aimed at sustaining and enhancing physical and mental health and preventing multimorbidity in later life” (Foster et al., 2021, p. 2). P. Stenner et al. (2011) emphasise the need for change in the public perception of ageing as a commonplace and obvious process in an ageing society. These authors recommend changing beliefs, perspectives, understanding, stereotypes, and biases related to ageing and older people. In this sense, active ageing is part of a “new ageing paradigm” aimed at eliminating the old “decline and loss paradigm” (Stenner et al., 2011, p. 5; Holstein & Minkler, 2007, p. 16). In the previous approach, old-age issues concerning politics, economy, and society were associated mainly with certain physical and mental changes inherent to this phase of life (Stenner et al., 2011).

Although the concept of active ageing has become a set piece of politics, societies, and economies of ageing populations, there is still plenty of room for critique. The main concerns are with the idealisation of active ageing and the possibility of the concept backfiring. According to M. Holstein and M. Minkler (2007, p.16), any attempts to eliminate ageism by focusing solely on positive aspects of old age and ignoring real problems – like health issues – and activity at all costs can lead to the exclusion of those who do not live up to their ideals (Stenner et al., 2011, p. 5).

In light of the concept of active ageing and other theories involving senior activity, their advocates believe that the educational activity of older people should be considered imperative (Mandrzejewska-Smól, 2017, p. 46). Learning is becoming indispensable for this generation to follow and contribute to today's rapidly changing reality. Thanks to education, seniors' new practical skills allow them to keep up with the times. It pertains to virtually all areas of life, from maintaining professional activity to overcoming everyday problems, challenges, and barriers. Self-sufficiency and independence are also important, especially for the oldest seniors. They can be achieved with a properly designed programme. Therefore, as Mandrzejewska-Smól (2017, p. 48) put it, "there is a need for planning educational activities regarding the optimal old-age management for specific groups of seniors, especially those exposed to problems".

According to the International Standard Classification of Education (Richert-Kaźmierska et al., 2013, p. 131), adult, and senior, education follows three approaches:

1. formal (school) education offered by schools and training institutions. It strictly follows a curriculum and involves a certificate of completion confirming skills and knowledge learnt;
2. informal learning (hands-on learning), taking place outside of the core education system;
3. incidental learning, which is part of life, often not considered an educational activity. It involves conversations and gatherings that build knowledge and shape our thinking through the exchange of information.

Senior education has three primary functions: original, complementary, and social (Richert-Kaźmierska et al., 2013). The original function of education involves "continued improvement and expansion of knowledge and skills among adults, mostly in scope not covered by school education and yet necessary to carry out their duties and to perform professional and social roles" (Adamczyk, 2022, p. 78). This function is relevant to the changing reality and constant adaptation. They require specific competencies and skills.

The complementary function of education means that seniors acquire new knowledge and skills. It is considered an 'extra chance' (Adamczyk, 2022) so they can fully participate in public and professional life. The feeling of social inclusion is driven also by the social function of senior education. According to a report by the Senate of the Republic of Poland (2019), Polish seniors are relatively inactive regarding maintaining and establishing social relationships (every tenth older person has a minimal social network). Acquisition of new technology skills for improved independence is another matter. Finally, the social perception of older people. Considering age-based discrimination or ageism a significant problem, the educational activity of seniors can improve the image of this age group. It can lead to a revision of the stereotypical perception of the older person as dependent, often infirm, and socially excluded (Jedlińska, 2013).

Educational activities of seniors in Poland, Slovakia and Czechia

Education of the elderly in Poland is an important component of senior policy. The document governing this sub-discipline of social policy is "Social Policy for Older People 2030. SAFETY – PARTICIPATION – SOLIDARITY" drawn up by the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej*) (MRPiPS, 2018). One of the areas devoted to the general older population is "VII. Activities for education for old age (care and medical staff), until old age (entire population), through old age (from the youngest generation), and in old age (older people)". They consist of:

1. "improving educational opportunities for older people,
2. development and promotion of care professions and improvement of their competencies,
3. development of informal education (radio, television, Internet, audiobooks),
4. promoting new technology education" (Kowalska et al., 2023, p. 4).

As the 2022 data of Statistics Poland show (Statistics Poland, 2022), seniors in Poland relatively infrequently participate in education, be it formal or

informal. The report demonstrates evident differences in educational activity depending on such variables as residence, sex, or education. For instance, seniors from rural areas and towns do not participate in education nearly as much as those from cities, with participation levels of 26% and 35%, respectively. Undoubtedly, the difference stems from the availability of institutions offering education to seniors and the diversity of their services (Kawińska, 2024, p. 15). Moreover, women from urban areas more often take up educational opportunities than men, which is the other way around in the countryside.

Also, forms of informal education differ. For example, 67% of the respondents selected education through electronics, radio, and television. Other equally popular forms were books, specialist magazines and other printed materials (over 60% of answers). Work-motivated education was selected by merely 12% of women and one in four men (Kawińska, 2024, p. 18).

The most popular forms of senior education in Poland are universities of the third age (U3As) and seniors clubs. The first U3As in Poland were established in the 1970s, first in Warsaw and then in Wrocław and Opole. There were 520 U3As in Poland in 2015. They had over 150 thousand students (Turek et al., 2016). Today, the audience of the over 640 U3As in Poland is 84% women. Most U3As are located in cities, but only one out of ten serves rural populations (Kowalska et al., 2023). Merely one-fifth of the U3As are part of a university. Most are run by community centres or NGOs. Even though U3As have been part of the Polish educational landscape for over forty years, senior's interest in this form of education is on the rise (Nowicka et al., 2020) (Konieczna-Woźniak et al., 2019).

Seniors clubs are Poland's second most common mode of senior participation and education. Their history dates back to the 1960s. They are readily available and generally free for seniors. Seniors clubs are most often run by community centres or local clubs, sometimes by parishes. When meeting at the clubs, seniors can participate in various educational programmes or cultural events. As Kacprowska (2019, p. 82) writes: "senior clubs are institutions for the normalization of activities by combating the feeling of loneliness, isolation and redundancy functions. In addition, they support the intellectual and creative capabilities of older people". The senior clubs is now financed through

the “Senior+” Multiannual Programme for 2021–2025 aimed at improving the financial standing of existing facilities and creating new ones (National Report, 2021, p. 4).

The senior policy in Slovakia is coordinated by the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic on the Rights of Seniors and the Adaptation of Public Policies to the Population Ageing Process. The important part of senior policy is The National Programme of Active Ageing for 2021–2030 (NPAS, 2021). Its support for active ageing includes priority “Lifelong promotion of human resources” with two goals for senior education: Goal 3: “Education for older people to improve their employability or job preservation, while accepting key trends of the Fourth Industrial Revolution” and Goal 5: “Non-formal lifelong learning for older people as a tool for promoting social inclusion and intergenerational coherence” (NPAS, 2021).

The key institutions offering senior education in Slovakia are universities of the third age, academies of the third age, pensioners clubs, and senior day centres. According to D. Gracova and E. Selecky (2020, p. 4), senior education in Slovakia comes in two varieties:

- “1. Segregation model – seniors do not study with young students.
2. Integration model – seniors study with young students”.

The most popular form of senior education is universities of the third age. It is a segregated education aimed at a specific age group. The first Slovak universities of the third age were established in the 1990s. However, their origins date back to Czechoslovakia, when they were organised by the Czechoslovak Red Cross and the Socialist Academy. They thrived after 1989. Today, they are found in all twenty cities in Slovakia (Kaščáková et al., 2019; Nowicka et al., 2020). Another form of education for seniors in Slovakia is the Academies of the Third Age. They offer educational programmes of one or more semesters. They come in two flavours: either similar to U3As (similar course cycles over years) or as individual or short-term cycles of lectures, language courses, discussion clubs, or social skill training courses (Kowalska et al., 2023). Programme content includes topics in medicine and gerontology, among others and “civic-social education whose initiator can be the Slovak Seniors’ Union. They also focus on culture, art, literature, history, ecology and

environmental science; preparation for retirement; spare-time education (e.g. gardening, agriculture); physical education and other areas” (Čornaničová, 2007, p. 101).

Facilities that also offer informal education are senior citizen clubs or other day centers. Senior clubs are very popular in Slovakia. They are controlled by two large organisations, the Union of Pensioners of the Slovak Republic and the Association of Christian Senior Citizens. Senior clubs offer many opportunities for education, culture, recreation, etc. A day centre, on the other hand, is a Facility that provides social services and organizes leisure time (including educational activities) during the day for, among others, elderly persons (Hatar, 2020).

The senior policy in Czechia is included in the “Strategy for Preparation for Population Ageing for 2021–2025”. The document contains senior education guidelines. One of the actions relevant to ageing is Action 8: “Lifelong learning, labour market, and active ageing”.

The most common form of senior education in Czechia is universities of the third age. The first U3As from the late 1980s followed the French model. They are sometimes called “free time universities” in Czechia. It was an essential step for senior engagement, which now bears the fruit of an extensive U3A network (Stepankova et al., 2012). In 2012, there were 30,000 senior students, while in 2020, 50,000 (Nováková et al., 2020). U3A have been organised in the Association of Universities of the Third Age (AU3V) since 1993. Today, there are about 40 U3As at universities in Czechia (Göttlichová, 2019). U3A is a mode of continuing education. The U3As follow principles similar to those in Poland or Slovakia. They provide one to six semester-long courses depending on the needs and interests of the students. Today, this mode of education is considered more of a pastime activity. Still, as the Czech population ages and the share of older people increases, it may become an indispensable method for improving professional competencies. Perhaps U3As’ mission will have to be redefined, and they will create special profiled educational programmes for seniors (Nováková et al., 2020). Additionally, Czechia has Universities of the Fourth Age. These are the educational programmes for seniors living in care homes. The residents can participate in classes, as long as their mental

and physical condition is good. Classes are held in groups of up to 10 people. Lectures cover various areas, for example: healthy lifestyle, lifestyle diseases, socio-economic situation, computer skills etc. (Svobodova et al., 2020).

Material and methods

The research project was a pilot survey in Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia. The project was coordinated by researchers from three universities in these countries: the University of Agriculture in Krakow (Poland), Mendel University in Brno (Czechia), and Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (Slovakia). The survey sample of people aged 60 and over was selected through purposive sampling. The survey was conducted during meetings with seniors in rural local communities. The meetings aimed at allowing the seniors to assess the senior policy of local governments. The purposive sample included 402 persons aged 60 and over (145 in Czechia, 145 in Poland, and 113 in Slovakia) resident in Lesser Poland Voivodeship (Małopolskie, Poland), South Moravian Region (Jihomoravský, Czechia), and Nitra Region (Nitranský, Slovakia).

The results presented here are pilot in nature as part of a concept of a broader project to assess senior policies implemented in rural areas by local authorities in Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia. The survey results discussed here cover the educational activity of the population aged 60 and over from rural areas investigated using quantitative analyses.

Results

Educational activity of seniors in rural Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia

The survey, focused on the education problem. The central notion was the educational activity of seniors in rural areas of the three countries. The survey questions revolved around the educational activity of older people, in particular their motivation, selection of self-education models and types of educational activities, and gaps in the product and service proposal for the oldest group of consumers.

The survey involved 402 people aged 60 and over (145 in Czechia, 145 in Poland, and 113 in Slovakia). Women constituted from 57% of the respondents in Poland to about 63% in Slovakia, to 80% in Czechia. The dominant age group was people aged between 60 and 70. The least numerous was the oldest group: 80 and over. Respondents from Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia exhibited different levels of education. Most seniors in Poland and Slovakia were secondary school graduates (nearly 39% and about 38%, respectively), while the largest group of the Czechs (about 34%) completed the secondary level of education. Most people in all three countries were married (the largest group in Slovakia). The overwhelming majority of the respondents did not work at the time of the survey. The largest group were the Czechs (about 81%) followed by the Slovaks (62%).

The respondents from Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia most often (over 60%) used printed materials, books, and journals to improve their knowledge. The seniors often used the Internet. Sixty-five per cent of those from Slovakia watched educational television (Fig. 1).

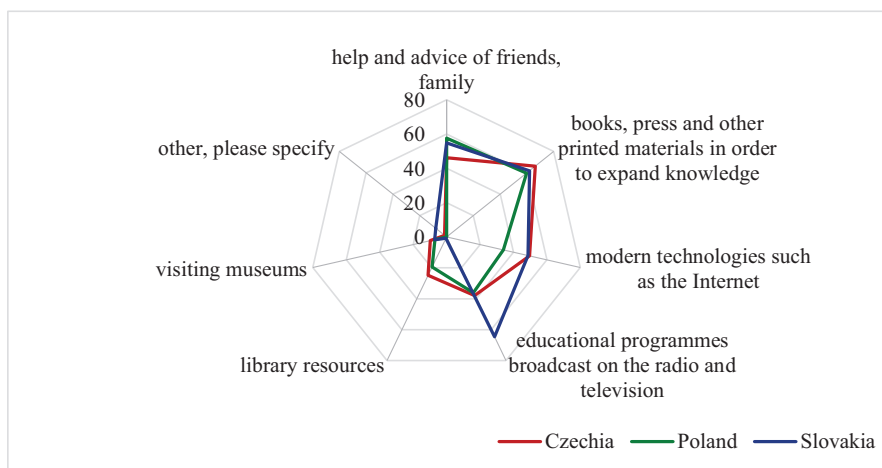


Figure 1. Percentage of responses to the question: What self-education model do you use most often?

Source: Own elaboration based on the results.

The respondents from all the countries had to indicate the type of educational activity they engaged in the most. All the seniors most often picked those activities that involved outings or trips to see interesting places. This answer was the most common in Czechia (nearly 63% of the respondents), little less so in Poland (42%) and Slovakia (40%). More than half of the seniors in Czechia participated in activities provided by Senior Day Centres. Interestingly, this type of activity was much less popular among the Polish and Slovak seniors. More than half of the seniors in Poland found speeches and lectures delivered at clubs, community centres, or parish houses interesting. Professional development, language courses, and computer courses were the least popular in all three countries.

The respondents specified diverse reasons for taking up educational activities depending on their country. It was paramount for the Czechs to stay in a good mental state (71% of answers) and meet with their peers (over 53%). The learning motive for the Slovak seniors was pleasure, which increased life satisfaction (nearly 55%). It was also a way to spend free time in an interesting way (about 57%). Nearly half of the Polish seniors were driven by the need to stay cognitively fit. Staying in touch with peers motivated them slightly less (nearly 40% of answers). Even fewer considered it a good opportunity to spend free time (about 37%). Importantly, seniors from all three countries very rarely considered educational activity as a way to improve their education level or learn new skills to improve their quality of life or labour market position.

The interviewed seniors were asked to indicate the worst obstacles to accessing cultural and educational services. For the Slovaks, these were mostly limited funds (nearly 56% of the respondents), which was the least problematic issue for the Czechs (about 37% of responses). The latter found their health the most significant problem (over 45% of answers). Still, it was even worse for the Poles (over half of the answers) and the Slovaks (nearly 48%). The least problematic obstacles when selecting educational and cultural services in all the countries were the lack of information about interesting events, lack of free time, and difficulty accessing them.

Despite their positive opinions on the educational and cultural opportunities, seniors expected discounts on cinema, theatre, and museum fees, mostly

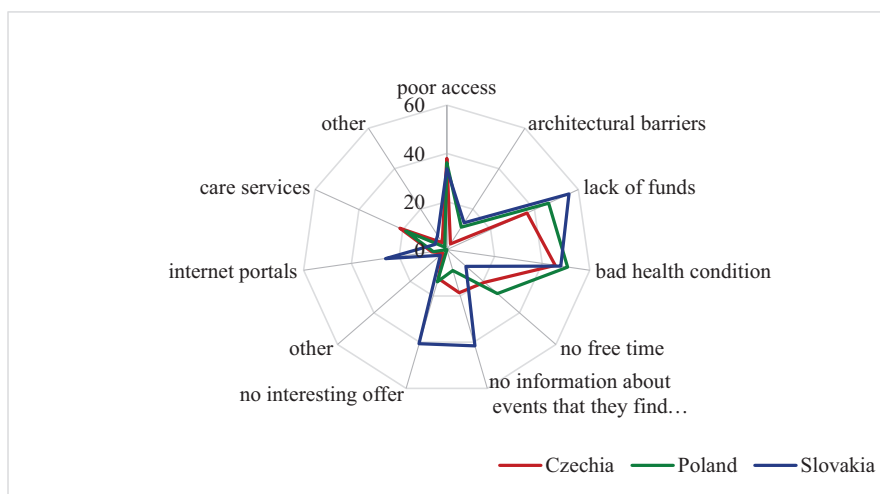


Figure 2. Percentage of responses to the question: In your opinion, what is the biggest shortage of services and products for seniors on the market?

Source: Own elaboration based on the results.

in Czechia (42.8%) but also in Poland (32.6%) and Slovakia (21.2%). Polish and Slovak respondents voiced a need for places where seniors could engage in various activities. This answer was chosen by 38.2% of the respondents in Poland and 33.6% in Slovakia. A large group of seniors in Slovakia (43.4%) wished there were more television and radio programmes dedicated to seniors (Fig. 2).

Discussion

Senior education was the leading axis of our study. Respondents from Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia most often used printed materials, books, and journals to improve their knowledge. This answer was selected by over 60% of the seniors in each country. This result points to the critical role of self-education for seniors. It is also consistent with the results of a survey among Polish and Spanish seniors. Authorities in these countries responded to the idea of “lifelong learning” nearly immediately by establishing three universities of the

third age. They embraced the need for alluring, multidisciplinary educational opportunities on various levels. Both countries exhibit a directly proportional association of IT and Internet use with education. In Poland, the number of Internet users grew, but the level of digital skills declined, particularly in the oldest age groups (Marcinkowska et al., 2020).

Another study on senior education involved women aged 65 and over in southern Poland. Higher life quality was correlated mostly with participation in senior education, younger age, and better financial situation of the women (Jurkiewicz et al., 2022).

Similar associations were concluded from a study on older people who attended the University of the Third Age at the Wrocław University of Economics (Poland) in 2018. They suggest that older people are becoming increasingly digitalised. The respondents in that study did not confirm the hypothesis that the willingness to use the Internet declines with age. Moreover, the results suggested that future research should focus on comparing Internet usage by seniors among countries representing different cultures or areas with different social policies (Dziuba et al., 2021). Another study was conducted in Czechia and Poland on two groups of students aged 55 and over. The results showed that seniors who attend language courses generally exhibited exceptionally high general satisfaction and wellbeing (Klimova et al., 2021).

Education as a non-pharmacological therapy for seniors is a foundation for the idea of the university of the third age. It is one of the new teaching, educational, and stimulation opportunities for seniors living at home and in care homes provided for in Czech legislation. Population ageing and the trend towards lifelong learning through the acquisition of social skills generate a need for improved quality of spare time offered in care institutions. Seniors acquire or improve knowledge from various domains (environment protection, law, health, medicine, etc.) (Svobodova et al., 2020).

A survey among representatives of companies focused on the age gap in Slovakia was conducted under the AGE GAP project (VS/2019/0031) co-financed by the European Commission. Some questions regarding the older population concerned their general knowledge and new technology skills. Most of the respondents believed the knowledge of the older generation

remained up to date. They also did not consider seniors' aversion to new technologies a serious problem (Age management issues in Slovakia and the government response).

Intergenerational learning may be crucial for achieving many social, political, and educational goals. It may help resolve problems and issues related to active learning, smart communities, ageism and age segregation, community identity, etc. The attitude of Slovak youth and seniors towards intergenerational learning was investigated with a survey of 1447 respondents. Although they voiced their concerns regarding relationship conflicts or problems with education coordination, both groups were strongly in favour of intergenerational education (Moravčíková et al., 2019).

The level of self-education of Slovak seniors measured as digital competencies is a little below the EU average today. According to interviews with 374 seniors aged 60 and over about their smartphone use, most Slovak seniors do not use smartphones because they do not need them. Only 30% of the seniors who own smartphones try to resolve any problem with the device themselves. Forecasts 60 years into the future exhibit a greater dynamics in this regard in Slovakia compared to other EU countries. According to Eurostat data, Internet use among people aged 65 and over will reach 35.9% in Slovakia compared to the EU average of 28.7% in 2080. The same will be true for 16.3% of the population aged 80 and over in Slovakia and 12.3% in the EU (Švecová & Odlerová, 2018).

Our research is consistent with this trend. The seniors often used the Internet, and 65% of those from Slovakia watched educational television.

Conclusions

Population ageing is a global phenomenon, so the increase in the absolute number and percentage of older people in the total population affects virtually all countries. It is also one of the critical global processes. Although not long ago, population ageing was associated mostly with the Global North, it is now seen virtually all over the world. However, the process is not uniform and varies among continents in terms of scale and dynamics. Importantly, it

is the most advanced and widespread in Europe. The Old Continent is also diverse, and the problem of ageing is now particularly evident in the Eastern Bloc states. The same applies to the countries investigated in this study, Poland, Slovakia, and Czechia.

Today, senior education is not just a nice and productive pastime; it emerges as a necessity in light of the current changes. A senior citizen with appropriate knowledge and skills can handle negative stereotypes about older people more effectively and minimise the possibility of exclusion and marginalisation in many aspects of public or economic life. The survey among seniors from rural Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia facilitates an assessment of the educational activity of this age group, also with the goal of identifying differences among the countries. Seniors living in rural areas usually have fewer opportunities for educational activity compared to older people in towns and cities. Still, the respondents seem satisfied with the educational and cultural opportunities for seniors, especially in Czechia and, to a lesser extent, in Poland. Things are slightly different in Slovakia, where nearly half of the respondents found the educational and cultural options unsuitable for seniors.

Notably, the educational activity seniors from all three countries engaged in was not aimed at improving their education level or boosting income by re-entering the labour market. These answers were selected by a negligible number of respondents. What the seniors did find important was brain exercise and meetings with peers to foster interpersonal relationships. Another interesting conclusion is that almost half of the respondents used the Internet and considered it a source of information about the world regardless of the country. This is, undoubtedly, an optimistic insight, especially in light of the digital exclusion of older generations, particularly in rural areas.

Participation of older people in any form of education is a critical component of active ageing. Educational activities are an important leisure activity for seniors. At the same time, it plays an important role in increasing their social participation and building the social and cultural capital of local communities. It also makes it possible to combat ageism, i.e. stereotypes associated with senior citizens. Importantly, education is one of the critical determinants of the quality of life regardless of age. Evidently, educational activities have

many functions for seniors. There is, therefore, a need for a broad educational choice tailored to the specific needs and abilities of all social groups, including rural seniors. Such measures will help seniors experience old age better and, systemically, will fit better into the concept of active ageing.

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