



ACTIVE AGEING IN SLOVENIA AND PODRAVJE REGION

SUMMARY OF REGIONAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

Prepared by:
eim, Human Resource Development Centre

September, 2009

CONTENT

Introduction	3
A. Situation Report	4
1 Demographics and state of elderly	4
2 Elderly on the Labour Market	6
3 Inclusion into Society and Social Life	8
3.1 Programmes and Institutions Designed for Elderly	8
3.2 Learning in the Third Life Period	11
3.3 State of Embedded ness in the Neighbourhood and Main Characteristics of Social Connections	12
3.4 Accessibility of the Medical and Commercial Network	12
3.5 Links Between the Municipalities and the Elderly	13
3.6 Social and Special Exclusion	13
4 Social Care	14
5 Spatial Arrangements	15
5.1 Situation of the Urban Design and Public Spaces	15
5.2 Condition of Parks and like Public Facilities	15
6 Elderly in Traffic	16
B. Key Findings of the Analysis	18
1 Demographics and state of elderly	18
2 Elderly on the Labour Market	18
3 Inclusion into Society and Social Life	18
4 Social Care	19
5 Spatial Arrangements	19
6 Elderly in Traffic	20
C. Recommendations for Further Steps	21
1 Elderly on the Labour Market	21
2 Inclusion into Society and Social Life	21
3 Social Care	21
4 Spatial Arrangements	21
5 Elderly in Traffic	21
D. Proposed Pilot Projects and Good Practices / Strategies supporting them	22
Sources	24

INTRODUCTION

The ageing of the population and other related demographic problems are coming to the front of sustainable development tasks in recent years. Demographic issues in Slovenia and Europe are at least as important as environmental protection and energy supply. Slovenian and EU response on those issues are reflected in their political documents. The common cognition coming out of these documents is that quality ageing can not be separated from intensive work for revival of solidarity and harmony of all generations which demands for participation of state, family, civil society and business or science, profession and political lines.

World and European response to the ageing of the population and other demographic issues

Demographic picture shows the 21st century to be a century of old people like 20th century was a century of children. Indigenous European nations are rapidly ageing whereby third world countries will follow after decade or two but with more horrible scenario (due to lack of health and social insurance systems). Response of world community was announcement of 1999 to be a year of older people and 2nd UN world assembly on ageing in Madrid (2002) followed by European UNECE Berlin ministerial conference on ageing (2002) and green paper on confronting demographic change: **A new solidarity between generations** (2005). Very important is also document from UNECE 2007 conference **“Challenges and opportunities”** that confirmed all existing political orientations of UN and EU and at the same time put forward the importance of family in solving new solidarity of generations’ tasks as well as quality ageing.

European and world politics are increasingly aware of pressing problem of demographic situation and are rapidly putting together system of solving measures. It seems like orientation into new solidarity of generations is not only good but the only direction promising solution to the crisis.

Slovenian response to the ageing of the population and other demographic issues

In Slovenia the beginning of gerontology development goes back to 1996 when dr. Bojan Accetto started to work and Slovene Institute for Gerontology was established as one of the first in this part of Europe. It has equally linked and developed medical-geriatric and social-gerontological knowledge which made it very advanced and long-sighted. Unfortunately the state care for this field almost completely faded with his retirement in 1988 and caused lagging behind other European countries. At the same time development on non-governmental area, especially social, was on relatively high level. Starting to face the unfavourable demographic picture Slovene government finally in 2004 established the Anton Trstenjak Institute for gerontology and intergenerational relations in order to catch up with other European countries. In 2006 the Government adopted strategic document called **Strategy of care for the elderly till 2010 - Solidarity, living together and quality ageing of the population**. Although the first part of the title caused some resistance, the content is comparable to world and European political documents level. A special feature of this document is its inter-disciplinary and inter-sectorial orientation as it is engaging all important areas, professions and departments on national and local level to cooperate. Document as such is not only targeting period to 2010 but represents the promising start for further national strategy.

A. SITUATION REPORT

1 DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATE OF THE ELDERLY

The Slovenian population is old (the share of population aged 65+ is relatively high, while the share of young population is modest) and the impact of population ageing to a slow growth of Slovenia's population has long been noticed. At the last census in 2002 the share of the young (0-14 years) hardly exceeded the share of persons aged 65+. The tendency of decrease in the share of young population and increase in the share of the third generation (i.e. older and the oldest population) in the total population is most obvious in the Podravska, Zasavska and Goriška statistical regions.

The Podravje region is the fifth biggest region in Slovenia, as it covers 2,170 km². In December 2007 it had a population of 321,781, which represents 15.8 % of total population in Slovenia and puts the region on second place based on its population.

As mentioned, the rate of elderly in Podravje region is higher when compared to Slovenian national average. The share of people in the age of 50 or more in 2007 was 37 % and has increased from 34.3 % in 2003. It is also higher than Slovenian national average which was 35.8 % in 2007 and 33.1 % in 2003.

The following table presents some basic trends for the population in Podravje region, based on the shares of its main age groups, average age of the population and the ageing index.

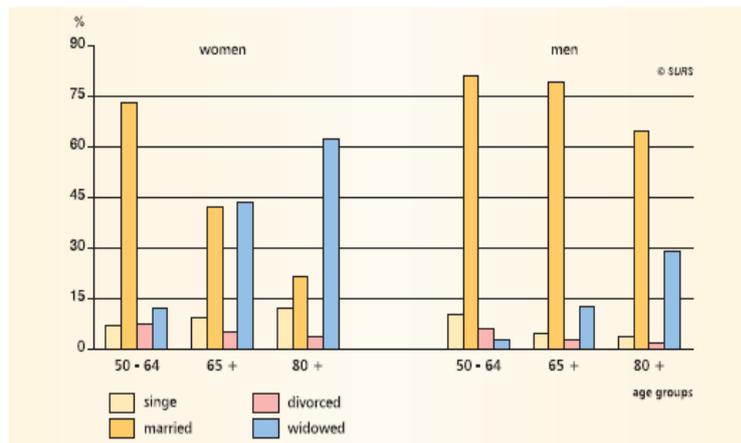
	Population	Main age groups (age)			Shares based on age %			Avg. age	Ageing index
		0 - 14	15 - 64	65+	0 - 14	15 - 64	65+		
1999	319,605	48,487	226,456	44,662	15.2	70.9	14.0	39.2	92.1
2000	319,717	47,224	226,880	45,613	14.8	71.0	14.3	39.5	96.6
2001	320,078	46,102	227,071	46,905	14.4	70.9	14.7	39.9	101.7
2002	319,804	44,953	226,868	47,983	14.1	70.9	15.0	40.3	106.7
2003	319,426	43,841	226,857	48,728	13.7	71.0	15.3	40.6	111.1
2004	319,114	43,040	226,477	49,597	13.5	71.0	15.5	40.9	115.2
2005	319,235	42,464	226,261	50,510	13.3	70.9	15.8	41.2	118.9
2006	319,706	41,993	226,240	51,473	13.1	70.8	16.1	41.5	122.6
2007	321,781	41,591	227,058	53,132	12.9	70.6	16.5	41.8	127.7

It is evident, that the number of people and their share among the entire population in Podravje region, who are 65 or more years old has been constantly increasing during last years. Consequently the average age and the ageing index have also been rising. All these indicators for Podravje region are higher than the Slovenian national average. In Podravje region, there were 16,5% of people in the age group 65+, the average age was 41.8 years and the ageing index was 127.7 in 2007.

Current projections show that by the year 2050 the share of people in the group 65+ in Slovenia will be 31.1 % and their number will double. Another worrying indicator is the coefficient of dependence of elderly, which represents the relationship between elderly and the active population. In 2004 the coefficient was 21.4 and by 2050 it is projected to

almost triple its current value to 55.6. It is noteworthy to mention that the life expectancy in Slovenia is rising. A boy born in Slovenia in 2005/06 can expect to reach almost 75 years and a girl 82 years; that is 0.8 of a year more for a man and 0.6 of a year more for a woman than in 2004/05. In the last three decades the life expectancy for a man in Slovenia increased by 8.3 years and for a woman by 7.7 years.

Population of Slovenia aged 50+ by marital status, Census 2002



Source: SORS, Census 2002

The fact is that in Slovenia women die older than men and this affects also the situation shown by the data on the marital status of men and women aged 65+. Up to the age of 65 most of both, men and women are still married. With regard to persons aged 65+ and especially persons aged 80+; the share of widowers and especially of widows is much larger than the share of married or single persons.

At Census 2002 in Slovenia most of the elderly aged 65+ lived in »private« households with two or more members (86.6 % men of such age and 62.4% women of such age). The shares of both are decreasing with age. In this age group 3.4% of people lived in collective households (2.1% men and 4.1% women) at the 2002 census. Their share is increasing after the completed age of 75. The largest share of persons who at the 2002 census lived in collective households was recorded in the age group 85+, namely 15% (8.8% men of such age and 17.0% women of such age).

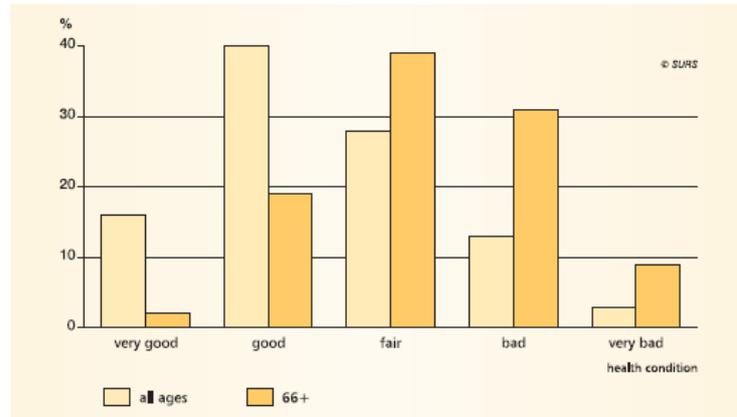
Many persons older than 65 lived alone at the 2002 census: there were twice as many such women than men. In the group of persons aged 65+, 25.3 % of them lived alone (one-member households), namely 11.4 % men and 33.5% women. The share of women who live alone and are in the age group of 70+ is always higher than 33 %; this share, however, is the highest in the age group 80-84 (41.8 %). On the other hand, only 5.3 % men of such age live alone.

The intensity of population ageing is reflected in the increasing number of pensioners. The number of pension beneficiaries in Slovenia, entitled to receive pension in Slovenia, is increasing; their number (old-age, disability, family and farmers' pensions) has been increasing in the last decade (2000-2007) on average by 1.5 % per year. In 2007 there were 543,473 retired persons in Slovenia, which is 1.3 % or 6.9 more than a year before. 9.5 % older than 55 are still active (employed), others are retired. But there are some social problems pensioners are dealing with, for example: average pension in 2008 in Slovenia was 467€, which presented 61.5% of average salary. The lowest pension was 163 €, and 40 % of pensioners get less than 400 €.

Among the pensioners in 2007 the highest share was represented by old-age pensioners (61.2 %), followed by disability pensioners (17.4 %), family pensioners (12.1%) and widow pensioners (4.8 %). In the 2000-2007 period mostly women were in the group of pension beneficiaries.

Survey on Living Conditions, EU-SILC, Slovenia, 2006 included also questions on the general health condition of the selected person. The most common answer to this question was “good” (41 %), 16 % of people answered very good, 28 % fair, 13 % bad and 3 % very bad. The health condition of people is above all related to their age: the older the person, the worse is her/his health condition.

General health condition of a person according to the age group he/she belongs to, Slovenia, 2006



Source: SORS, Survey on Living Conditions; http://www.stat.si/pxweb/Database/Dem_soc/08_zivljenjska_raven/08236_zivlj_pogoji

The hospitalization level due to disease (which is in Slovenia relatively high in the first year when the child is born) is steeply increasing after completion of 65 years of age, much more with men than with women.

The study on self-care of home-dwelling elderly people living in Slovenia showed that the formally guided (52.3 %) is the most common behavioural style of home-dwelling elderly people. Those people have high functional capacity, high life satisfaction and high self-esteem. Responsible behavioural style follows (25.8 %) and the last is independent (14.2 %). Those elderly people who do not take care of themselves are abandoned (7.6 %); they are not satisfied with their way of life and have low self-esteem.

2 ELDERLY ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The ageing population is already trans-European problem. The economy perceives it as a lack of workforce in many activities, regions and levels of qualification. The share of active older persons amongst employed is raising but the employment of persons between 55 and 64 years of age is still too low. Employment rate of elderly in Slovenia is rising as well but still lags far behind EU average. In the 55 - 64 age group only 33.5 % employment was registered in 2007 (source: EUROSTAT) which is certainly also due to the early retirement in nineties. Therefore is the rise of the employment rate of elderly one of the priorities for action on the labour market (by 2010 reach 50 % employment of elderly). On the other hand Slovenia also has a lot of unemployed older persons. In the age structure the highest share belongs to unemployed persons between 50 and 60 years old (28.2 % in Slovenia and 26.5 % in the wider Maribor area).

The reasons for the low employment rate in Slovenia lie in employment policies and the organization of the pension system who tended to promote inactivity of older workforce before 1990. Today public actors in Slovenia are more aware of the fact that the integration of older people into the labour market will constitute an important factor for ensuring economic growth in the future. As a result, strategies and policies for encouraging older workers to remain in employment (i.e. active employment strategy) have been established and the laws (Pension and Disability Act, Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act) have been changed.

Most of the direct activities to promote **employment of older people** are carried out within the measures that raise employability of unemployed people, stimulate employers

to create new jobs and employment of disadvantaged groups, and training and education for employment. Support as regards the re-entering of the labour market involves mostly (majority) the various financial incentives for employers (subsidy for employment and reimbursement for contributions that are rather non-stimulative). However, there is also some counselling done and measures like public work programme and part-time employment. Activities are financed by national and European sources (mainly by European Structural Funds).

If we are talking about **employed older people** the recent research Ageing Workforce, carried out by the Association of Employers of Slovenia (2007), showed that employers not only adapt to older workers not to disturb the working process but actually think highly of them and their qualities. Companies are aware of the value of existing older employees as they gained a lot of experiences and develop values like commitment toward the company, expert knowledge, responsibility, reliability and working experiences. On the other hand younger workers are distinguished by flexibility, mobility, knowledge of languages and technological skills.

But the picture is not so rose-coloured when talking about **new employments** of older people. Here it is evident that most companies prefer to employ younger people. The reasons stated by the employers are: no applications received from older candidates, the employment policy doesn't foresee employment of older than 55 or lack of adequate qualification of older candidates. The most important incentive to improve this would in their opinion be more flexible combination of retirement and work, state financial incentives or tax relief's and similar. Quite important is also behaviour of older candidates: they should be more open to new ideas and innovations, more in favour of team work, they miss their better mobility and flexibility and fresh knowledge.

Specific problem in Slovene society represent wishes and rights of **already retired** old people that would like to continue with periodical intellectual services (the problem of research work). Intellectual services of retired persons that represent term expert work is quite limited by law. It seems like contracting with retired experts is not welcomed. However, with this we are losing knowledge and experience which will without any doubt ease the way for younger experts to attain the set objectives.

Applied abilities of elderly could be a solid basis for future development; by accepting their experiences and wisdom they are actively involved in improving life of society as a whole. Therefore a chance to carry out a job as long as they wish or are able to should be given to them, as well as the access to educational and training programmes since the encouragement of elderly to cooperate, represents the key element of active ageing.

To improve the situation of elderly on the labour market in the region it is necessary to raise awareness and inform employers as well as wider public about the meaning and added value of older population more intensively. By doing that lifelong learning plays an important role that is many times overlooked. Inclusion of population into lifelong learning represents the condition for competitiveness and productivity of each individual on the labour market within the full life cycle.

Besides measures aiming at higher productivity, employability and competitiveness of elderly it is utmost important to bring about a change in the employers viewpoints. Therefore it is important to launch information campaigns and discussion tables especially aimed at SME's that typically don't have enough time, information and knowledge to develop social responsibility and older-worker-friendly measures.

Slovenia also hasn't adopted mechanisms for promotion and implementation of not stressful and graduated retirement.

Slovenia is aware of the unfavourable demographic composition and the low proportion of elderly employed and has in 2006 started to develop a national strategy for active aging i.e. **active aging action plan for employment**. The most important objectives of the strategy for active aging are already covered by the objective of the EU, namely towards the Lisbon goal of an average of 50% employment rate, measures to achieve the goal are within the strategy defined as follows:

1. Identifying existing barriers to employment of elderly people;
2. Identifying benefits of employment of elderly people;
3. Definition of appropriate measures for the employment of elderly people;
4. (Enforcement of appropriate modern pension legislation);
5. Measures focused on investing in training, lifelong learning and skills aimed at providing the elderly with higher productivity and the employability and competitiveness in the labour market;
6. Measures aimed at improving working conditions and occupational health and adjustment at work;
7. Measures to change attitudes of employers and the general public to the elderly (promotion of employment of senior citizens).

The main public actor in the field of employment initiatives for ageing workforce is the Ministry's of Labour, Family and Social Affairs responsible for the arrangement and implementation of laws and other legislation in the area of employment, labour relations, on-job health and safety, pension and disability insurance, insurance against unemployment, employment and status of disabled persons and social inclusion.

3 INCLUSION INTO SOCIETY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as with the family, allows older people to continue to exercise their competence, to enjoy respect and esteem, and to maintain or establish supportive and caring relationship.

Slovene seniors are active in different spheres of activity: from helping their children families, volunteering in the communities, public engagement, housekeeping, personal hobbies, amateurish work, pensioner's organisations, political party, and self help groups to Third Age University.

In 1990 pensioners association from Maribor started their own political party named as **Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia - DeSUS**. Today party stands for economically successful, socially fair and legal state. It is for society of free people where other values than profit and growth are at the forefront; and for society where business morale and good people-to-people relations are important. Today they have 7 members of parliament.

3.1 Programmes and institutions designed for elderly

The most widely spread form of bonding and active participation of seniors is pensioners' organisations. **Slovenian Federation of Pensioner's Organisations** is humanitarian, voluntary, and non-party organisation of interests, operating over 60 years. Today more than 250.000 pensioners are actively participating in 486 organisations united in the

Slovenian Federation of Pensioners Organisations. Their purpose is to improve the quality of elderly lives, actively participate in development of society, encourage bonding and conquer social exclusion. The Federation is also engaged in adopting legislative decision. Main activities of societies are: sport and recreation, social and health activities, travelling, cultural activities such as singing, attending cultural events, manual skills, and educational activities in forms of courses and lectures. Majority of the activities are open only to members of the pensioner's organisations, with exception of events open for public.

Key motif for membership in pensioners' organisations is social inclusion. In the recent years there has been an increasing focus on strengthening social networks of seniors by education. Educational programmes for seniors have increased in numbers and diversity. Also the attendance is increasing.

The federation is since 2004 carrying out the project "Elderly for higher quality of life at home" or shorter "**Elderly for Elderly**". The project is aimed at uncovering the needs for help of elderly and organizing help for them; for all that live at home and are older than 69. Several pensioners' organisations are since the beginning gradually joining the project, so in 2007 there were 117 organisations involved with 1.384 volunteers visiting 51.000 elder fellow citizens (50 % of all elderly living in the area covered by involved organisations). The activation of volunteers is carried out within the framework of the pensioners' organisations. During their visits they are uncovering situations of abuse, violence and loneliness. According to so far existing field researches 25% of people, older than 69 years, need some sort of domestic help.

Each year there is a **Festival for the third period of life**, organized by Slovenian Federation of Pensioners. At the Festival seniors get the opportunity to bond, attend lectures or round tables, presentations, cultural and educational events.

The third generation is indispensable holder of intangible cultural heritage and carrier of fundamental cultural values for own and other generations and as such has very important societal role. In Slovenia this generation also ranks among most frequent users of public libraries and public media. Slovenia is therefore relieving different degrees of participation in **culture**, especially with the help of Public Fund for Cultural Activities network, public libraries network, museum network, and first of all with wide access to classical and electronic media. National cultural programme and existing cultural policy is therefore oriented towards stimulation for elimination of physical and socio-economical circumstances that are restricting chances for active engagement of third generation in cultural and social life. We are talking about easing access to culture for physical or similarly restricted older people, and at the same time enabling access to those with lower financial incomes or hesitation on suitability of their participation in certain cultural practices.

In the area of **intergenerational cooperation** Slovenia already has some history and practise, so intergenerational assistance is not something new. Various organisations have been working in this field for some time. Larger or smaller groups are involved and many of them work within the Homes for the elderly. A good practice is also a project for encouraging the voluntary work of the young for the elderly, **Fruits of Society** (started in 2006). The purpose of the project is to systematically join the elderly, who live at home, on one side and the school-age youth on the other side, with a purpose of assuring the additional help to the first, for instance socializing, reading newspapers, bringing necessary things from a store or a pharmacy, taking a dog for a walk etc. and enabling acquisition of the new knowledge, learning and socializing with elderly through the

voluntary work to the latter. However, this kind of intergenerational assistance is far from extended.

Among many NGOs, which in last period work in the field of care, help and social involvement of old population, there is **Association of Societies for Social Gerontology** of Republic of Slovenia with its head office in Maribor and its local contact centres for individual programme implementation. This Association has its subgroups and there are 486, they also have 5144 members - elderly people, 65 years old and above. This means that a very big density of subgroups works in Maribor, that is in the centre of Podravje region. The programme that the Association carries out:

- Elderly people self-help groups: a group consists of up to ten people and meets once a week. The work is organised and supervised by a trained couple of supervisors, mostly from the middle generation. The basic activity in a group is discussion. Parallel activities are singing, reading, exercising, excursions, meeting guests, praying, dancing, creative workshops, trekking, etc.,
- Intergenerational camps: an intergenerational camp is where the representatives of all three generations live together for a few days;
- Training and education of the volunteers for group supervisors;
- Intervention and supervision;
- Training and education of the local network organisers;
- Publishing the magazine “Prepletanja” (“Interplay”).

Anton Trstenjak Institute of gerontology and intergenerational relations is the Slovenian national scientific and expert institution within gerontology and good intergenerational relations field in Slovenia. The institute was founded by few experts as private individuals, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Art in 1992 and in 2004 by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Our work is interdisciplinary and includes sociology, psychology, medical sciences. At present, the strongest emphasis is on holistic approach.

According to the actual needs in this area the Anton Trstenjak Institute of gerontology and intergenerational relations developed and offers four types of programmes:

- Programmes for informing the communities on the possibilities for quality ageing, preparation on the old age and better intergenerational communication (lectures, round tables, informative brochures for every household, newspaper articles, TV and radio shows)
- Several short courses (3 times 3 hours in a small group of 12 people): for young people for better relations and communication with elderly; for elderly for better understanding younger two generations, for quality life after the retirement, for caring for an elderly family member, ... all those courses lead to practical lasting activities.
- Training and organizing intergenerational volunteers of all generations; for individual companionship or groups once a week, young people teaching old people some basic computer skills, old people helping youngsters with some school assignments and teaching them some traditional skills, ...
- The local self-organisation of these programmes: formation of the intergenerational association, care services, the elderly home, organisation of the relative's clubs - special self support groups of old people's relatives, organisation of the work of the intergenerational volunteers. The local intergenerational centre is the highest organisational form when implementing large number of different programmes in the local community of about 10.000 people.

Upon the research data and practical experience gained in developing and introducing a social network of programs for quality aging and a solidary coexistence of generations, the institute developed the **local intergenerational centre model**. The model is based upon comprehensive anthropology: a holistic view of man in his physical, psychological, social,

spiritual, existential and developmental dimensions; a complementary unity of physical, psychic and social health; a complementary bonding of all three generations; and a life balance between the individual and the community. The greatest attention in the centre's work is paid to the links intermediate between individuals and the community that is to the family and, most particularly, groups formed by people's own choice on the principle of self-help and solidarity. Today they started to work on two such centres in the Podravje region.

3.2 Learning in the third life period

Lifelong learning is of key importance for individuals of all ages and holds an array of benefits for them and society. It promotes their full economic and societal participation, enables them to be better informed and more active citizens, contributes to their personal well being and fulfilment, supports their creativity and innovation, and increases their efficiency as workers or volunteers.

In Slovenia the participation of 25 - 64 age group in lifelong learning is higher than the EU average. Indicators for 2008 show 13.9 % participation for Slovenia and 9.6 % for EU-27. However, the participation in LLL is decreasing with age. The results from the recent study on social integration of elderly show the strong correlation of active age and inclusion of elderly in social environment with the great impact of education and learning. There are great differences regarding participation in education activities. More detailed analysis shows that the most impact on learning activities of elderly and their integration in environment have living arrangements and social network (above all within family and housing neighbourhood), more than age itself. Continuous learning of elderly is closely linked with valuation of education within the family and individual relation to learning developed throughout ones life. The quality and quantity data of the research show constant decrease of participation in learning activities with age. Interest in learning is decreasing with age irrespective of possibilities offered in specific environment. Conclusion on a research basis can be that learning habits and needs of future generations of elderly will differ from habits and needs stated today. But it can not be determined what kind of learning activities will be required.

In Slovenia today seniors most often take part in the **Third Age University**. This is not a formal university as such but it is an informal voluntary educational movement, meant for 50+, mostly retired people, but also for elderly workers out of work. It has been established to provide access to culture and education for the elderly and to contribute to changing the social and economic position of the elderly. The Third Age University encompasses at present 35 universities all over the country. Each Slovenian university organises study circles, lectures, and some of them also summer universities, educational camps, study trips, etc. The Third Age University has different goals to accomplish, be educational or social. Mentors are active and retired university teachers, researchers, renowned artists, newspapermen, young graduates or post graduates. For their work, which is mostly on a voluntary basis, they receive little payment, this being the same for all of them, be they university full time professors or young graduates. Fields of activities: history, art history, ethnology, anthropology, geography, literature, journalism, music, psychology, astronomy, communication, language courses, computer skills, painting, health program, horticulture...

Another possibility for lifelong learning is offered by **LLL Centres**, that link together different training providers and their services with the aim to increase participation of population in lifelong learning, attract new target groups (also elderly) and make quality

training and counselling accessible to all. In 2005 there were 13 LLL Centres established in Slovenia, 1 of them in the Podravje region that expanded their offer of counselling and ICT supported learning, and make them richer.

Special type of education programmes that are popular among seniors are **Study Circles**, organized by Adult Education Centres, public libraries and other institutions, where they in small groups explore different topics and mostly share their knowledge and experiences.

3.3 State of embedded ness in the neighbourhood and main characteristics of social connections

Research shows that in Slovenia the individual's **social network** declines with age; thus the family network becomes increasingly important, and for some the integration into their social environment also gains on importance (an important role of the neighbors). Elderly are more interested to include into social network. Much of elderly decides to take part in some of the voluntary organization - most of the elderly are included in local pensioner's societies and local Red Cross organizations - these two organizations are mayor actors of fostering voluntary work of elderly.

Slovenian studies are showing that the **families carers of old people** are the most important source of help to frail and disabled elderly. Until recently, there was not much political or scientific attention given to this important group of carers in Slovenia. It is obvious that the willingness of family to care is much higher than many experts think. The biggest problem is not the willingness to care but rather the ability to care. Overall it was found that the motives like "emotional bonds", "sense of duty" or "moral responsibility" are the most frequently mentioned motives for caring. When talking about the characteristics of family carers the feminisation of care can be confirmed. The main carers of old people are children - mainly daughters - then partners and daughters-in-law. One third of the family carers care more than 40 hours per week, which equals the full time employment. The number of caring hours increases along with the severity of the disease of the person cared-for. Alarming is the information, that spouses have a very weak supporting network; two-fifths received no help with caring responsibilities.

3.4 Accessibility of the medical and commercial network

In Podravje region there are two main **hospitals** (clinics) - one University Clinical Centre in Maribor and general hospital in Ptuj. In Slovenska Bistrica there is also 24 hour ambulance. Al other municipalities also have individual outpatients' departments. The accessibility to medical service for elderly in Podravje region is satisfactory.

Also the situation of extensiveness and local availability of shops and other **commercial services** is very positive, since there are various commercial activities centred in main cities as Maribor, Ptuj, Slovenska Bistrica. Nevertheless are the supermarkets placed outside the city centres but the public transport is available. Some bigger supermarkets offer up to 10 % discount for pensioners at certain days. All other smaller municipalities and cities have satisfactory capacity and availability of commercial services and shops.

3.5 Links between the municipalities and the elderly

There are no direct links between municipalities and elderly. Municipalities finance the programmes and activities of institutions that are founded for the support of elderly population. Those organisations apply on social care organisation, organisations for home support for elderly, elderly home, Red Cross organisation that widely integrates the elderly population as volunteers, etc. Municipalities in Podravje region also financially support various projects for elderly.

In Podravje region the Municipality of Maribor is currently running gerontology centre that presents information point that is intended for attaining quality of live for elderly people - it offers quality and very simple accessibility to various information about services and activities related to the needs for old population. It also offers free access to internet. In Slovenska Bistrica municipality supports the activities for elderly that are mostly integrated in Centre for elderly, offering various workshops, lectures and other activities according to the need of the elderly.

Internet access and its usability in Podravje region is spreading. There are several info point from the Lifelong Learning Centre - also in very distant local environments - that offers elderly people access to internet and also support by using it. Otherwise, many elderly have possibility to internet access from their home, especially if they live with younger generation.

3.6 Social and special exclusion

Social exclusion is present as limited or impossible access to general social services, employment, housing, health, education, culture, and participation in social life. Social exclusion is very much connected with **poverty**. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is above average (20 %) in older population. By that older women (24.9 %) are in much worst position then man (12.0 %). The highest at risk of poverty rate is in single persons over 65 (45.0 % in 2005).

Accessibility to public services is not always satisfying, especially for elderly. Long waiting periods or regional differences, lack of uniform arrangement (e.g. long-term care) and regional differences in accessibility still exist. Long waiting periods are also present at admittance to social and medical care.

According to the experiences of community nurses taking care for elderly we could classify problems into three groups:

- **Material poverty:** sick and old persons can not afford dietetic food, can not pay extra for certain above standard materials needed for healing, can hardly pay for personal care and similar;
- **Poor social network (poverty of relations):** old, helpless and ill persons need extra attention, more people helping them - low number of relatives and friends can beside their own activities quickly be exhausted;
- **Poor knowledge of rights or inability to recognise opportunities:** each person has the right to decide on its life, even if discrediting itself.

4 SOCIAL CARE

In Slovenia exist different types of social care for seniors. A lot of seniors live in **elderly homes** that represent an organised form for elimination or ease of social distress and difficulties as a result of ageing. Such kind of social care is regulated by Social Assistance Act.

Elderly decide for institutional care only then when they are not able to live in home surroundings any more and urgently need residential placement. In 2007 there were 69 elderly home's providing care for 13.856 residents (10.359 women and 3.497 men), which represents 2.67 % of all men and 5.18 % of all women in this age group (over 65). Their share is increasing sharply with age. Capacities of elderly homes satisfy admittance of round 4 % Slovene population at age 65 and more what makes them fully occupied. At the same time is the number of applications for admittance increasing and waiting lists are getting longer. In 2007 there were more then 14.000 applications denied.

Since older persons have the right to live independent in home surrounding as long as they wish and are able with the help of health and social care, elderly homes are increasingly providing services related to preparation of environment, family and individuals for ageing or they offer help at organizing help for careers. In some cases they also offer **day care centre** service, offering transport to and from such a centre, organized meals, associateship, organized outdoor activities, leisure activities, and others. At the beginning of 2006 there were 22 day care centres operating in Slovenia, mostly by elderly homes.

Another possibility for those being able to live alone with some assistance is **sheltered housing for the elderly**. They are relatively new form of building special apartments as independent housing units in a building designed for older people (65+), individuals or pairs. Residents are older people that are not able to live completely independent and need some organized every day assistance. At the moment there are 11 sheltered housing in Slovenia, out of that just 1 in the region, located in Maribor.

Another service in this field is **help at home**. Help at home is a well-known social assistance service which is of special significance for persons whose accommodation and other living conditions are provided but who cannot care for themselves on their own due to old age or severe disability and whose relatives cannot provide them with care due to their own incapacity or because it is not otherwise possible. The service "help at home" includes assistance in housekeeping, personal hygiene and social networking. Help at home as a part of the public services was in the beginning of 2007 delivered by 74 different organisations, providing more then 5.000 users (almost half of them aged 80+). Lately this service is being up-graded with the **Social service** that is offering also some additional forms of assistance.

Besides elderly homes, sheltered housing, day care centres and help at home, older people in Slovenia are provided with other types of assistance arranged by **Social Work Centres**, **Home Care Centres**, **pensioners' associations**, public and private health institutions and gerontology society which focuses on the development of various care types based on scientific findings.

Slovene Association of Societies for Social Gerontology is linking associations, implementing Elderly people self-help groups programme. The programme is designed to integrate two generations: elderly people (users) and mostly middle aged volunteers (group leaders). The characteristics of the program is: it is being developed at the level of

the individual - group - local network - regional and national network, what gives the program and its working the strength and coherence. The programme has more than 5.000 seniors participating in almost 500 groups, involving nearly 800 group leaders who are volunteers, specially trained for this job.

Also **Red Cross** activities take an important share of providing for the elderly. Volunteers' role in this field is also getting very important.

5 SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Situation of the urban design and public spaces

Types of housing and their residents:

All biggest cities in the region have their roots in the history. Therefore they all have old city centres with older buildings and villas. The residents are mainly older people (who grow old in this area) who are confronting different obstacles like: difficult mobility (no elevators, high stairs, no ramps), renovation requirements, access (lack of parking spaces), shops moving out of centres, etc. But recently the apartments and houses in the centres are bought by younger - middle generation.

Outside the very centres the neighbourhoods of block of flats are built mainly populated by middle and young generation (depends on when they were built). The neighbourhoods that use to be at the city surrounding consisting of individual houses are becoming a part of the cities as they grow. They are mainly populated by third and middle generation. And recently, a trend of ribbon building is present throughout the region populated by younger generation.

Smaller settlements and villages are built up with mostly individual houses since Slovenia has a tradition of own account construction.

Accessibility by public and individual transport:

The public transport in the cities is reported to be quite satisfactory and well used by elderly. The situation is slightly different when talking about suburban services where the connections are worse but they exist. When talking about individual transport we can say that the road network is quite good and therefore accessibility of neighbourhoods enabled. The accessibility of the city centres is getting difficult due to the heavy traffic and lack of parking areas, especially free ones.

Regarding safety and security the region is presumed to be pretty safe for its residents. Older citizens only stated city parks not to feel quite safe during the night time since they are popular meeting place for young people who sometimes cause disturbances, behave violently and molest others (mainly under the influence of alcohol and drugs).

5.2 Condition of parks and like public facilities

All bigger cities in the region tend to have as much public green areas as possible. This includes playgrounds, parks, squares, tree avenues, green plots, and river banks. Their maintenance is mainly responsibility of local authorities but also citizens are encouraged to

take part in environmental care. As an example the case of green areas in Maribor is presented in more detail.

Green areas in Maribor (biggest city in the region):

Maribor is rather green city with numerous tree avenues, green islands, parks and river banks. Green plots and tree avenues are dense network, interlacing residential areas and city centre. Maribor has about 35.000 square metres of city green areas and round 70.000 square metres of green areas in residential areas (counting only regulated ones).

The special meaning has a city park due to its history, regularity, diversity and extensiveness. It originates in 1871 and was developed gradually. Today it could be called the arboretum and belongs to the most beautiful parks of Slovenia. Above all the park has recreative and educational meaning. It is well visited by all generations since it offers different kind of possibilities (playgrounds, walkways, rest areas, aquarium/terrarium, outdoor yoga, etc.) and has good access with public and individual transport. When talking to the participants of citizens groups the interest for arranging a playground for elderly in the park was quite high (the situation was quite opposite in the city of Slovenska Bistrica, where the interest was rather low).

Close by the city centre in the river-bed the Maribor Island is located. It is a habitat of several plant species and rare and endangered species of animals. At the same time it serves as public bath with regulated pools and recreation areas.

The city is surrounded with hills offering regulated walk and cycle ways. One of the biggest advantageous natural resources represents wealth of forests that are surrounding or indent the city, making residential environment richer.

The care for green spaces lies with the city authority who also grants a charter for spatial planning and co finances complementary programmes. Nevertheless, also citizens are encouraged to take part in the form of organised voluntary actions to make city cleaner and more beautiful. And they always respond.

6 ELDERLY IN TRAFFIC

Older persons are vulnerable group of participants in traffic. Mobility of this population in public traffic is of high importance for quality of their lives and society. Therefore the development of traffic should be directed to enabling mobility and participation of older persons.

With ageing of the population in Slovenia more and more problems related to older participants in traffic are opening. The risk of age group over 65 in road traffic, especially in pedestrian and cycle traffic is above average.

Related to the **participation in traffic** older people from the region reported several obstacles to their mobility:

- As pedestrian: pedestrian crossing lights change too quickly; not all are familiar with the system of light activation (pedestrians have to push the button);
- As cyclists: within the cities the cycle paths are mostly well regulated, but there are still some obstacles like not lowered curbs, damaged cycle path surface, recklessness of pedestrians;

- As bus passenger: transport routes are relatively well connected and frequent, greater concern are drivers parking their vehicles on bus stations which makes bus entry quite difficult;
- As drivers: the drivers culture is quite poor, some intolerance of older drivers is present, the way of life results more and more in speeding, parking facilities in the cities are inadequate.

The majority of transport stops are provided with seating and with shelter from the weather. **Public transport** is available to reach destinations like hospitals, health centres, public parks, banks, and also shopping centres that are lately unfortunately located in the outer areas. There is also discount price available for monthly transportation pass for elderly. **Taxis** are getting quite affordable in the last years and are also used by older persons.

B. KEY FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS

1 Demography and State of the Elderly

The Slovenian population is old and the impact of population ageing to a slow growth of Slovenia's population has long been noticed. The rate of elderly in Podravje region is even higher when compared to Slovenian national average.

In Slovenia women die older than men and this affects also the situation shown by the data on the marital status of men and women aged 65+. Most of the elderly aged 65+ live in »private« households with two or more members (86.6 % men of such age and 62.4% women of such age). The shares of both are decreasing with age.

The intensity of population ageing is reflected in the increasing number of pensioners that are dealing with some problems related with the amount of the retirement benefit.

The health condition of people is above all related to their age: the older the person, the worse is her/his health condition. But in average their health condition is good.

The most common behavioural style of home-dwelling elderly people is formally guided which means that most of the older people have high functional capacity, high life satisfaction and high self-esteem.

2 Elderly on the Labour Market

The employment rate of elderly in Slovenia is in comparison with other EU countries rather low due to the recent employment policies and the organisation of the pension system. Existing measures that raise employability of older unemployed people mostly include various financial incentives for employers, but also part-time employment and public work scheme. However there are no measures designed specifically for elderly that would base upon their characteristics.

In terms of employment there is an unfavourable position for older job seekers since employers are in favour of engaging younger persons rather than older. On the other hand is the position of already employed older persons quite good.

During the discussions with citizens groups it was clear that there is no real history of employing retired persons although few of them did practice part time work - because of their affection for and connection to the profession, and as a soft transition from work to retirement. Such employment is sometimes difficult also due to the legislative obstacles (research work).

There is a great deal of possibilities for the voluntary work through different organisations, like associations for social gerontology (cross-generational associations), pensioner's organisations, as well as Red Cross and similar.

3 Inclusion into Society and Social Life

The elderly are included in various cultural, sports and spare time programmes that are provided in this sphere by non-governmental organisations for the elderly, including the

numerically strongest Society of Pensioners of Slovenia, and the University for the Third Age University, and they are also active in numerous other organisations, but there is still to low percentage of elderly in their activities promoting active social life.

The participation of seniors in different learning activities depends mostly on living arrangements and social network, but also on the participant fee required. Activities that are free of charge are especially attractive.

Although Slovenia has some history and practice in intergenerational cooperation there is a need to improve the intergenerational communication and relations.

There are no direct links between the municipalities and the elderly, but yet the municipalities do finance and support programmes and activities for elderly.

The most important carers of the old people are the family members. The needs of family carers vary and are related to the level of dependency of old person and the characteristics of the carer. However, the first need is in common to all family carers, the need for longer vacation - “respite care services”. The recent, Slovenian documents (Development strategy, Strategy of care for the elderly, National action plan, ...) indicate, that there will be a positive shift in the Slovenian attitude towards family care, since different services for family carers (respite care, financial compensation, flexible working arrangements, ...) are planned as well as an expansion of services for dependent old people.

Slovenia still lacks a proper system of preparation for the age that could develop and reconcile changes in life, develop new life style in this age as affiliation to the generational life style. It doesn't defines extra roles for older people, doesn't have instructions for productive ageing and cooperation in social life. And this vacuum has a negative influence on cross-generational relations.

4 Social Care

In Slovenia there exist different types of social care for elderly. Besides elderly homes, sheltered housing, day care centres and help at home, older people in Slovenia are provided with other types of assistance arranged by Social Work Centres, Home Care Centres, pensioners' associations, public and private health institutions and gerontology society which focuses on the development of various care types based on scientific findings.

Quite interesting opportunity for development of social care services presents the third sector - social enterprises that started to develop recently. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs just launched the tender to promote development of social enterprises and also employment of older unemployed persons is given preference over other groups of unemployed.

5 Spatial Arrangements

Older people, who live in older buildings within the city centres and in the individual houses, are facing different problems related to the maintenance of their homes and mobility.

The public transport in the region is quite well organised, especially in the cities. The suburban connections are worse but present. The road network is quite good which enables accessibility of different neighbourhoods. The region is presumed to be pretty safe for its citizens, although some public spaces get less safe during specific day time (at night).

6 Elderly in Traffic

With ageing of the population in Slovenia more and more problems related to older participants in traffic are opening. In order to enable their equal participation in the traffic specific measures should be undertaken.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STEPS

Based on findings of the regional situation analysis following further steps in specific subjects can be recommended:

1 Elderly on the Labour Market

- Raise awareness and inform employers as well as wider public about the meaning and added value of older people/employees (information campaigns, discussion tables, etc.)
- Suggest active labour market policy measures design aimed at older unemployed people taking into account key features of weaknesses characterizing this group

2 Inclusion into Society and Social Life

- Design models of new voluntary work/activity schemes for older people with focus on strengthening of inter-generational solidarity
- Support activities/services for family carers
- Support activities/programmes of preparation for the age
- Design new programmes to promote senior knowledge society - enhance participation in knowledge, culture, e-society
- Raise awareness of older people on the meaning of lifelong learning and inform them about the possibilities offered
- Suggest existing programmes to come near the local environments /neighbourhoods which are better accessible for older citizens
- Suggest regular events open for older citizens to express their needs and suggestions regarding quality ageing
- Prepare regional/local action plans/strategies for active ageing

3 Social Care

- Promote development of new social services through development of social enterprises

4 Spatial Arrangements

- Adapt public spaces to needs of senior people by creating new facilities for them (senior sport park, playground for elderly)
- Suggest more rigorous control over offences against the public order and peace in public spaces

5 Elderly in Traffic

- Raise awareness of wider public on vulnerability of older participants in traffic and obstacles to their free movement caused by other participants
- Suggest more severe penalty or more rigorous control over offence causing limited mobility for older participants in traffic

D. PROPOSED PILOT PROJECTS AND GOOD PRACTICES / STRATEGIES SUPPORTING THEM

According to the findings and recommendations of the analysis Slovenian partners involved in the Q-Ageing project decided to develop activities within following pilot projects:

1. **Upgrade the services** of Centre for home social care in Maribor with programmes for helping the families with an elderly family member - Improving regional accessibility of existing care services and programs by spreading the structure and technology to the wider area and programs for intergenerational voluntariness - Promoting and boosting of volunteerism. (PP2)
2. Set up **Senior Sport Park** as an outdoor exercise stations, designed for elderly and those which are weakened in their mobility. The main aim of the Senior Sport Park is to provide suitable outdoor environment and equipment, which will enable elderly people to go for physical activities adapted to their needs and possibilities and associate with all generations. (PP2)
3. Develop a **program for Silver Age day activity centre** in Slovenska Bistrica which would include a modern social programs network for quality ageing, various entertaining or educational courses, also some intergenerational groups could be formed. Such program would be a big step towards meeting the demands of older generations, especially in keeping social connectivity, raising the awareness of entire local population about quality ageing from all aspects and preparing the society for an extremely increased share of elderly among the entire population. (PP3)
4. Organise **events open for older citizens** to express their needs and suggestions regarding quality ageing that would also contribute to development of regional/local action plans/strategies for active ageing (PP2 and PP3)
5. Organise **Age positive campaign** to change attitude of the society to the elder population, as well to motivate and build self-confidence of elderly themselves. The campaign will offer a lot of information and awareness raising through different dissemination channels, training to elderly in order to improve their competitiveness in the job market and to motivate them to participate as active members of society. It would also advise the companies how to use the expertise of their older workers or adjust the job responsibilities and characteristics to ensure that older workers are still a valuable asset to the company. (PP4)

Pilot projects will build upon the findings of the regional situation analysis and also experiences of different good practices identified in the process of situation analysis preparation:

Older People's Play Area

The main objective of the playground is to enable elderly access to recreation with the equipment that is designed to provide gentle stimulation to ageing bodies. Such outdoor environment helps encourage both exercise as well as socializing.

Aktiv im Alter

The strategy, which is closely related to a model programme, addresses local/ regional municipalities to encourage elderly people to actively participate in society, to improve the quality of life for elderly people, to anchor the concept of active ageing in municipalities and to create new images of age. These aims shall be implemented by the development or further improvements of local networks between communities and other organisations or associations dealing with elderly people.

Fair Play for older workers

The aim of the project was to promote the contribution of older workers within the labour market. Working with employers and employer organisations the project aims to assist with the implementation of age management strategies in the workplace which maintain and invest in the continued employability and productivity of older workers.

“8-teen, 8-ty or how much early and late adulthood have in common”

The aim of the project is to develop and consolidate the link between two generations: of early and late adulthood (the students at thebrink of adulthood and the senior citizens) based on educational and cultural activities. The goal is to overcome social barriers and stereotypes regarding not only the senior citizens but also the youth, and raise the awareness of the local community of many things that are common to these two seemingly ‘distant’ generations.

Perspective 50Plus (Employment Pact for Elderly People in German Regions)

The aim of the project was to develop new ways to reintegrate long term unemployed people aged 50+ into the labour market. Therefore, the initiation of employment pacts on a regional level with all relevant actors was intended. By means of the programme innovative strategies should be developed, that could be used as a role model at federal level. Furthermore, the project wanted to contribute to a general shift in consciousness towards the improvement of employment opportunities for elderly persons and to initiate new networks between different sectors of the labour market.

Active Ageing Forum

The main goal is to spark a debate, first of a cultural, on the issue of ageing, first knowing that there is need to assert a new concept of retirement, essential to design new and more appropriate policies which will ensure that all conditions for a life worth living at any age. Issues to be addressed have been identified and were organized six conferences.

SOURCES

- Self-Care of the Homedwelling Elderly People Living in Slovenia. Danica Železnik. Academic Dissertation. Oulu University Press. Oulu 2007
- "Strategy for Care for the Elderly till 2010 - Solidarity, Good Intergenerational Relations and Quality Ageing of the Population". Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Ljubljana
- Slovenia's Population is Ageing - New Solidarity Relations Between Generations are Needed. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Ljubljana. November 2008
- 8th Festival for Third Life Period, Collection of Scientific Papers. Ljubljana 2008
- <http://www.inst-antontrstenjaka.si/>
- <http://www.ess.gov.si/>
- <http://www.mddsz.gov.si/>
- <http://www.stat.si/>
- <http://www.maribor.si/podrocje.aspx?id=0>
- <http://www.slovenska-bistrica.si/podrocje.aspx>
- Citizens groups. Maribor. Slovenska Bistrica. July - August 2009.