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## **Senior policy as an element of local government activities in Tarnów**

### **Abstract**

This article is an analysis of the social policy of practical activities implemented for seniors in the environment of their local residence. Tarnów was chosen as the local environment, in which seniors are the majority of the population. It discusses the principles of social policy, the resources of the Tarnów local government, activities and initiatives for seniors in Tarnów as well as the objectives and tasks of the Tarnów local government implemented in 2015–2020

The analysis of social policy shows that the local government authorities in Tarnów organized many valuable and good initiatives for the benefit of seniors. This is demonstrated by the cafeteria of activities undertaken by social institutions (state and local government), non-governmental organizations, religious associations (church), and other economic entities (enterprises and business). However, there are some lacunae, especially in the area of care standards.

### **Keywords**

Senior, local government, local environment, resources, family, social policy.

## 1. Introduction

The great ancient think and medic, Hippocrates, used to make the thesis that old age, although conducive to disease, is not a disease. It is a natural and irreversible phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> And although he never determined the causes of human aging in his medical activities, he devoted many treatises to this issue. Undoubtedly, this thesis does not need to be proven, it is enough to engage in the interdisciplinary sciences (anthropology, biology, medicine, sociology, pedagogy, social work...) to notice not only the functioning of the elderly in society, but also the functioning of societies in which the oldest generation adopts the direction of immanent continuation. Hence, social gerontology in its subject assumes an interdisciplinary character and cannot be reduced to the scope of only sociology or pedagogy. This reductionism would not only be illogical, but would narrow this scientific discipline only to a fragment of a certain reality.<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this article, an understanding of senior policy as defined by the First World Assembly on Aging of Societies (United Nations in 1982) has been adopted that it is: „all intentional activities of public administration bodies at all levels and other organizations and institutions that carry out tasks and initiatives shaping the conditions for dignified and healthy aging.”<sup>3</sup> In this aspect, senior policy should be included in the public management sector.<sup>4</sup>

This article, after outlining the basic principles of social policy, will attempt to analyze practical activities carried out for seniors in the environment of local

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<sup>1</sup> G. Minois, *Old age history. From antiquity to the Renaissance*, Warsaw 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Miecznikow was the first representative of science to define gerontology as a stage of human old age and aging. However, the proper development of this science took place in the second half of the 20th century, although in 1928 the first gerontological institute at Stanford University in California was established. See: B. Szatur-Jaworska, P. Błędowski, M. Dziegielewska, *Fundamentals of social gerontology*, Warsaw 2006, pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> K. Kwaśniewska, *Senior issues as an important task of social policy*, „Studies in the field of Legal Sciences” (2016) No. 6, pp. 379. 369–383.

<sup>4</sup> Public management is characterized by strong ties with the practical sphere, which is why it is analyzed in a dynamic rather than static approach. It concerns the search for effective organization of projects, programs and broader public policies, perceived as activities that meet important social needs. The scope of the problem is analyzed in the literature as management in the public sector (subject approach) or as public affairs management (subject approach). In relation to the social category of seniors, management focuses on the methods and tools used, and around the nature of problems that are the result of the institutional complexity of the public sector. J. Krzyszkowski, *Inclusive Communities, or the Role of Social Policy in Local Government*, Warsaw 2014, p. 54.

residence. Tarnów, as a city of about 111,000 residents is a representative sample in relation to the implementation of integral social policy in Poland. Therefore, in this article, the city of Tarnów was chosen as an individual case of the implementation of the senior policy of the local government.

## 2. The principles of social policy in the local community

The principles of social policy implemented for the benefit of seniors and the elderly, determine the selection of such actions that will be priority, and at the same time implemented by state authorities and local governments. For this reason, the most important principles guided by social policy, especially senior policy towards seniors and the elderly, include three basic principles: subsidiarity, comprehensiveness of needs assessment and, locality.<sup>5</sup>

The subsidiarity principle is derived from the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Its effectiveness was noted by, among others Popes: Pius XI<sup>6</sup>, John XXIII<sup>7</sup> and John Paul II.<sup>8</sup> John XXIII believed that the principle of the common good concerns the conditions of social life that serve the development of man. John Paul II, on the other hand, emphasized the role of policies focused on development and helping the individual, whose goal is to guarantee a good, just and dignified life. In addition, he believed that the principle of subsidiarity was combined with the principle of solidarity. In this context, he wrote: „A higher-order community should not interfere in the internal affairs of a lower-order community, depriving it of competence, but rather should support it when necessary and help coordinate its activities with the activities of other social groups, for the common good.”<sup>9</sup> This principle is included in the implementation of senior policy. It is generally accepted that the family should be the first place to support seniors and the elderly. For them it is the most important platform for emotional support and

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<sup>5</sup> Z. Szweda-Lewandowska, *Polityka społeczna wobec starości i osób starszych*, in: *Elementy gerontologii społecznej*, eds. P. Szukalski, Z. Szweda-Lewandowska, Łódź 2011, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Vatican 1931.

<sup>7</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Vatican 1961.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, Watykan 1981; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Vatican 1982; *Centesimus Annus*, Watykan 1991.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Encyklika. Centesimus Annus*, No. 48.

functioning. Therefore, it is recognized as a group of care and support for the socially accepted needs of seniors.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of this support, this obligation is assumed by state institutions and other social organizations. According to Z. Szwed-Lewandowska, elderly people should first be supported by the closest groups in their living environment, i.e. a neighborhood group, a religious community, self-help groups and other local non-profit groups. At the end of the aid chain are state institutions. The provision of social services is an important scope of this assistance. The subsidiarity principle fits into the context of these benefits as the effect of shifting the macro level policy to the micro level, located in regional and local entities.<sup>11</sup> This type of policy enables the family and other organizations to provide help and support to the elderly and to develop social solidarity among people through the animation of various civil society environments.

The principle of comprehensive assessment of the needs of seniors concerns an adequate analysis of the local community in which the elderly reside. Usually, this analysis is referred to as a diagnosis of a person's life situation. This diagnosis concerns the assessment of existential, family and living conditions. In this context, the diagnosis should be oriented towards providing assistance within the framework of local environment resources and adapted to the needs of seniors. Because a comprehensive approach to the difficulties and problems of older people requires a lot of detail, so it is necessary to individually analyze their fate of life. The individuality feature allows the development of a support plan tailored to the life needs of seniors. It must be remembered that the difficulties of the elderly are different. Hence the individual approach appears as the first and most important stage of support.

The above-mentioned principle of a comprehensive-individual approach to the specific difficulties of seniors is combined with the principle of multisectoralism, which consists in the simultaneous functioning of public social policy entities, non-profit organizations and market institutions providing resources and services to meet the needs of older people.<sup>12</sup> This type of support depends on the nature of the needs of seniors depending on their age, state of health and

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<sup>10</sup> A. Chabior, *Sytuacja rodzinna i zdrowotna osób starszych*, in: *Starzenie się i starość w perspektywie pracy socjalnej*, eds. A. Chabior, A. Fabiś, J.K. Wawrzyniak, Warsaw 2014, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Z. Szwed-Lewandowska, *Social policy towards old age and the elderly*, in: *Elements of social gerontology*, eds. P. Szukalski, Z. Szwed-Lewandowska, Łódź 2011, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup> M. Polak, *Principles and instruments of social policy*, in: *Introduction to social policy*, eds. R. Gabryszak, D. Magierek, Warsaw 2009, p. 35.

family situation. It seems that the senior policy implemented at the local level is best used to integrate older people in their living environment.

Particular attention should be paid to the principle of locality. As part of it, it should be emphasized not only to organize help for seniors, but above all to organize life for the elderly. Only creating a help system using the local potential will allow self-help activities to be launched, thus activating seniors. The local environment is also the best place to fight ageism, which often leads to discrimination against the elderly and a stereotypical approach. These types of activities are beneficial for local government and the local environment, because maintaining seniors independent for the longest possible has social benefits. P. Błędowski clearly states that the scope of social policy tasks towards the elderly includes, above all, satisfying the needs related to the organization of the life of seniors. Satisfying these needs and enabling independent living in the local environment despite later age, lack of health or fitness, implies a person's well-being.<sup>13</sup>

In this principle, there is a need to activate seniors and integrate them into society. The integration process should be enriched with activities within the environmental method, in social work referred to as organization work. These activities should be long-term, systematic and consistent. For this purpose, it is necessary to use the social economy, which should be a criterion for the activity of seniors, social groups and other civic institutions. In addition, all local environment actors should be involved in these activities, among them – municipalities, the Church, schools and other aid organizations. The local environment seems to create the best conditions for participation and integration of seniors. In this context, the most important goals of social policy towards seniors include „ensuring the independence of older people and creating conditions for the integration of the older generation with other members of society (as well as local community) and for intra-generational integration.”<sup>14</sup>

The principles mentioned above appear as important elements of social policy and referring to them allows an integral approach to the social category of seniors as part of the policy implemented by the local government, especially at local level.

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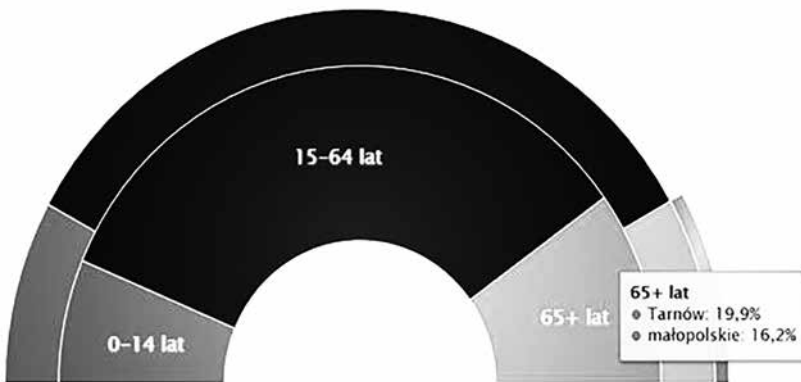
<sup>13</sup> P. Błędowski, *Local social policy towards the elderly*, Warsaw 2002, p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> P. Błędowski, *Social policy towards old people in Poland and the European Union*, in: *Population aging as a challenge for social policy*, ed. M. Szlązak, Kraków 2003, p. 7.

### 3. Tarnów – methodology and short statistics

In Tarnów, the population has been steadily decreasing for over ten years and reached the level of 111,388 at the end of 2014. In 2017, 108,773. The assumptions of the population projection are still confirmed, which provides for a further decline in the city's population. With the decreasing number of the general population in Tarnów, the number of people in post-working age is increasing every year. At the end of 2014 it amounted to 24,300, in 2017 – 26,200. The post-working age population was 21.8% of the total population. Biological age groups are presented in the chart below. According to the data in the chart, it follows that although the biological age group 15–64 is the highest percentage, the age group 65+ is almost 20%. In this context, new challenges and tasks implemented for seniors are emerging for the Tarnów local government.

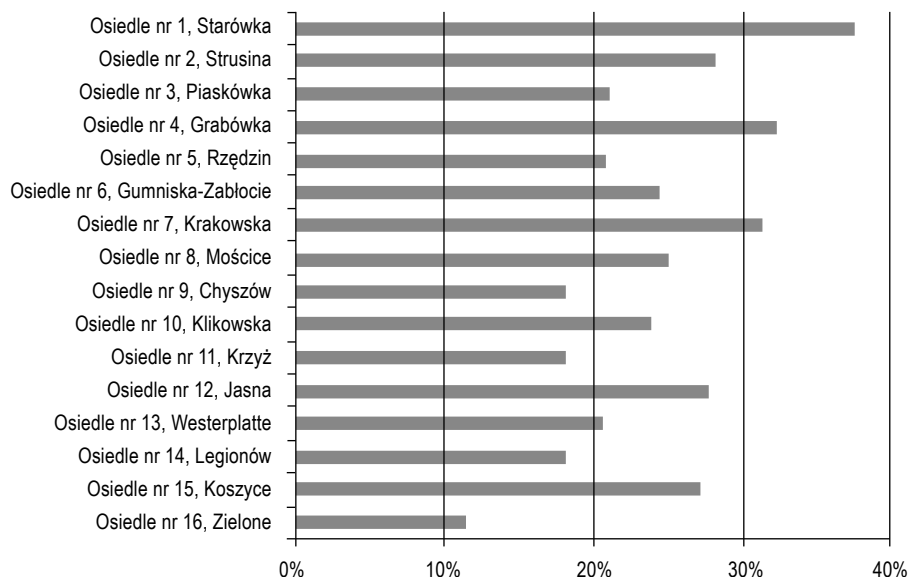
**Chart 1.** Biological age groups in Lesser Poland and Tarnów 2017



Source: GUS 2017

It is important to note the statistics of the percentage of the elderly in the total population of the inhabitants of Tarnów. Chart 2 presents empirical data.

**Chart 2.** Share of seniors in the total number of inhabitants broken down into housing estates (data in %)



Source: Action Program for the Elderly in the City of Tarnów for the years 2015–2020, Resolution No. XVIII / 178/2015 of the City Council in Tarnów of November 26, 2015, Tarnów 2015, p. 6. (pdf document).

The chart above shows that the population density of seniors is the highest in the ‘Starówka’, ‘Grabówka’, ‘Krakowska’, ‘Jasna’ and ‘Kościce’ housing estates. A high percentage of Tarnów’s seniors also live in the following housing estates: „Strusinia”, „Gumniska-Zabłocie”, „Mościce” and „Klikowska”. Almost 38% of seniors live in the „Starówka” estate. It seems that the implementation of the policy for seniors should not only be adapted to the general population, but also to specific Settlements. Desk research was adopted as the main methodology in this study, which is the analysis of data collected by others in the form of tables, charts or research reports. This kind of analysis implies not only showing the context of a given issue, but also the socio-economic background of the urbanization area and its changes.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Diagnosing social problems. Domestic Violence*, written by J. Mańka, Kraków 2015, p. 19.

## 4. Resources of the Tarnów local government

In the implementation of tasks aimed at improving the life situation of Tarnów seniors, the key role is played by the resources possessed by the Municipality and the City of Tarnów. Resources can be material but also non-material. The resources include the organizational units of the Commune and City of Tarnów, undertaken social and educational activities, social and non-governmental organizations operating in Tarnów, as well as projects and programs implemented for the residents of Tarnów.

### 4.1. Organizational units of social assistance of the City of Tarnów

The first entity of social policy implemented at the level of the Tarnów local government is the Municipal Social Assistance Center, which has been operating since 1990. MOPS, apart from supporting families and individuals, especially helps Tarnów's seniors. The scope of assistance provided by this institution concerns financial support directed to people in difficult life situations, services and care services. The full scope of assistance provided in 2017 is presented in the table below. It should be noted that the percentage of beneficiaries who are over 60 years of age. On the matrix of the table cited, it is easy to see that seniors most often use services such as: care services, specialized care services provided for people with mental disorders and stay-in social assistance homes. In addition, MOPS also runs an Information Point for Seniors. The tasks of the point include:

- providing information on the possibility of receiving support,
- promoting various activities organized for seniors,
- monitoring environmental resources with the possibility of implementing them in the category of older people,
- promoting forms of activity and assistance

Another assistance institution for the elderly located in the area of the Tarnów self-government is the Nursing Home, which offers: housing, all-day lodging, care and medical care, rehabilitation, therapeutic classes, organization of free time and cultural events. Currently 87 residents live in the house. The institution's main goal is to care for the elderly on a psychophysical level, to counteract loneliness and the sense of rejection and marginalization.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Dom Pomocy Społecznej*, ul. Czarna ulica 48, <http://dps.itarnow.pl/> (25.01.2019).



L.p.	Types of benefits	Number of people who received benefits	Including people over 60 years	Percentage of beneficiaries over 60 years
1	Periodic benefit	1.098	49	4%
2	Special purpose and in kind allowance	1.744	281	16%
3	Permanent benefit	614	140	23%
4	Material help	746	180	24%
5	Specialist care services for people with mental disorders	16	7	44%
6	Stay in nursing homes	101	45	45%
7	Care services	496	431	87%
8	Social work	2.941	408	14%

**Source:** *Municipal Social Support Center in Tarnow*

It is worth mentioning that in the city of Tarnów there is also a Nursing Home Saint Brother Albert. Currently, 164 people (women and men) live in the house and it is intended particularly for residents who require 24-hour care and assistance due to their old age, poor health or disability. In addition to the basic help (living, caring) resulting from the mission of the home, special attention is given to conducting therapeutic work. Hence, the main purpose of the home operation in the local community is to keep residents active. The awareness of these activities is dictated by the fact that the activity of people with silver hair not only prolongs their lives, but also adds strength to fight disease, allows them to maintain optimism and faith in the future and allows them to lead a creative, harmonious life. The DPS also operates a Day Care Center for seniors who, due to their age, disability and health condition, require support in their daily functioning. The facility has 50 places where professionals try to comprehensively meet the needs of the elderly and the, lonely, to keep them active, fill their free time, provide therapy without taking the participants away from their own environment.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it should be added that health care is also carried out under the local government policy, including primary healthcare, outpatient specialist care,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Nursing Home Saint Brother Albert in Tarnów*, <http://www.dps.okay.pl/> (25.01.2019).

hospital care, long-term nursing care and emergency medical services. There are also various self-government cultural institutions in which seniors take an active part realizing their capital and intellectual, acting, educational and physical potential.

#### 4.2. Activities for seniors in Tarnów

Tarnowski local government, in accordance with the adopted nationwide assumptions, undertakes activities aimed at multi-faceted support for seniors and maintaining their social activity<sup>18</sup>, and thus counteracting social exclusion of this age group<sup>19</sup> In this area, social and educational activities, social organizations and health programs for seniors can be distinguished.

Social activities undertaken by managers of local government are focused on shaping the general conditions of human existence. In the Tarnów self-government, the area of social policy implemented within the framework of senior policy included:

- A. Tarnowski Senior Card;
- B. Organization of Tarnów Senior Day;
- C. Website for seniors;
- D. Free public transport;
- E. Health programs;
- F. Tarnowska Council of Elders;
- G. Non-governmental organizations working for the elderly;
- H. Inter-Community Centers for Senior Activity;
- I. Senior Clubs;
- J. Universities of the Third Age.

The „Tarnów Senior Card” (KTS) is the result of the implementation of a person-senior policy addressed to people aged 65+ who have registered in the city. The

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<sup>18</sup> Many Polish sociologists dealing with the topic of social gerontology recognize that one of the key problems regarding seniors and the elderly in our country is the fact of their inactivity in social functioning. Rather, one should speak about receptive activity manifested only in watching television, reading, listening to the radio and spontaneous activity in the acts of neighborly self-help or caring solidarity. However, there is still a relatively low level of participation of seniors in the social, public and political spheres. M. Niezabitowski, *Elderly people in a sociological perspective*, Katowice 2007, pp. 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> On January 1, 2016, the Act of September 11, 2015 on older people entered into force (Journal of Laws item 1705).

purpose of the indicated KTS is to enable seniors to use services in the following categories: education and development, sport and recreation, culture and entertainment, medical services, pharmacies, automotive services, gastronomy and hospitality, consulting, Internet. Thanks to this action, seniors on preferential terms are supported not only in strengthening their economic condition, but also in the form of spending free time and cultural development.<sup>20</sup>

The cyclical organization of the „Tarnów Senior Day” is the second undertaking addressed to Tarnów seniors. This action, which is a kind of senior celebration, is part of good practices for managing the free time of older people, thus conditioning the integration of Tarnów seniors and showing a preferential offer addressed to this category of people by various institutions and non-governmental organizations. The spectrum of this activity also includes the permanent website for seniors. The information it contains on older people’s problems, their needs, assistance and support are an important element of the offer of care for seniors and their families. The aforementioned website operates within the website of the Tarnów City Council [www.tarnow.pl](http://www.tarnow.pl), in the ‘Social policy and health’ tab, where it is located under the page for seniors. Also an important factor of the local government offer for seniors is direct help in the area of material condition at the level of free journeys on all lines of Tarnów public transport. Persons over the age of 70 are entitled to use this offer. One should also note the pro-adult policy proposals in the area of implementation of various health programs. In addition to free vaccination against influenza for citizens over 65 years of age are implemented, among others, programs: Home rehabilitation of chronically and bed-ridden patients due to musculoskeletal disorders or musculoskeletal disorders (rheumatoid arthritis and other chronic musculoskeletal disorders or multiple sclerosis); Systemic medical rehabilitation improving dexterity and locomotion in people with significantly reduced mobility caused by chronic illness”; Psychophysical rehabilitation and prevention of women after mastectomy; Screening for early diagnosis of glaucoma.

A valuable aspect of the senior policy in Tarnów is the functioning „Tarnów Senior Council”<sup>21</sup>, which aims to build the image of a senior and to prevent

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<sup>20</sup> The program was adopted by Resolution No. LI / 657/2014 of the City Council in Tarnów of May 22, 2014 regarding The Tarnów Senior Card.

<sup>21</sup> *The Tarnów Elders’ Council was established by the Resolution of the City Council No. XIV / 143/2015 on September 10, 2015. It is worth adding that in 2020 there were about 375 municipal senior councils in Poland. E. Lewicka-Kalka, *Functioning of Senior Councils**

marginalization of this category of people. The activity of „TRS” is focused around several areas: supporting the activity of seniors, using the experience and potential of seniors, building intergenerational bonds, prevention and promotion of health, promoting the lifestyle and needs of seniors – active, creative, passionate senior, supporting various initiatives implemented for seniors, prevention of seniors’ social ageism, encouraging various forms of recreation, access to education, culture and sport.<sup>22</sup>

Non-governmental organizations working for the elderly are another important effect of Tarnów’s senior policy. The use of non-governmental organizations for this type of activities seems to be an important part of the standardization of senior services at the level of local structures. Defining local social policy, P. Błędowski states that it is an activity carried out in the city, commune by local government bodies and non-governmental organizations, religious associations (churches).<sup>23</sup> The most important and relatively active non-governmental organizations located in Tarnów include: Caritas of the Tarnów Diocese; „Bread Slice” Foundation; Partnership for the Future Foundation; KANA Catholic Youth Education Center; Polish Social Welfare Committee District Board in Tarnów; Polish Association of Retirees and Pensioners District in Tarnów; Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society Branch of the Tarnow Land; Specialist outpatient clinic ARKA, and a helpline in Tarnów; „Senior on Time” Association; „Silver Skronie” Association; Association of Graduates and Friends of the 4th High School in Tarnów; „Europe-Poland” Association of Socio-Economic Initiatives; KANON Association; Polish Medicine Association; City Association on the Internet; The University of the Third Age Association at the State Higher Vocational School in Tarnów. This type of social entrepreneurship falls between traditional entrepreneurship and charity. Charity focuses on social change and solving social problems in which seniors assume the status of subjectivity.<sup>24</sup>

The competences of the third sector include the „Inter-community Centers of Senior Activity” existing in Tarnów. This is a partner venture

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in Poland, in: <http://mrs.poznan.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Rady-senior%C3%B3w.-Raport-z-bada%C5%84.pdf> (17.02.2021).

<sup>22</sup> *Public Information of the Lesser Poland Voivodship*, <https://bip.malopolska.pl/umtarnow,m,261337,tarnowska-rada-seniorow.html> (30.01.2019).

<sup>23</sup> P. Błędowski, *Local policy towards old age*, Warsaw 202, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> O. Pankiv, W. Duranowski, *Social entrepreneurship and social work*, Warsaw 2014, p. 73.

of non-governmental organizations characterized by experience and professionalism in implementation Senior projects allow you to creatively use the resources and capital of seniors. This type of initiative is characterized by proper subjectivity focused on the citizen and institutions, because local government is closest to seniors and it is easier to develop a diagnosis of needs and standards of support for territorial policy recipients in the areas of: education, activity, and quality of life of physical development.

Senior Clubs are further resources of the Tarnów local government managed in the public sector of activity run by many entities (non-governmental organizations, parishes, housing cooperatives, housing centers and the science sector). The basic activities of these organizations are supporting seniors in the field of social and physical activity. Various forms of workshops are organized for seniors: computer, language, artistic, outdoor (nordic walking), movement (pilates or fitness), educational (preventive, scientific lectures) physiotherapy classes, meetings with interesting people (travelers), occasional, cultural events (cinema, theater) trips and intergenerational meetings. Further areas of activity are: improvement of manual and motor skills, integration with the local environment and the immediate environment, building social, family and intergenerational bonds. including: Senior Club „Cafe pod Jesienną Różą”; Senior Club at the parish Christ the Good Shepherd; Creative Senior Club „at the parish of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe; Senior Club at Tarnów University of the Third Age; Creative Initiatives Club OMEGA at the University of the Third Age at the PWSZ in Tarnów; Self-help Club „Spring of Life” run by the Partnership for the Future Foundation. Clubs run by: Tarnowska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, KANON Association, the Catholic Youth Education Center KANA, the Association „Medycyna Polska”, the Association „Senior Na Czasie”.

An important area implemented for the benefit of seniors within the territorial self-government in Tarnów are educational activities undertaken by Universities of the Third Age, which expect only a time bank from seniors. In exchange for the received time bank, they offer a whole cafeteria of lectures: scientific, didactic, cultural, practical. Several universities operate in the morphology of Tarnów: the University of the Third Age Association at the PWSZ in Tarnów; Tarnów University of the Third Age „Slice of Bread” Foundation; Mościcka Academy of the Third Age. Organizations of this type meet several important effects: prevention of loneliness, extension of intellectual ability, improvement of dexterity, physical activity, rehabilitation, recreation, cultural and tourist programs, courses and trainings. Meetings at the University, especially a new

form of self-help (inter-adult) cooperation, a new approach to problems is an inspiration and discovering the world by them.<sup>25</sup>

## 5. Goals and tasks for seniors in Tarnów for the years 2015–2020

In the Program of Activities for the Elderly in the City of Tarnów for the years 2015–2020<sup>26</sup> the following areas were indicated: health, help, support, safety, counteracting ageism, intergenerational integration. The main goal of the program was to create conditions for seniors to ensure their individual development, meet the needs in all spheres of life, and to guarantee the full participation of older people in social life. The program has three important priorities:

**A. Priority I.** Creating appropriate conditions related to maintaining and improving the health of the elderly;

**B. Priority II.** Assistance, support and ensuring social security for seniors;

**C. Priority III.** Preventing social marginalization of seniors through intergenerational integration, activation and development of the interests of older people.

The first priority focuses on improving access to medical services, especially in the area of rehabilitation of the elderly. The responsibility of various institutions in improving the psychophysical fitness of seniors related to their activity and social activation was raised to the rank of responsibility. The need to develop a long-term care system was emphasized and the need to educate and promote a healthy lifestyle among older people was taken. The second priority of local government activities focused on supporting seniors in the local environment, emphasizing the development of the care system for the elderly who cannot function independently in their own environment. There was also a focus on developing, promoting and coordinating a system of reliefs addressed to seniors and supporting families of the elderly. Usually, in an elderly care situation, the family functioning system needs to be rebuilt in terms of family members' roles, time and household structure. An important element of the second priority was to draw attention to support for the development of the „silver economy”, i.e. the modern

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<sup>25</sup> See R. Konieczna-Woźniak, *Adult learning through their free time interests*, 2011 Adult Education, No. 2, p. 112.

<sup>26</sup> The program was created in 2015 in order to determine the living conditions and needs of the elderly, and to take actions that in a planned and purposeful way will improve the quality of their lives in the city of Tarnów. The local government of Tarnów has initiated the initiative to create a local action program for the elderly.

market of services and products friendly to the elderly, in order to meet their consumption, living and health needs. The last third priority of the strategy for helping seniors concerned marginalization, social ageism and intergenerational integration. To accomplish this task, the following activities were undertaken: stimulating the elderly to participate in public life; building a positive image of the elderly in society, promoting and strengthening integration and intergenerational cooperation.<sup>27</sup> Intergenerational integration is particularly important because seniors and young people are necessary for each other. This issue is highlighted by the American sociologist G. Bosard, stating that „family relationships include not only what parents convey to their children and children to each other, but also what children can pass to parents and grandchildren to their grandparents. These intergenerational „gifts” include: enriching and strengthening intra-family ties, emotional satisfaction that permeates the whole of family life, the possibility of retrospection and a return to a beautiful, lived stages, a chance to control and correct the development of personality of a young person, and a deeper understanding of processes life and meaning of life. For the elderly, not only children but also grandchildren, sometimes even to a greater extent, can be a source of diverse, positive emotions and interests. For them, grandfather or grandmother is a life teacher, a wise educator, a reliable guardian.”<sup>28</sup>

As part of the presentation of goals and tasks for seniors in Tarnów, a street probe was carried out in December 2018. The topic of the survey concerned the needs of seniors, which should be taken by local authorities. The survey took into account the elderly (seniors). The survey shows several important conclusions conditioning the expectations of older people, which may constitute strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats of the implemented senior policy. Tarnów’s seniors expect:

- rehabilitation and therapeutic classes;
- help in loneliness – conducting activating classes in comfortable, peer groups, because, for seniors, social contacts are very important, including how they define themselves, meeting new people;

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<sup>27</sup> The Action Program for the Elderly in the City of Tarnów for the years 2015 – 2020 adopted the nature of forward-looking and prognostic activities that allow us to outline the implementation of defined priorities. *Action Program for the Elderly in the City of Tarnów for the years 2015–2020*, Resolutions No. XVIII / 178/2015 of the City Council in Tarnów of November 26, 2015, Tarnów 2015, pp. 29–32 (pdf document).

<sup>28</sup> Quote after: A. Zych, *Man and old age. Sketches in social gerontology*, Katowice 1999, pp. 61–62.

- most activation classes should be free (low pension), and if the fee is already charged, it is symbolic;
- help in managing free time;
- seniors want to act for the benefit of others, therefore they expect volunteering opportunities for the elderly and for the elderly, e.g. in the form of a time bank (parish, clubs, self-help groups);
- pro-family activities – make sure that such activities are carried out in each housing estate, in proportion to the number of seniors living there;
- a significant proportion of seniors remain in the home environment is socially passive – increase the pressure on the activation of these people (family, social worker as well as nurses and community care workers, assistance leader);
- better and easier access to doctors – specialists;
- adjusting the division of the senior policy in the 60+ and 80+ ranges.

Seniors also pointed to several shortcomings related to their people in Tarnów, including:

- lack of developed standards for people after hospital treatment;
- permanent lack of care in the place of residence;
- no possibility of stationary rehabilitation;
- deficit of personal caregivers (presence and conversation);
- lack of help for the family in bearing the disease (professional balance, social roles) on the part of local authorities;
- no stationary hospices.

This last provision is a threat in the area of external factors posing the greatest danger to the implemented senior policy in Tarnów. Against the backdrop of shortcomings in carrying out the senior citizens policy in Tarnów, it is worth taking into consideration that a nation-wide senior citizen policy has been implemented to various extents, depending largely on the self-government resources within a given administrative unit. Nevertheless, the framework of the senior citizen policy in Poland constitutes an element within the network of social and institutional services provided for elderly dependent persons. The programme *Social Policy for Older People 2030. Security. Solidarity. Participation* published on 30 November 2018 indicated—as part of senior citizen policy – the elimination of architectural barriers in the places of residence of the elderly, the provision of opportunities to rent equipment to assist senior citizens with independent living, and the adjustment of the needs regarding geriatrics and rehabilitation,



including post-hospitalisation care. The emphasis was placed on the standardisation of assistance and care services within the family home environment, as well as on the need to provide domestic, daily, and 24-hour support. With regard to the above, the employment of qualified staff was also underscored as important. Additionally, there are indications of the demand for experts and professionals in coordinating the activity of healthcare and social assistance systems, particularly for senior citizens deficient in independence. The recommendation of the programme provides an answer for the senior citizens of Tarnów who worry about the implementation of a future-oriented social policy.<sup>29</sup>

## 6. End

Local government authorities in Tarnów take many valuable and good initiatives for the benefit of seniors. This is demonstrated by the cafeteria of activities undertaken by social self-government institutions, non-governmental organizations, religious associations (church), and other economic entities (enterprises and business). Social policy implemented in many areas appears to be dynamic and focused on personnel activities, i.e. for the citizen. Many activities are carried out in a local environment. Tarnów seniors, aware of care and support, integrate with their activities on many levels.

The image of Tarnów seniors conditioned by their social life is not a monolith without cracks. Adjusting individual social policies seems a difficult task. And although shortcomings in this area will always exist, the conclusion of the analysis seems to be the thought of T. Parsons, who warns against the structural isolation of seniors and the elderly from professional, family and local ties. Therefore, extending the period of activity and creative life, maintaining health, the ability to work, moving old age to an even later time is not only an important life task of every human being, but above all the task of the social policy of the state and in it each local government.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Polish Monitor, *Social policy towards the elderly 2030. Security – participation – solidarity*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 66–70.

<sup>30</sup> A. Zych, *Man and old age. Sketches in social gerontology*, Katowice 1999, p. 97.

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