

SENIOR POLICY IN OSTRÓW WIELKOPOLSKI

The authorities of Ostrów Wielkopolski, aware of the challenges associated with an aging population and the increasing role that seniors play in a social life, have taken a number of system policy initiatives related to older citizens. The aim of these actions is mainly to engage and activate senior inhabitants in the society, to create conditions for active ageing and to ensure a dignified and fulfilling life for older people. It is worth noting that, in this field, the Town and Commune of Ostrów Wielkopolski had been noticed at national level. In 2016 we received a prestigious award for actions directed to seniors from “Coalition for Senior – friendly Municipalities”. In 2016 Ostrów Wielkopolski was accepted to the prestigious Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities of the World Health Organization.

Ostrów Wielkopolski (POLAND) is one of the biggest towns in the south part of Greater Poland – it counts close to 72 thousands inhabitants. 23 % of its, close to 17 000 inhabitants, are over 60 years old. The framework for the functioning of seniors were defined in the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Town 2015-2020, which contains a separate chapter entitled “Human Capital: age – friendly town”.

Among initiatives undertaken in Ostrów Wielkopolski are the Program "Senior's Card" that offers a system of discounts for senior citizens. In Ostrów Wielkopolski, as one of the first towns in Greater Poland, was established the Town Council of Seniors - an advisory body of the authorities of the town in the field of the senior policy. Also in Ostrów

Wielkopolski, as one of the first cities in Poland, was opened Day Care Centre Senior + dedicated to inhabitants over 60 years old. A very important role in the senior policy has also the University of the Third Age. Its aim is, among other, to deepen the knowledge of older citizens, and to offer a rich program of activities for them.

The authorities of the town do not forget about public health programs. As example of such action may serve free influenza vaccination program, dedicated to seniors. The program is financed from the town budget. It is worth highlighting that the "Tele – Care Program" allows seniors to call for medical help by using "bracelet of life". Outside gyms (founded from town budget), located in different parts of the town, contribute to improvement of senior's health too.

An interesting project that is going to be implemented in Ostrów Wielkopolski is "Senior Time Bank". It consists in mutual, free provision of services by senior. We believe that the project will contribute to even greater activation of older citizens in our town. Noteworthy is also the approach of the authorities of the town to local transport. According to the philosophy of the authorities of Ostrów Wielkopolski, available and cheap transport is a key factor in aging of the society. In Ostrów Wielkopolski public transport is free for people 70 +; the routes are operated mainly by low-floor buses. In addition, bus stops are located at key locations for seniors and are equipped with benches and shelters to protect against bad weather conditions.

Ostrów Wielkopolski is friendly and open city for various social groups, regardless of age and life - position, including seniors. All initiatives aim to activate and encourage people 60 plus to lead more active life and to enjoy the cultural and sports offer of the town. All the assumptions developed by the town – in our opinion – have been achieved. This is reflected above all in a high number of participants of programs and in their strong interest.