

ENGAGING SENIOR CITIZENS AND YOUTH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article presents the current situation of senior citizens in Lithuania, and ways to involve them in the development of society. About a fifth of European Union (EU) citizens are considered to be senior citizens (65 years or older). The growing number of older people presupposes micro and macro problems in society. The micro problems are the loneliness of the elderly and the lack of social participation. The macro problems include social security issues: pensions, health care and social services. All EU countries are facing the challenge of an ageing society and demographic change. The results of the study 'Community Senior Citizens Involved International presented in Stripes revealed: 1) existing best practices for the inclusion of senior citizens; 2) social issues related to the exclusion of senior citizens; 3) ideas on intergenerational solidarity by involving senior citizens and young people in joint activities. The results are likely to contribute to the development of youth attitudes towards ageing and strategies to reduce the gap between generations.

KEY WORDS: ageing, inclusion, generation gap.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje pristatoma vyresnio amžiaus piliečių padėtis Lietuvoje ir būdai, kaip juos įtraukti į visuomenės vystymosi procesą. Beveik penktadalis Europos Sąjungos (ES) piliečių laikomi senjorais (65 metų ar vyresni). Augantis vyresnio amžiaus gyventojų skaičius lemia visuomenės mikro- ir makroproblemas. Mikroproblema – senų ir pagyvenusių žmonių vienetė, socialinio dalyvavimo stoka. Makroproblema – socialinės išlaidos pensijoms, sveikatos apsaugai, socialinėms paslaugoms. Senėjančios visuomenės ir demografinių pokyčių iššūkių kyla visoms ES šalims. Straipsnyje pristatomi tyrimo „Bendruomenės senjorai, dalyvaujantys tarptautinėje veikloje“ rezultatai atskleidė: 1) esamą geriausią senjorų įtraukties praktiką; 2) socialines problemas, kurios susijusios su senjorų atskirtimi; 3) kartų solidarumo supratimą, įtraukiant senjorus ir jaunimą į bendrą veiklą. Rezultatai galimai pasitarnaus modeliuojant jaunimo požiūrį į senėjimą ir kuriant kartų atotrūkio mažinimo strategijas. PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: senėjimas, integracija, kartų atotrūkis.

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Introduction

To start with, in terms of definitions, it should be noted that there is no universal understanding of what constitutes being young or old (senior), as it depends on the geographical location. The senior citizen label is quite often given to people who have reached retirement age. As the Finnish Centre for Pensions (FCFP) suggests, in most EU member states, the usual retirement age is 65 years. Therefore, on the whole, in this analysis, a senior citizen is seen as a person aged 65 or over, unless

specified otherwise. The definition of a young person is also rather vague, but in this analysis it will be largely based on the Youth in Action (YIA) programme, which suggests that a young person is any person under 30 years old.

According to Statistics Lithuania, at the beginning of this century, more than 20% of the population of Lithuania was 60 years old and older. If current demographic trends remain, it is predicted that by 2030 the share of senior citizens will have reached over 27%. These facts point to the inevitable conclusion that the increasing size of the ageing population will have a huge impact on the development of Lithuania, meaning that, with the ageing of society, more attention will be paid to the quality of life of older people, since it is this group of people that will undoubtedly influence the general standard of living in the country. Moreover, the ever-growing rate of emigration and the dramatically reducing numbers of newborns also imply that the population of young people in Lithuania is shrinking, which results in more onerous burdens for middle-aged people.

Therefore, one of the crucial challenges that Lithuania needs to confront is the implementation of fundamental structural reforms at social, educational, cultural and economic levels, so that the gap between the old and the young is bridged, leading to the greatly reduced social exclusion of senior citizens. As a result, this paper seeks to discuss the trends in the ageing of the population in Lithuania, aiming to provide ideas on the involvement of senior citizens and youth in community development, and creating a basis for developing a programme on social inclusion.

1. Methodology

The method of the current analysis is based on a qualitative-quantitative approach. In order to find out the most acute social problems relating to the exclusion of senior citizens, a questionnaire was designed and distributed among Lithuanian citizens. In total, 158 respondents answered the survey, 30 of whom (19%) were young people (under 30 years old) and 72 (46%) were senior citizens. The gender and age of the respondents show that there are more women than men among senior citizens: 66 respondents were elderly women, which constitutes 92% of the total senior citizen responses, and six respondents were men, constituting 8% of the senior citizen respondents. Interestingly enough, the share of males is completely outnumbered by females in all the other age groups too, which implies that the proportion of women in Lithuania's population is much greater than that of men. This is also true when talking about middle-aged people. In fact, according to the World Bank (ILOSTAT), Lithuania is the only country in Europe to regularly have more women than men in its workforce: the percentage is currently 50%, and it is larger than for any other European or Western country.

The labour market in Lithuania is very diverse, and ranges from lower positions to high-powered jobs. No wonder the absolute majority (67%) of young people aged 18 to 29 are students, which is why they do not work. A total of 10% of young respondents have lower positions in the job market (e.g. they work as social/youth workers), but, surprisingly enough, 20% of the youth respondents claim to have high-powered jobs (e.g. they define themselves as leaders or businessmen).

In the middle-aged group (aged 30 to 64), the majority of people in Lithuania have lower positions (e.g. librarians, workers, social/youth workers, workers in private clinics). A similar share of middle-aged people (around 20%) have high-powered jobs (e.g. leaders or businessmen), or are pensioners. The latter fact does not come as a surprise, since at the time the questionnaire was distributed, in 2020, the pensionable age for men was 64, while women's pensionable age was 63. A total of 8% of middle-aged people fall into the category of specialists (most define themselves as accountants).

Among senior citizens, it is no surprise that the dominant occupation (93%) is being a pensioner, which in the main coincides with the status of being unemployed. Only an extremely small number of senior citizens in Lithuania (7% to be precise) are actually involved in work activities: 3% are specialists (mainly in the medical industry), and 4% work as leaders or heads. The medical aspect here should not be ignored: it may actually imply that with age, people start paying more attention to health, as health problems become rather pressing at an older age.

Importantly enough, it should be highlighted that even though senior citizens are the most educated people in Lithuania, their share of the percentage in high-powered jobs is the lowest among all the age groups. This may not only be because of health problems preventing them from doing an important job with many weighty responsibilities. It might also be related to the history of Lithuania: all senior citizens in Lithuania were educated when the country belonged to the Soviet Union, so it is no surprise that older people have outdated skills and desperately need to update them to have more work opportunities in the job market. As a result, the implementation of modern social, educational, cultural and economic programmes for senior citizens is of profound importance.

2. The situation of senior citizens in Lithuania

Lithuania is facing three key issues these days which are common all over Europe, namely, 1) increasing life expectancy; 2) a low birth rate; 3) the greying of the baby-boom generation. All these issues lead to the inescapable conclusion

that older people make up an increasingly large proportion of the population in Lithuania.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the life span in Lithuania has been steadily increasing (see Table 1). This statement also finds support in recent research by Eurostat (PSA), where it is claimed that the increase in the share of the population aged 65 years or over between 2008 and 2018 in Lithuania is 2.8%, which is the average in all the European Union. Birth rates, on the other hand, remain dismally low: after a slight rise in 2005 to 2009, the birth rate has shown a strong tendency to go down (see Table 2), resulting in a negative value regarding natural population change (see Table 3). These statements and the tables below show that increasing longevity and low birth rates speak of the fact that older people make up a significant share of the total population in Lithuania.

Table 1. Life expectancy in Lithuania

Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019	2020
Life expectancy	70.82	71.73	72.71	74.65	75.65	75.80	75.95

Source: United Nations (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects. Lithuania Life Expectancy 1950–2020. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/LTU/lithuania/life-expectancy> [accessed on 17 April 2020].

Table 2. The number of newborns in Lithuania

Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Number of newborns	34,149	30,541	30,676	31,475	28,149

Source: Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas), population and social statistics, population, fertility, natural population change (Natūrali gyventojų kaita). https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-44_en#_ednref2 [accessed on 17 April 2020].

Table 3. Natural population change (increase / decrease) in Lithuania

Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Population change	-4,770	-13,258	-9,867	-10,301	-11,425

Source: Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas): Population and social statistics, population, fertility, natural population change (Natūrali gyventojų kaita). https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-44_en#_ednref2 [accessed on 17 April 2020].

In addition to this, recent studies on the total number of people in Lithuania show the greying of the baby-boom generation (the generation that is most often defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, in the postwar baby boom):

the number of older people has been steadily increasing in the country for almost 20 years (see Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of population by age at the beginning of the year

Year	Total population (number of people)	Under 14	15–64	65 and more
2019	2,794,184	15.1	65.1	19.8
2015	2,921,262	14.6	66.7	18.7
2010	3,141,976	15.0	67.7	17.3
2005	3,355,220	17.1	67.1	15.8
2002	3,454,637	19.0	66.5	14.5

Source: Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas): Population and social statistics, population and its composition, resident population at the beginning of the year (Nuolatinių gyventojų skaičius metų pradžioje). https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-44_en [accessed on 16 April 2020].

The table above also shows that the total population of Lithuania is rapidly shrinking, from 3.5 million people in 2002 to only 2.8 million in 2019, which means that Lithuania has lost more than half a million people in the last 20 years.

Regarding the composition of the population of senior citizens in Lithuania, there are more women than men: males constitute 34% of senior citizens, and women 66%, which, according to Eurostat (AE), is the case all over Europe. The division between males and females seems to be quite stable: it has not changed much during the last decade.

3. Ageing in Lithuania

There are three key factors indicating whether society is ageing or not: 1) the median age, 2) the ageing index, and 3) the dependency ratio or age-dependency ratio. Starting with the first, the median age is the age that divides a population into two numerically equal-sized groups, i.e., half the people are younger than this age and half are older. It is a single index that summarises the age distribution of a specific population. Countries with a lower median age tend to have higher population growth rates, whereas an increasing median age shows that a population is ageing fast. In Lithuania, at the beginning of 2019, the median age of the population was 44 years (for men 40 years, for women 47), i.e., five years longer than at the beginning of 2009 (for men four years, for women five). Interestingly enough, at the beginning of 2019, the median age of men was seven years shorter than that of women (at the beginning of 2009, it was six years), which supports the fact mentioned above that there are more older women than men in the country. Last

but not least, it should be noted that the median age in Lithuania is very high: according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Lithuania's median age in 2018 took 15th position out of 228 countries around the world. One more significant factor used to indicate whether society is ageing or not is the ageing index. This refers to the number of elderly persons of an age when they are generally economically inactive (aged 65 and older) per 100 persons younger than 15 years old in a specific population. This index increases as the population ages, i.e., the higher the index, the more elderly people there are in a specific population. In Lithuania, the ageing index tends to grow, even though its growth seemed to slow down after 2015 (which might be because of finance-related events that year, e.g. Lithuania joined the Eurozone, it was classified as an advanced economy by the International Monetary Fund, etc). What is more, Lithuania's ageing index remains relatively high in comparison with other European countries, according to Eurostat (AI). See the increase of the ageing index in Lithuania in Figure 1 below.

Last but not least, the dependency ratio focuses on separating those of working age (between the ages of 15 and 64) from those of non-working age. It is a measure of the number of dependents aged zero to 14 and over the age of 65 in comparison with the total population aged 15 to 64. In Lithuania, the dependency ratio is rather high: in the last decade it has been gradually increasing, and seems to have been stable only in the last few years. A low dependency ratio means that there

Number of elderly (aged 65 and older) persons per 100 children (aged 0–14), beginning of the year

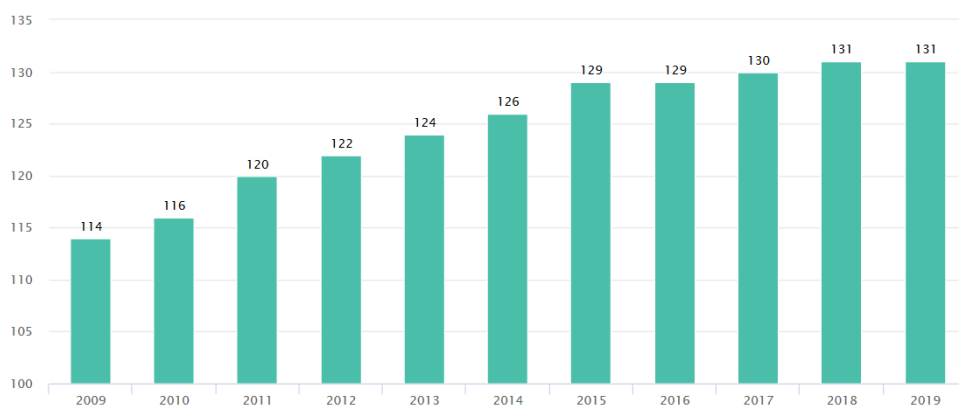


Fig. 1. The ageing index in Lithuania, 2009–2019

Source: Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas): The ageing index at the beginning of the year (Demografinės senatvės koeficientas metų pradžioje) <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=fbee7084-03a9-42c8-9d88-88b8c742cf3c#/> [accessed on 17 April 2020].

are sufficient people working who can support the dependent population, which means that a lower ratio could allow for better pensions and better health care for citizens. A higher ratio, as in Lithuania, indicates more financial stress on working people, and possible political instability because those of working age, and the overall economy, face a greater burden in supporting the ageing population. For more information see Figure 2.

To sum up, as in many other countries around the world, Lithuania’s population is ageing. A significant decrease in the number of young people has been noticed over the last decade, while at the same time there has been a sharp rise in the number of senior citizens as a percentage of the total population. This means that the proportion of people of working age is shrinking, while the relative number of those retired is expanding. In addition to this, the share of senior citizens in the total population is predicted to increase in the coming decades, as a greater proportion of the postwar baby-boom generation reaches retirement. This situation will, in turn, lead to an increased burden on those of working age to provide for the social expenditure required by the ageing population for a variety of related services. These important demographic changes, together with the sensitive widespread problem of emigration, have a direct impact on the whole country and its economy, which is why they should not be ignored. It is therefore, perhaps, no surprise that older people are the focus of a range of policies and programmes worldwide, in-

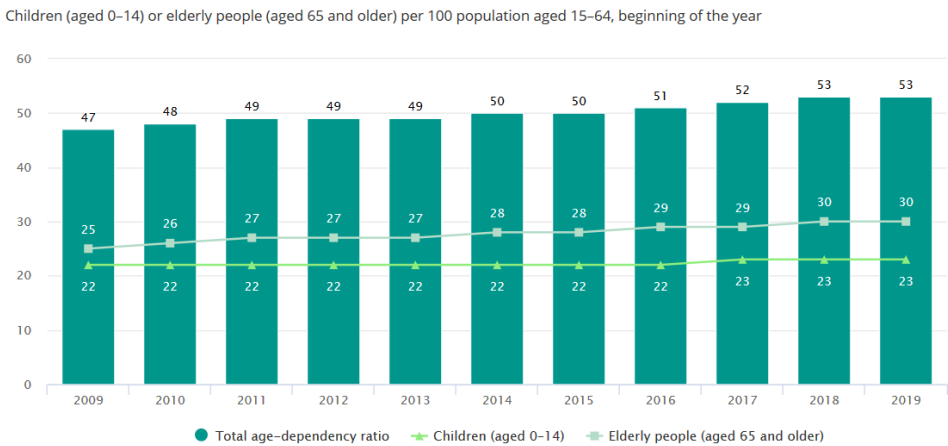


Fig. 2. Age-dependency ratios in Lithuania, 2009–2019

Source: Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos statistikos departamentas): Age-dependency ratios at the beginning of the year (Išlaikomo amžiaus žmonių koeficientai metų pradžioje). <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=2c361bfc-82ba-4c66-820e-94e7f3cfca29#/> [accessed on 17 April 2020].

cluding those concerned with discrimination, active ageing, social protection and accessibility of public services.

4. Social problems related to the exclusion of senior citizens

The main reasons why Lithuania's senior citizens face acute social problems are related to health, living conditions, losing important people, a lack of education, the character of the person, and society's attitude to the elderly. In the questionnaire, the absolute majority of respondents highlighted the fact that the most important reasons are related to health. The senior respondents said that they encounter health issues and disabilities caused by old age (75% of senior respondents) and feel the inevitable ageing process (47%). What is more, quite a number of respondents pointed out that living conditions have an influence on the problems they encounter. As many as 38% of elderly respondents claimed that their location (city, town, village, etc) might be the cause of why they feel isolated, and 33% highlighted that they live alone, which is why they feel isolated from the rest of society.

In addition to this, some elderly people also mentioned the fact that a strong feeling of social exclusion and loneliness is aroused by the fact that they have lost important people in their lives: 21% of the senior respondents claimed that their relatives had passed away, and 13% revealed that losing a husband or wife increased feelings of isolation and loneliness. This suggests that elderly people have witnessed more than one death in their life, and seeing that you gradually lose the people you love leads to a poor emotional and psychological state, this in turn might explain why some of them shut themselves away from society and are alone.

Education-related reasons should not be ignored, either. A total of 6% of elderly respondents claimed that they are not interested in self-education, or, on the whole, in anything (presumably because they have tried everything that can be experienced). Others highlighted that a lack of education and the language barrier make them feel excluded. Last but not least, other reasons causing social problems for senior citizens in Lithuania are related to a person's character (i.e., introversion, some people tend to be alone because they define themselves as introverts), and society's attitude to the elderly (for some people, sex seems to be a factor leading to exclusion, while others feel the negative outlook of society).

All the reasons mentioned above cause a variety of acute social problems related to the exclusion of senior citizens. When asked to specify the problems, the overwhelming majority of senior citizen respondents (69%) spoke of social problems. A total of 29% of the elderly pointed out that they lack entertainment, namely cultural events, leisure time activities and recreational opportunities, and 19% of senior respondents highlighted that they lack opportunities for meaningful

volunteering. It is no surprise that 68% of older respondents are eager to participate in organising leisure time activities, such as concerts, social campaigns and exhibitions. A total of 35% of older respondents expressed a willingness to contribute to art-related activities, such as painting and handicrafts, and 33% of the elderly showed an interest in contributing to volunteer campaigns. Interestingly enough, 16% are interested in contributing to sports events.

It should be stressed that senior citizens would like to contribute to all these social events, but the main problem here is that they are not aware of such social possibilities: 21% of elderly respondents claimed that they lack such information. This might also be connected to the location where elderly people live: 21% claimed that they have difficulties travelling because of limited transport. This is particularly true for people who live in remote villages or small towns in Lithuania: sparse transport networks, irregular bus schedules and rarely visiting family members increase the feeling of social exclusion.

All this data clearly shows that senior citizens feel socially isolated because they lack social inclusion programmes and activities related to culture, leisure time and volunteering. Therefore, making sure that senior citizens are visited and not forgotten (and not only by relatives or family members) in remote places, and creating social inclusion programmes for those who live in cities and promoting them appropriately, are the key in combating the severe social problems that lead to the exclusion of senior citizens nowadays.

Another large part of elderly respondents mentioned the limited employment and education possibilities. A total of 39% of older respondents pointed out that they suffer from age discrimination, i.e., they would like to work, but employers will not give them a job because they treat an older applicant or employee less favourably because of his or her age. In addition, a number of senior citizens (36%) also stressed education-related problems: the lack of educational possibilities, not knowing the local language well enough, and computer illiteracy. This suggests that the education that elderly people received in Lithuania is very outdated, since it was provided by the Soviet Union and apparently lacked Western influences. It might also provide some reasons why senior citizens keep struggling when trying to find employment in Lithuania. In a nutshell, there are a lot of problems related to work and education that senior citizens in Lithuania face, and these need to be eradicated as soon as possible, because the number of the elderly increases every day.

Other problems that lead to the exclusion of senior citizens are health and personal problems. A total of 22% of older respondents stressed that they have limited possibilities to use health care institutions. It is no surprise that there are always long queues in Lithuanian clinics and hospitals: astronomically expensive private health institutions and a lack of specialists in state medical centres have created li-

limited possibilities for senior citizens to get the medical care and support they need. Importantly, it should be stressed that one respondent revealed that depression is the main problem that he or she faces. Therefore, more attention should be paid to senior citizens' medical care, and their well-being should be taken very seriously, as a bad physical and psychological (emotional) state leads to unhappiness, frustration, and eventually feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Last but not least, some elderly respondents (3%) pointed out that they have certain life difficulties, but they did not reveal exactly what difficulties they have. It might be related to the previously described loss of important people in senior citizens' life. Finally, some senior citizens (3%) also said that they lack determination (motivation), which might be related to the previously discussed aspect of personality.

5. Good senior citizen inclusion practices

One good senior citizen inclusion practice in Lithuania was introduced in November 2013 when students from Utena University of Applied Sciences organised a project called 'Students for Senior Citizens and Senior Citizens for Students' to exchange knowledge between young people and senior citizens. The university students provided senior citizens with free but high-quality health care and cosmetology services, mainly because these services in Lithuania are far too expensive for old people. The students taught the elderly various massage and exercise techniques, to ensure that they stay fit even when they are old. They also checked senior citizens' blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and gave several workshops on how to take care of oral hygiene. All this was done to show that taking good care of one's health is important for everyone, the young and the old.

In addition, female students showed the elderly how to make old clothes look stylish and fashionable, i.e., how to change them so that they look new. What is more, the students also shared some tips on how to become familiar with modern technology, so that senior citizens who wanted to improve their computer literacy skills had a great chance to do so with the help of young people who are so deeply interested in modern technology. In return, the elderly shared their personal stories with the students, and gave them a lot of useful advice from their own experience. Read the following website for more information on this practice¹.

Another good senior citizen inclusion practice was introduced at Klaipėda State University of Applied Sciences in February 2020. University students invited senior citizens to go back to the times when Klaipėda was the capital of Prussia. The

¹ <https://www.delfi.lt/pilietis/naujienos/studentai-ir-seniorai-ieskojo-bendros-kalbos.d?id=63233984> [accessed on 20 April 2020].

students organised a theatrical performance and dressed like Frederick William II and his wife Louisa to show how the city was run by these two important historical figures. After the performance, the elderly had a chance to try virtual reality headsets, which was particularly important for those people who had physical disabilities (e.g. physical impairment, using a wheelchair, etc), and could not walk around the city on their own; in this way, they were given an opportunity to see places they had never seen before. Interestingly enough, the youngsters who introduced this practice were second-year tourism students, so the event was of particular importance to them too, since they had a chance to be guides for the elderly, and to tell them as much as they knew about their city. Read the following website for more information on this practice².

6. Tools and methodologies for social inclusion

As a small young country with continuously rising rates of emigration, Lithuania has not yet developed its own tools and methodologies for teaching youth workers about the involvement of senior citizens. Therefore, it must adopt tools and methodologies from other countries where they seem to function well. One of the best sources of information about the available tools and methodologies for teaching youth workers about involving senior citizens is the United Nations, of which Lithuania became a member soon after it regained independence. According to the United Nations, all member states should incorporate the following principles into their national programmes: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity. As a member of the United Nations, Lithuania is able to follow these principles, and, by doing so, will ensure that the appropriate and necessary social programmes are created, enabling senior citizens to participate actively in social life, and at the same time providing more opportunities for youth to be involved in different activities with the elderly.

As a result, programmes that seek to reduce social isolation by providing an opportunity for the development of one-to-one relationships between senior citizens and youth are very important. Two of the most adaptable one-to-one programmes are: 1) befriending (it generally involves either home visiting or telephone contact with a volunteer or member of staff), and 2) mentoring (it is more goal-oriented than befriending). It should be highlighted that the friendly disposition and good social skills of a matched friend are of great importance in one-to-one programmes, and reliability and regularity of contact should be guaranteed, as random visits are not effective.

² <https://www.delfi.lt/miestai/klaipeda/studentu-dovana-seniorams-pasivaiksciojimas-po-karaliu-laiku-klaipeda.d?id=83597881> [accessed on 20 April 2020].

Counselling or psychotherapeutic programmes are aimed at addressing an existing problem and stopping it becoming more serious. Counselling does not target social exclusion per se, but it addresses risk factors related to social isolation, such as depression or the experience of loss. Counselling can be provided only by a very skilled person, preferably a professional therapist.

Connecting via the internet and internet training programmes appear to be very cost-effective. The internet works as a way for senior citizens to communicate inexpensively, frequently and easily with family and friends, regardless of the distance, as well as a means to meet new friends who have similar interests. However, many senior citizens are not familiar with or comfortable using the internet and other new technologies. Therefore, some special training might be needed before starting to implement these programmes. For example, youth workers could provide initial training on how to use modern technologies for those who may be struggling.

Volunteering appears to be a very good and interactive way of promoting the involvement of senior citizens in social activities. Importantly enough, older adults who volunteer experience increased feelings of self-confidence and self-worth, strong feelings of purpose and meaning in life, and feelings of connection with the community and contribution to society. However, volunteering should be done very carefully, and only meaningful volunteer opportunities should be provided. Volunteer engagement should include some form of social interaction, and ensure that volunteers are recognised for their input.

Intergenerational programmes are specifically created to engage older adults and the younger generations in the same programme, with a mutually beneficial result. Intergenerational programming is very diverse, and includes a wide variety of activities, such as home maintenance, help with housework, a delivery service for senior citizens, community projects, choirs, art groups, etc. There are four main types of intergenerational programme: 1) older people helping youth (e.g. help with housework), 2) youth helping older people (e.g. home maintenance), 3) older people and youth collaborating to help their community (e.g. a community project), and 4) older people and youth engaging together in educational or social activities (e.g. choir). These intergenerational tools reduce negative stereotypes and attitudes of both senior citizens and younger generations, decrease social isolation, and increase personal and social development, thus contributing to the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

Last but not least, programmes to increase personal capacity and economic self-sufficiency are aimed at low-income senior citizens, to increase their income or decrease their expenses, as that may indirectly prevent social isolation. For example, helping low-income senior citizens obtain benefits or transfer payments

to which they are entitled but not receiving, or reducing medical costs, may free up the means to increase social engagement and more active participation in social life. These programmes include the following tools: 1) financial literacy programmes (teaching senior citizens the skills to manage their personal finances), 2) home sharing (an arrangement between two unrelated people to share a living space to their mutual benefit), 3) home maintenance and home improvement (combating the limited resources and physical barriers of senior citizens to create a pleasant living environment for them), 4) time banking (this is a scheme by which people earn credits by spending time helping others, either member-to-member or in community service projects), 5) food delivery (providing adequate resources for proper nutrition that leads to the health and well-being of older adults).

All the above-mentioned tools and methodologies are highly adaptable. Therefore, even though Lithuania is a small and young country, which has not developed its own tools and methodologies, it is still able to use the ideas suggested by the United Nations in order to teach youth workers about the involvement of senior citizens. This would help reduce social exclusion, and, naturally, increase social inclusion, closing the gap between the two generations, youths and senior citizens.

7. Ideas on how best to engage senior citizens and youth

The research showed that the main occupation of senior citizens is being a pensioner, which implies that the majority do not work and have quite a lot of free time. This time could be used for various activities which may bring youths and senior citizens together. However, these activities do not seem to be very popular in Lithuania with members of either group. Among youths, only 23% had participated in youth-senior activities. Among senior citizens, the situation is slightly better: 52% of senior respondents claimed that they had been involved in such activities.

On the whole, respondents evinced an avid interest in youth-senior activities. Among youth, as many as 30% of respondents would like to take part in social inclusion activities that bring youths and senior citizens together. Among senior citizens, the interest was even stronger: as many as 51% of respondents expressed a willingness to be included in social activities. Furthermore, the general tendency was that people who had tried such activities would like to participate in them again. For example, 17% of young respondents who claimed to have no interest in such activities had never tried them before. In addition, the number of people who expressed little interest in participating in social inclusion activities is quite similar in both age groups: 53% of young people were not sure about participating in social inclusion events with senior citizens, and 42% of senior citizens were not certain about taking part in social inclusion activities with youth. This shows that,

in general, social inclusion activities for bringing youths and senior citizens together in Lithuania are regarded as a positive thing. However, since the number of people who have never participated in such activities is rather high, it is no surprise that some people, both young and old, are a little sceptical about these activities. Therefore, youth-senior activities should be highly promoted and made available to everyone, so that every person has a chance to participate in social inclusion events, and only after that to decide whether they would like to try them again or not.

When asked to specify what kind of youth-senior activities would be most interesting, young people and senior citizens had similar views. The top three activities in both age groups are leisure (e.g. events, concerts, exhibitions, conferences, etc), arts and crafts (e.g. drawing, painting, handicrafts, etc), and volunteering. An interesting tendency can be noticed when analysing religious and physical activities (e.g. sport, dancing, Nordic walking, etc): more young people are interested in sport (37%) than in religion (27%), whereas more senior citizens are interested in religion (29%) than sport (17%). Nevertheless, sport and religion still play a pivotal role, and there is a clear need to organise these activities.

Not only do respondents express a considerable interest in youth-senior activities, they also show an increased willingness to actually contribute to organising such events. The tendencies here are pretty similar to those described in the previous paragraph: only a small number of respondents (around 20%) claimed to have no willingness to contribute to the organisation of activities for youth and senior citizens, which might be related to the aforementioned reason that they have not tried any such activities, and consequently have no real understanding of them.

Volunteering is one of the top three activities that youths and senior citizens find particularly engaging and attractive, so it is no surprise that quite a number of people would agree to contribute to organising activities to bring youths and senior citizens together on a voluntary basis: 40% of young people were absolutely positive about this idea (and 43% claimed that they might consider the idea); and 36% of senior citizens also supported the idea (38% pointed out that they might consider volunteering for it). When asked to specify what activities they would like to contribute to on a voluntary basis, young people and senior citizens shared similar, but this time slightly more diverse, views. Among youth, event planning (e.g. organising a concert or a campaign, etc) and socio-cultural activities (e.g. guided tours, cultural visits, linguistic and cultural exchanges, etc) are the most engaging activities. Among senior citizens, on the other hand, community initiatives (e.g. mutual support programmes, providing help and/or information by phone or email, campaigns by art, sport, business or other common interest associations or clubs, etc), and one-to-one tutorials (e.g. educating other people on a one-to-

one basis, providing them with relevant information, etc) are the most attractive activities. However, a lot of young people also have positive views regarding one-to-one tutorials and community service, and quite a number of senior citizens like the idea of event planning and socio-cultural activities. Home visiting seems to be more popular among the young: 57% of young respondents supported the idea, while senior citizens remained more sceptical (25% of the elderly liked the idea of home visiting for volunteering). The least attractive activities for volunteering in both these age groups appeared to be organising transport (e.g. for children, patients, disabled people with physical and mobility impairments, etc), and providing personal hygiene services. This might simply be because of the fact that transport and hygiene require very specific knowledge and/or experience, and neither youths nor senior citizens feel that they have enough knowledge in these fields. Therefore, providing activities related to logistics and health should not be neglected.

The discussion in this paper shows that the most important activities to engage senior citizens and youth can be grouped into eight categories. Table 5 summarises the best ideas to engage senior citizens and youth in common activities. These ideas are examples of some activities that can be offered, in order to bring senior citizens and youth together. Most of these specific ideas were mentioned by respondents themselves, and some were included based on the available tools/methodologies when speaking about the context of Lithuania.

Table 5. Ideas on how best to engage senior citizens and youth

Type of activity	Tools / methods	Specific ideas on how to best engage senior citizens and youth
Leisure activities	1. Integrating leisure activities in programmes 2. Incorporating the United Nations principle of self-fulfilment into national programmes 3. Using group programmes, as well as one-to-one programmes	1. Events 2. Concerts 3. Exhibitions 4. Conferences 5. Cinema 6. Theatre 7. Opera
Arts and crafts	1. Integrating interest in arts and crafts to develop skills in these fields 2. Incorporating the United Nations principles of independence and Self-fulfilment into national programmes 3. Using group, one-to-one and inter-generational programmes	1. Drawing 2. Painting 3. Making handicrafts 4. Wood carving 5. Sewing 6. Knitting 7. Photography

Type of activity	Tools / methods	Specific ideas on how to best engage senior citizens and youth
Volunteering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrating interest in volunteering to show how useful it can be when solving various real life problems 2. Incorporating the United Nations principles of participation and dignity into national programmes 3. Using volunteering programmes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health care 2. Cosmetics 3. Storytelling 4. SOS Children’s Villages 5. Forest cleaning (picking up litter) 6. Tree planting 7. Animal rescue shelters 8. Guiding at national parks or city centres (old towns)
Religion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using activities that will contribute to people’s spiritual well-being 2. Incorporating the United Nations principle of self-fulfilment into national programmes 3. Using group and one-to-one programmes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Church (Mass) 2. Bible studies 3. Retreats 4. Religious festivals (feasts) 5. Meditation 6. Matrimonial services
Physical activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrating physical activity into programmes 2. Incorporating the United Nations principles of care and self-fulfilment into national programmes 3. Using group, one-to-one and inter-generational programmes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workout / exercise/ Zumba 2. Dancing (e.g. Tango etc) 3. Nordic walking 4. Aerobics 5. Swimming or diving 6. Cycling 7. Jogging or running (marathons) 8. Games (e.g. tennis, golf, etc) 9. Gardening
Intellectual activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using intellectual activities to stimulate critical thinking, logical reasoning and debates/discussions 2. Incorporating the United Nations principles of care and self-fulfilment into national programmes 3. Using group, one-to-one and inter-generational programmes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Book club 2. Poetry nights 3. Solving puzzles 4. Creating songs 5. Board games 6. Brain battle

ENGAGING SENIOR CITIZENS AND YOUTH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Type of activity	Tools / methods	Specific ideas on how to best engage senior citizens and youth
Social activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting social activities to create a sense of neighbourhood and build stronger friendships 2. Involving family members in common activities with youth and senior citizens 3. Using social activities to engage both youth and senior citizens in participatory governance 4. Incorporating the United Nations principles of independence, participation, self-fulfilment and dignity into national programmes 5. Using group, one-to-one and inter-generational programmes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family day 2. Organising a picnic with your neighbours 3. Cultural (ethno-cultural) activities 4. Historical activities 5. Museum and gallery openings 6. Meet-up groups 7. Shopping together 8. Seminars/conferences/ workshops on being an active member of society 9. Elections 10. Eating out 11. Home visiting 12. Best buddy programmes 13. Event planning activities
Others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge exchange: demonstrating your own skills to train the elderly or youth, using skill training programmes 2. Using examples to educate (e.g. using real life problems to reach target groups) 3. Incorporating the United Nations principles of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity into national programmes 4. Using all the tools provided by Miller et al (2015): a) programmes that identify those in need and connect them with assistance; b) group programmes; c) one-to-one programmes; d) counselling programmes; e) connecting via the internet and internet training programmes; f) volunteering; g) intergenerational programmes; h) tools to increase personal capacity and economic self-sufficiency 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooking 2. Work and travel programmes 3. Eco-friendly activities 4. Historical activities (e.g. visiting old places, buildings) 5. Teaching senior citizens IT (computer literacy) skills 6. Educating youth about the importance of health at an early age 7. Hygiene services 8. Organising transport 9. Mentoring programmes 10. Youth-senior citizen project management 11. Celebrations

Conclusions and discussion

Lithuania's population:

1. The continuously growing number of older people in Lithuania requires various social, economic and cultural changes which are vital in order to secure the further gradual development of the country. Therefore, one of the crucial challenges that Lithuania needs to meet is the implementation of fundamental structural reforms, at social, educational, cultural and economic levels, so that the gap between the old and the young is bridged, resulting in the greatly reduced social exclusion of senior citizens.
2. Lithuania is facing three key issues which are common all over Europe, namely 1) increasing longevity (life expectancy), 2) low birth rates, and 3) the greying of the baby-boom generation. All these issues lead to the inescapable conclusion that older people make up an increasingly large proportion of the population.
3. There are three key factors indicating whether society is ageing or not: 1) the median age, 2) the ageing index, and 3) the dependency ratio, or age-dependency ratio. All these indices in Lithuania are high, which clearly shows that Lithuania's population is ageing. This means that the proportion of people of working age is shrinking, while the relative number of those retired is expanding.
4. The situation of senior citizens in Lithuania:
5. The ageing of the Lithuanian population is proportional, i.e. when the proportion of children shrinks, the proportion of older people grows correspondingly.
6. Regarding the composition of the population of senior citizens in Lithuania, there are more women than men: males constitute 34% of senior citizens, and women 66%.
7. Even though senior citizens are the most educated people in Lithuania, their share of the percentage in high-powered jobs is the smallest among all the age groups.
8. The main reasons why Lithuania's senior citizens face acute social problems are related to health, living conditions, losing important people, a lack of education, a person's character, and society's attitude to the elderly.

Tools and methodologies:

1. According to the United Nations, all member states should incorporate the following principles into their national programmes: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

2. Another methodology leads to the contribution of youth to the involvement of senior citizens in social activities. This methodology is based on the following tools: 1) programmes that identify those in need and connect them with assistance; 2) group programmes; 3) one-to-one programmes; 4) counselling programmes; 5) connecting via the internet and internet training programmes; 6) volunteering; 7) intergenerational programmes; 8) tools to increase personal capacity and economic self-sufficiency.
3. All the above-mentioned tools and methodologies are highly adaptable. Therefore, even though Lithuania is a small and young country, which has not developed its own tools and methodologies, it is still able to use the ideas suggested by the United Nations in order to teach youth workers about the involvement of senior citizens. This would help reduce social exclusion and, naturally, increase social inclusion, closing the gap between the two generations, youths and senior citizens.

Ideas to promote social inclusion:

1. In general, social inclusion activities to bring youths and senior citizens together in Lithuania are regarded as a positive thing. However, since the number of people who have never participated in such activities is rather high, it is no surprise that some people, both young and old, are a little sceptical about these activities. Therefore, youth-senior activities should be promoted and made available to everyone, so that every person has a chance to participate in social inclusion events, and only after that decide whether or not they would like to try them again.
2. The most important activities to engage senior citizens and youth can be grouped into eight categories: 1) leisure, 2) arts and crafts, 3) volunteering, 4) religion, 5) physical activities, 6) intellectual activities, 7) social activities, and 8) others. These activities can be implemented in Lithuania by following the principles proposed by the United Nations.

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