

Elderly citizens' activity and intergenerational solidarity

The share of elderly citizens is rising nationally. In 2014, 17, 4% citizens were older than sixty-five in Czech Republic. In 2030, 1 out of 4 will be over that age.

Structure of elderly population will also change drastically. The more advanced healthcare is, the higher is life expectancy. In 2010, one third of the seniors were aged between 65 and 69. In 2065, only 15 % will be in that age range. Population of people in their seventies and eighties will be doubled, respectively four times more than was in 2010.

That pace of aging causes concerns about growth of GDP and economic development. There are presumptions that the elderly could be burden to state welfare.

One way to turn those dreary predictions away is age management. Company which can integrate elderly employees among younger will have competitive advantage. It will not have to invest that much capital since the retiring of elderly employee means loss in human capital for the company.

Nowadays active aging is becoming more widespread, and its task is to create friendly environment for leading life full of opportunities.

Volunteering is one of the options to stay active, help others and spend spare time usefully. In Brno there are non-government organizations offering positions. To engage in volunteering, one must find and contact every single organization. That is very inconvenient and might be slightly confusing, in spite of existing database.

Another mean of make one busy is to enrol in a course at the university. Five local universities offer courses at university of third age. Mostly students attend Masaryk University. Capacity is usually filled within few days of announcement of the opening of the course.

City police of Brno has its own Senior Academy where students learn about safety. Graduates can, for example, look after crossings.

Library of Jiří Mahen runs Cultural Academy of Third Age and other discussions.

Sport life blossoms in traditional Sokol, Orel or Club of Czech Tourists. These associations have fair share of seniors among themselves. However, they cannot be labelled as for elderly.

Senior clubs are exclusively for retired citizens. Usually, one club is in the each district of Brno. About thirty clubs are located in Brno. That might seem a lot, but in comparison with for example Pardubice (twenty-seven clubs), it is not that impressive.

Another possibility of engagement is Board of Seniors. It is national organization with regional branch in Brno. Everyone can take the part in meetings – membership is not a condition.

Senior Points is meeting spot for elderly citizens. It is provided with internet, computers, and staff willing to help. Senior Points are located across the city of Brno.

Holders of Senior Pas are entitled to discounts at facilities. They must be over fifty-five years of age. Even without the Senior Pas, elder can enjoy discounts at the theatres of Brno, cinemas, trams, etc.

Project of intergenerationality between the seniors and children of pre-school age called “Who reads a fairy-tale” has been developed in the district of Brno-Střed. The goal is to deepen relationship regardless of age.

Elderly citizens of Brno can enjoy wide range of social services in good quality. The possibilities of active social life are very wide. Educational, cultural and sporting events are very frequent. As our research found out, the information awareness among seniors is not sufficient.

So, in order to activate a fellow senior citizen became rather the task to provide elderly citizens with information what is going on in the city of Brno. Our propositions to do so are following:

The web site is designed for tech savvy, mostly younger of the target group. However, even for them, seeking information could be very difficult because of its huge amount. This is a calling for the web site, which is to be well structured and with simple layout. It would contain the information about social services, education, events, taking part in volunteering and also visual tutorials “how to” to attract greater share of elderly. The difference to existing similar websites might be the helpdesk – users would post inquiry and then they would be briefed in little time or overnight.

Nevertheless, no matter how neatly would the website is done, 3 out of 4 seniors are still not entirely familiar in the internet environment at the moment. That is why printed brochure seems to be very suitable. The city of Brno issues thick brochure of social services. The downside of brochure is its breadth and the focus on wide range of subjects. The document that we propose would consist of abridged Brno issue as well as other key information elderly citizens need: the Senior Points, the Socio-info-centre, the Elderly clubs, the Board of Elderly and the realization of own project. Geographically, they are two variants of the issue - the city of Brno, or the city of Brno and surroundings. Despite of prohibitive nature of the Personal Information Law in acquiring address from vote registers, there is a possibility of finding information at the Senior Point and other meeting spots for seniors, where brochures would be available. Optionally, citizens could ask for home delivery.

Conveniently, monthly magazine Metropolitan is in circulation, distributed to every post box in Brno. The magazine itself is orientated on current events at the city. Our idea is to attach the piece of paper to every issue. The obvious upside is familiarity and credibility of the magazine. Also, the distributional cost would be reduced to absolute minimum.

The elderly people feel to be threatened with loneliness. Intergenerationality is one of the means to combat gloomy feelings. It tends to be more and more popular to interconnect different generations. The interaction of the youngsters learning from the elders used to be very usual, and nowadays, in the times of nuclear family, the process has been rediscovered and the understanding “being old” might have vanished.

The school tends to allow relatively little space in their schedules for intergenerationality and they are mostly one of infrequent projects. That leads to propose an educational program for children of third grade in primary schools. They would learn about the world of grandmothers and grandfathers. They would fill worksheet in the form of comics, debate and play games. Then, that information would travel to the seniors who would also be given the brochure created by the child attending the class.

The second way of promoting the intergenerationality could be setting up a course for undergraduate students. The elderly probably know better what students are missing. The meet their friends, are “inside”, and they would benefit directly if the project would be implemented. The active elderly, who want to implement some project, are very often put off by complexity, bureaucracy, papers and plans. The students would help them to make the

project possible; they could calculate the cost, for example. They would be able to communicate in plain manner so seniors could understand. The framework of the course would be to hold regular meetings. The students would have to get materials and advise them the easiest way to have the project implemented. The course would last one semester.

The Board of Seniors would appreciate that kind of assisting. They are several projects they consider worth pursuing, but they are unsure and they worry about finance but it is also true that Town Hall is very busy, and there are projects with higher priority.

The last contribution on our behalf to this project is linked to volunteering. It is the natural way to contribute to intergenerationality – meetings of younger and older. The Law says that there must be three parties involved: volunteer, receiving and releasing organization. Releasing organization is guarantee and must be accredited by the Ministry of the Interior. Receiving organization also must be accredited by Ministry of the Interior.

Unfortunately, constructing the whole concept of volunteering for the city of Brno is well beyond the scope of this project. However, there is an existing database of possibilities for volunteers. The data could be transmitted onto the website (the section “I want to join”). Within the capabilities of Senior Point is to coordinate potential volunteers, to navigate them or even sign them up.