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ORIGINAL PAPER
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CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL PUBLIC POLICIES RELATED TO THE AGEING POPULATION. EXPERIENCE FROM POLAND

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ABSTRACT

Motives: The rapid process of population aging poses significant challenges for local public administration, requiring a reorientation of existing public policies. While many regions face demographic shifts, the Opolskie Voivodeship (NUTS 2, Poland) serves as a critical case study due to the particular intensity of its demographic changes. Despite the growing importance of this issue, there is a lack of comprehensive qualitative data regarding how local governments operationalize aging policies across various sectors of public life.
Aim: The primary objective of this paper is to identify and analyze the measures taken by regional public administration to address the needs of older people and the broader challenges of an aging society. The study focuses on evaluating activities across several key areas: health and care services, leisure, education, economic security and activation, housing, public space, volunteering, transport accessibility, and access to administrative services.
Results: Based on in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted in a representative sample of 64 local government units in the Opolskie Voivodeship, the research provides a detailed map of local policy responses to aging. The findings, derived from the 2022–2023 DELTA grant from the Rector of the Opole University of Technology entitled Local government facing the challenges of an aging society – analysis on the example of the Opolskie Voivodeship and The impact of seniors' councils on the activation of seniors in the Opole Voivodeship, reveal the extent to which local authorities integrate the needs of seniors into their strategic agendas. The results highlight both well-developed areas, such as leisure and activation through senior councils, and significant gaps in sectors like specialized housing and transport accessibility, offering a foundation for optimizing future regional social policies.

Keywords: ageing, local policy, senioral policy, co-production, public services

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INTRODUCTION

Population ageing is an inevitable result of a long-term decline in fertility and mortality rates observed worldwide. However, Europe's fertility rate, which has remained below the replacement rate for several decades, and the world's greatest progress in extending human life expectancy mean that Europe's population is not only the oldest in the world, but will also remain the oldest in the world. It is estimated that 30% of people in Europe will be at least 65 years old by 2070; currently the figure is around 20%. At the same time, the share of the oldest people, i.e. those aged 80 and over, will increase significantly. It will more than double by 2070 to reach 13% (Eurostat, 2026).

European countries vary in terms of the severity of their ageing populations. UN and Eurostat population prognoses indicate that this process will be particularly intense in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with Poland being among the leaders in this transformation of the population age structure. Currently, the share of people aged 65+ is around 21% and is projected to be almost 33% in 2050. At the same time, a process of double ageing is very clearly taking place, i.e. the share of people aged 80+ is increasing at a faster rate than the senior population as a whole. In 2050, the share of people 80+ will exceed 10%.

Such demographic changes have wide-ranging socio-economic implications. They affect the future of social and health care systems, housing and infrastructure needs, the capacity of public budgets and many other areas. The significant increase in the share of older people thus poses a challenge for national and local development policies. A special role in this regard is played by local public policy makers, who are faced with a number of tasks aimed at creating appropriate living conditions for older people.

The theoretical framework of this article is based on a triad comprising three complementary concepts: the theory of the second demographic transition, the concept of active aging, and the concept of local governance. Their combined application makes it possible to understand both the causes of population aging, the desirable directions for adapting to this demographic change, and the role of local governments in this process.

The theory of the second demographic transition, developed since the 1980s, explains the demographic changes taking place in developed societies – primarily the sustained decline in fertility, changes in family structures, and shifts in family life patterns – as the result of profound sociocultural transformations (van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe, 2007). In the context of population aging, this theory suggests that this process is not only the result of increased life expectancy but, above all, a consequence of fertility rates remaining below the replacement level for an extended period. It thus serves as an important tool for interpreting the causes of contemporary population aging and its long-term social and economic consequences (Harper, 2023; Marois et al., 2020; Sobotka et al., 2020).

The concept of active aging is one of the main pillars of senior policy in developed countries. It shifts the focus from viewing old age as a period of passivity and dependence to treating it as a stage of continued activity, development, and social participation (Walker, 2002; Walker & Malby, 2012). It thus indicates how to respond to the aging of society by promoting the health, independence, and social and civic engagement of older adults, and by ensuring appropriate support and safety for older people (World Health Organization, 2002).

The concept of local governance, on the other hand, allows for an analysis of the institutional dimension of responding to population aging. It emphasizes the importance of local governments as entities responsible for identifying the needs of older adults, adapting public services to demographic changes, and creating conditions conducive to active aging (Fernandes et al., 2021; Santinha et al., 2023). It highlights, among other things, the development of accessible transportation, the removal of architectural barriers, the organization of long-term care, and the promotion of social engagement among older adults. This concept also underscores the importance of collaboration

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between local authorities, civil society organizations, and older adults themselves in the process of co-creating senior policy.

The combination of these three perspectives creates a coherent analytical framework for studying the challenges associated with an aging population. The theory of the second demographic transition explains the sources of this process, the concept of active aging points to the desired course of action, while local governance allows for an analysis of the mechanisms for implementing these actions at the local level.

The aim of this paper is to identify measures taken to address the needs of older people and the challenges of an ageing society faced by local public administration. The analysis is based on the experience of one European region (Poland, Opolskie Voivodeship, NUTS 2 region), in which the process of demographic change, especially the ageing of the population, is particularly intensified.

The research results come from a DELTA grants from the Rector of the Opole University of Technology entitled Local government facing the challenges of an aging society – analysis on the example of the Opolskie Voivodeship and The impact of seniors' councils on the activation of seniors in the Opole Voivodeship implemented in the period 2022–2023. This work was financially supported by the Opole University of Technology under DELTA projects no. 141/22 and 142/22.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Senior policy

For the first time, the decisive role of the state as a policy maker for older people was recognised in France in the 1960s, when the Scientific Commission on Old Age Problems, established by the French government, published the report Politique de la vieillesse. Senior policy can generally be defined as a system of measures taken within the framework of state social policy, aimed at people of retirement age and their families. In general, the policy is aimed at meeting the needs of older people and the ageing community, whether it is a policy on old age, older people or ageing. The subject matter of this policy covers three groups of people: a) seniors (this age may be defined differently in different countries); b) people approaching the age of seniority; c) all those who will be seniors in the future (Zych, 2019).

Senior policy should be understood in a broad sense, i.e. as a set of measures taken throughout a person's life, leading to ensuring conditions for long--term professional and social activity and independent, healthy and secure living for older people (Czech et al., 2020). When defining social policy towards older people, M. Maier stated that it is important to put special focus on the measures taken by public entities, as these should be directly related to meeting the needs of seniors (Maier, 2015).

Senior policy should increasingly address issues related to contemporary challenges, such as: the impact of climate change on the health and quality of life of older adults, the use of smart technologies, the digitization of public and commercial services, food security, and combating energy poverty among older adults. However, these issues are analyzed selectively rather than comprehensively (Klemens et al., 2025).

Analysis related to the impact of population ageing on the development of local communities is relatively poorly recognised in the literature. In the context of an ageing population, the following relationship have been analysed: a) local infrastructure challenges by local government located in rural and metropolitan areas (O'Brien, 2014); b) the subjective perception of well-being of older people (Saito et al., 2016); c) local and national government policies (Almeida, 2018); d) different models of public service delivery in municipalities (Supromin & Choonhakhlai, 2017).

In recent years, population ageing has increasingly been recognized also as a spatial and developmental challenge that significantly affects the functioning of local and regional governments. Changes in the age structure of the population influence the distribution and accessibility of public services, transport systems, housing policies, and the organization of public space. These challenges are particularly visible in peripheral

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and depopulating regions, where population ageing often coincides with the outmigration of younger residents, contributing to growing socio-spatial inequalities and increasing costs of public service provision. Contemporary studies indicate that effective responses to these challenges require the integration of senior policy with strategic planning, spatial planning, and territorial governance at both local and regional levels (Fernandes et al., 2021; Santinha et al., 2023). Increasing attention is also being devoted to the concept of age-friendly communities, according to which public spaces, transport infrastructure, housing, and social services should be designed and adapted to meet the needs of an ageing population (Biglieri & Hartt, 2023). Research further demonstrates that the preparedness of local governments for demographic change varies considerably across territories and depends on institutional capacity, strategic planning frameworks, and local development policies (Hartt & Biglieri, 2018). In this context, population ageing has become one of the key factors shaping socio-spatial development trajectories, requiring local authorities not only to expand healthcare and care services but also to adapt infrastructure, public spaces, and transport systems to the needs of older residents. Consequently, ageing is increasingly incorporated into broader debates on territorial resilience, socio-spatial cohesion, and sustainable local development.

Senior policy is implemented mainly at the national level, less often at the regional level (Cao, 2025), and is very rarely undertaken at the local level (Balachandran, 2025; Hartt & Biglieri, 2024; Maj-Waśniowska & Jedynak, 2020; Richert-Kaźmierska, 2018). More often, at the local level, local authorities undertake tasks that may aim to improve the quality of life of the elderly. One of the countries that carries out a number of tasks implemented in the context of the aging population at the local government level is Finland. However, it turns out that even in such a highly decentralized country, challenges for local government in the context of an aging population are a growing concern, due to, among other things, the costs and solvency of municipalities (Valkama & Oulasvirta, 2021).

Senior policy in Poland

Senior policy can be implemented at different levels of government: national, regional and local. In Poland, this means that senior policy can be pursued by the government (e.g. the relevant ministry), regional (departments of marshal's offices) and local (relevant representations of municipal authorities) units. Furthermore, senior policy can also be implemented effectively at the non-governmental/citizen level (e.g. through seniors councils).

In the context of an ageing population, the Polish parliament has mainly dealt with population health issues. An important policy document was adopted in 2007: National Health Programme for 2007–2015 (2007) and healthy ageing became a priority of the Polish Presidency in the EU (1 July 2011), emphasised the importance of preventive treatment and promoting health for the future society of the EU.

The origins of the Polish senior policy date back to 2012, when the Department of Senior Policy was established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The department coordinated the implementation of the Government Programme for Social Activity of Older Persons 2012–2020 (2013) and the Senior VIGOUR Multiannual Programme 2015–2020 ("Senior VIGOUR"… 2015) with its continuation with the "Senior+" Multiannual Programme 2021–2025 ("Senior+"…, 2020). The Senior Policy Council was also established in 2013. The resolution on establishing the programme named "Solidarity Across Generations." Measures aiming at increasing the economic activity of people over 50 (Resolution No. 239…, 2013) was also passed in 2013. The Senior Policy Committee was appointed in May 2014.

On 11 September 2015, the Older Persons Act was enacted, which defines an older person as a person who has reached the age of 60. It also defined the concept of senior policy as a set of measures taken by public administration bodies and other organisations and institutions to carry out tasks and initiatives shaping the conditions for dignified and healthy ageing (Act, 2015).

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In 2018, a new senior policy was announced in the form of the Social Policy for Older People 2030: Safety – Participation – Solidarity (2018). The latter document envisages the implementation of a number of measures towards older people in general as part of the following areas (Social Policy for Older People 2030: Safety – Participation – Solidarity, 2018):

1. Shaping a positive perception of old age in society.
2. Participation in community life and support for all forms of civic, social, cultural, artistic, sports and religious activities.
3. Creating conditions that make it possible to utilise the potential of older people as active participants in economic life and the labour market, adapted to their physical and mental capabilities, and family situation.
4. Health promotion, disease prevention, access to diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation.
5. Improving physical safety – counteracting the abuse and neglect of older people.
6. Creating the conditions for solidarity and intergenerational integration.
7. Measures for the education for old age (care and medical staff), before old age (society as a whole), through old age (from the youngest generation) and education in old age (older people).

Furthermore, the Social Policy for Older Persons 2030 includes, for the first time in Poland, measures aimed at dependent older people.

To date, ten pieces of information on the situation of older people in Poland have been prepared for the years 2015 to 2024, showing, among other things, the measures taken towards older people at different levels of government (Polityka Senioralna, 2026). It is important that this law does not grant older people any rights by which they can pursue claims against public authorities and is addressed to the Council of Ministers, not to older people (Czech et al., 2020).

Issues related to senior policy in Poland are not widely analyzed in major academic databases. For example, a search in the Scopus database using the keywords "senior policy" and "Poland" yields 9 results from 2018 to 2026. The research conducted has focused mainly on issues such as: how the living environment influences older adults' perception of social support (Chruściel et al., 2018); the level of burden, satisfaction, and support received among family (informal) caregivers of dependent individuals (Stojak et al., 2019); the involvement of local governments (rural and urban-rural municipalities) in the implementation of health policy programs for people aged 60+ (Augustynowicz et al., 2021); understanding how caring for elderly parents affects caregivers' subjective well-being and the pursuit of their own life goals (Szczupak, 2022); an analysis of the evaluation of measures to prevent age discrimination undertaken as part of the regional senior policy implemented in Katowice (Klimczak & Nowalska-Kapuścik, 2021); assumptions, methods, and sampling procedures of the PolSenior2 survey, which aimed to characterize the health status of older and very-old adults in Poland (Wierucki et al., 2022); an evaluation of measures implemented by central and local authorities to protect seniors from COVID-19 (Zapędowska-Kling, 2022); the support system for older adults in Poland (Bugajska, 2025); social engagement among rural seniors (Pawłowska-Mielech et al., 2026).

Local self-government has a significant position in the whole public administration system in Poland, and it is responsible for providing and managing a substantial share of public services, as well as for the economic and social development of the local communities and areas (Maj-Waśniowska & Jedynak, 2020).

It is difficult to talk about senior policy conducted at the local level, but some research on the aging population in these areas has been conducted in land, including (Maj-Waśniowska & Jedynak, 2020): implementation of local social policy (Błędowski, 2002); satisfying older people in relation to self-government (Kuś & Szwed, 2012); awareness of Polish local government units in the context of ongoing demographic changes (Richert-Kaźmierska, 2016); research covering the implementation of tasks of local government units in Poland in the conditions of demographic changes (GUS, 2018).

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Senior participation in the co-production of public services

Bloom and Canning (2004) as well as Walder and Döring (2012) noted that an ageing population is generally perceived as a burden on society, also in terms of public finances, as the increasing number of pensioners increases the degree of economic dependency. At the same time, it has been noted in Japan that the ageing of the population is becoming a basis of the silver economy and driving the economy by adapting market offerings to the needs of the older people.

The silver economy can be understood as a development opportunity resulting from the increase in public and private spending associated with the increasing share of older people in the total population and the emergence of the specific needs of this population group (European Commission, 2015). Research on the silver economy phenomenon is widely carried out in Europe (Thalassinos et al., 2019).

Literature studies show a lack of addressing the need for public authorities to implement measures to meet the needs of seniors, especially the oldest ones (85 years and over). The measures that public authorities (at each level of governance) should take include adapting the infrastructure, especially social infrastructure, to the growing needs of seniors, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner so that, in the event of a surge in the number of seniors, basic public goods and services are provided to them (Czech et al., 2020).

The experience of many municipalities in Poland proves that effective satisfaction of local communities' needs is based on collective and cooperative processes, stimulating the co-production of public services (Frączkiewicz-Wronka & Kozak, 2018; Heffner & Klemens, 2017). In order for co-production to take place in given area, there must be a high level of cooperation between representatives of institutions and the local community, and the participation of seniors in this process is important in terms of services intended for them (Pestoff, 2012). Senior councils can act as a representative of seniors in the co-production process.

Research carried out as early as the 1990s has shown that the social participation of seniors can provide them with many tangible benefits (Allen et al., 1992). Similar results are being achieved in ongoing research, particularly in terms of improving the quality of accessibility to public services (Terzi et al., 2012). The research of Pinto and Neri (2017) as well as Serrat et al. (2020) shows that participation in both individual and collective environments determines better quality of life and well-being. They also showed that the participation of seniors reduces the risk of various diseases, disabilities, cognitive decline and the risk of feeling lonely.

The participation of seniors in the co-production of public services stands, as it were, in opposition to M. Maier's position described above. Some researchers have observed that since the last decades of the 20th century, there has been a growing crisis of citizen trust in the bodies and institutions of a highly bureaucratic public administration (Kaźmierczak, 2011; Needham & Carr, 2009; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971; Sześciło, 2015). Ostrom argued in her research that the direct involvement of public service recipients in the process of producing public services contributes to more efficient production of public goods, and that the public sector, responsible for the design and implementation of public services, should stimulate the development of civil participation in this regard (Ostrom, 1996). Sharp added the issue of co-responsibility of citizens and professional officials in the delivery of public services to this concept (Sharp, 1980).

Gawron et al. (2021) found that older people, as direct beneficiaries of public services, can engage in co-productive activities in two main dimensions: individual and collective. The team also gave examples of measures that stimulate the co-production of public services among older people: a) for individual co-production, e.g. involving individual older people and their closest environment (e.g. family members, friends, neighbours) in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the support (including services) they experience; b) for collective co-production,

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e.g. working with the local community of older people to make a proper diagnosis of the needs of older people functioning in the local community in order to design and implement optimal public services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research process

The research process consisted of 3 main stages – preparation for the research, implementation of the empirical research, analysis of the obtained results. The individual elements of this process are presented in Fig. 1, while a detailed description of the research area, justifying its selection and the scope of the research along with the research objectives and hypotheses are described in subchapters 3.2. and 3.3.

Detailed description of the area of research

In order to identify the current measures taken towards seniors and future challenges related to the ageing population, it was decided to carry out research in Poland, in the Opole region, because this area is characterised by particularly unfavourable demographic processes, including population ageing (Heffner et al., 2019).

Although this study does not employ GIS-based spatial software or geostatistical modeling, it strictly incorporates a structural and typological spatial dimension. The spatial scale of the analysis corresponds to the LAU-2 level within the Opolskie Voivodeship (NUTS-2 region). However, GIS software was used to create a map of the Opole Voivodeship broken down by municipalities (LAU), showing the share of population aged 65 and older, based on publicly available statistical data. Fig. 2 illustrates the spatial distribution of older adults in the region.

This is evidenced by the following elements of demographic change:

The following elements of demographic change are the evidences of the exceptionally poor situation of the Opolskie Voivodeship:

– the region's share of people aged 65 and over in the biological age group structure in 2050 will be the highest in the country – 36.1%, with a national average of 32.7% (Fig. 3);
– taking into account the population structure by economic age groups, the region will experience the highest projected increase in the share of the retirement age population in the country – 33%, with a national average of 29.3% (Fig. 4);
– the age dependency ratio will be the highest in the country (34.6%);
– in 2050, there will be a 2.5-fold increase in the share of people aged over 80 (the so-called advanced old age) compared to 2013 – to 12.2%, with a national average of 10.4%;
– in 2050, compared to 2013, men over 65 will live 15.8 years longer and women – 19.1 years longer, which will be the highest rates in the country, the median age will be 56.1 years, with a national average of 52.5.

An analysis of the data that enables assessing the region's adaptation to the needs of an ageing population in terms of selected health and care services shows that the region currently has a relatively well-developed base of health care facilities (care and treatment facilities, palliative care centres, nursing services provided at the patient's home). Despite this, there are significant deficits in this regard, particularly in terms of the availability of geriatric specialists, which is the lowest in the country, and the simultaneous deteriorating situation in geriatric wards. Despite the increase in the number of residential social care facilities (facilities providing 24-hour care for the disabled, chronically ill and seniors), many of these services are still inaccessible due to their costs (they are expensive and elderly people, due to their income exceeding the social assistance criteria, cannot use them free of charge) and territorial accessibility (their coverage is insufficient in small towns and villages). In recent years, there has been an increase in the support provided by palliative care and nursing facilities, but, at the same time, the limited space in hospices and other such facilities still does not meet the increasing needs. This means that with the rapidly

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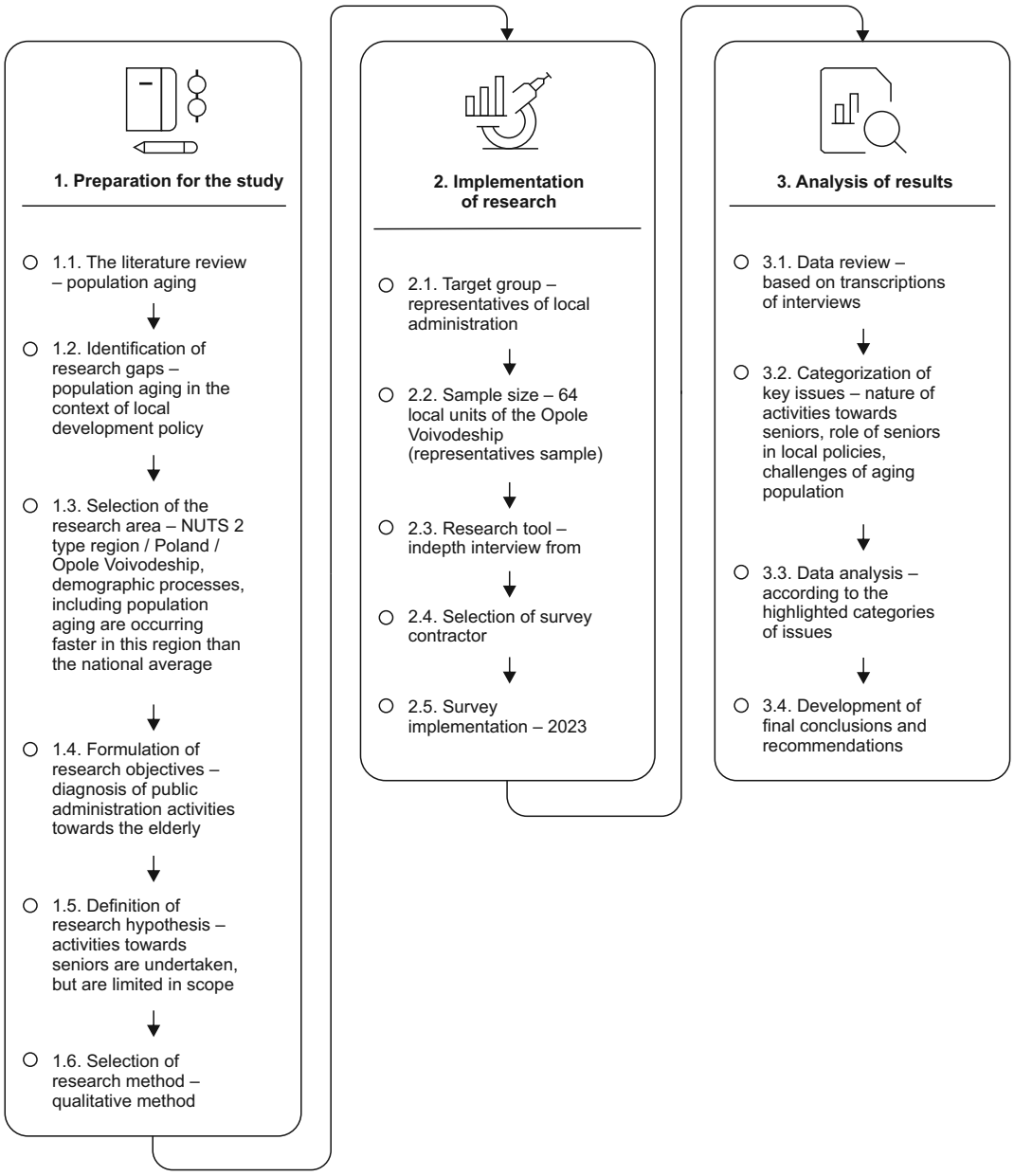


Fig. 1. Stages of the research process
Source: own elaboration in Napkin.ai.

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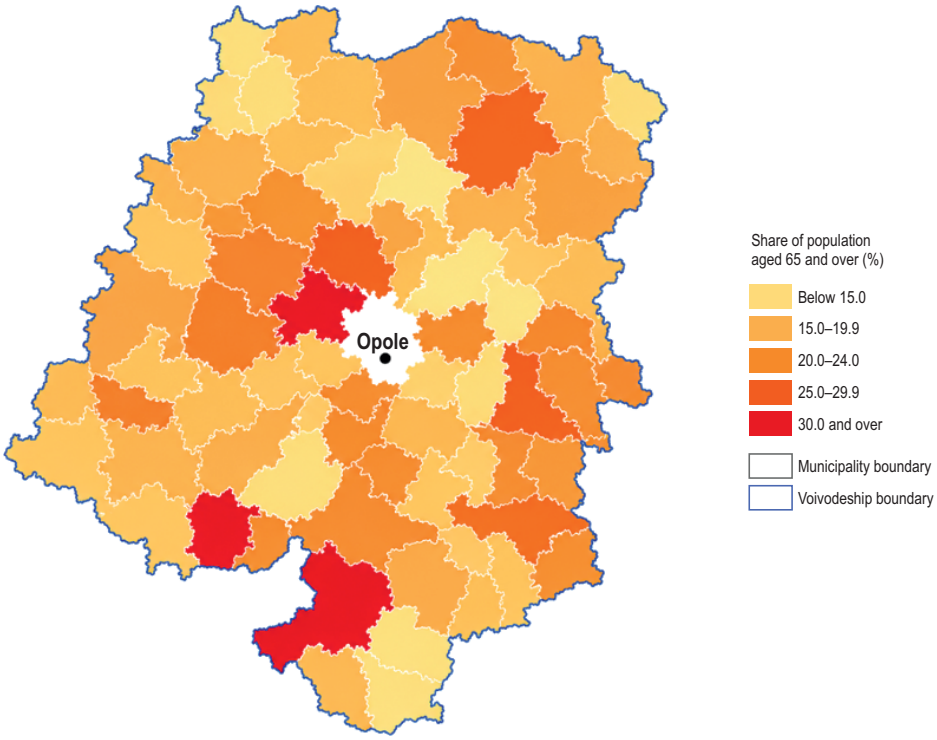
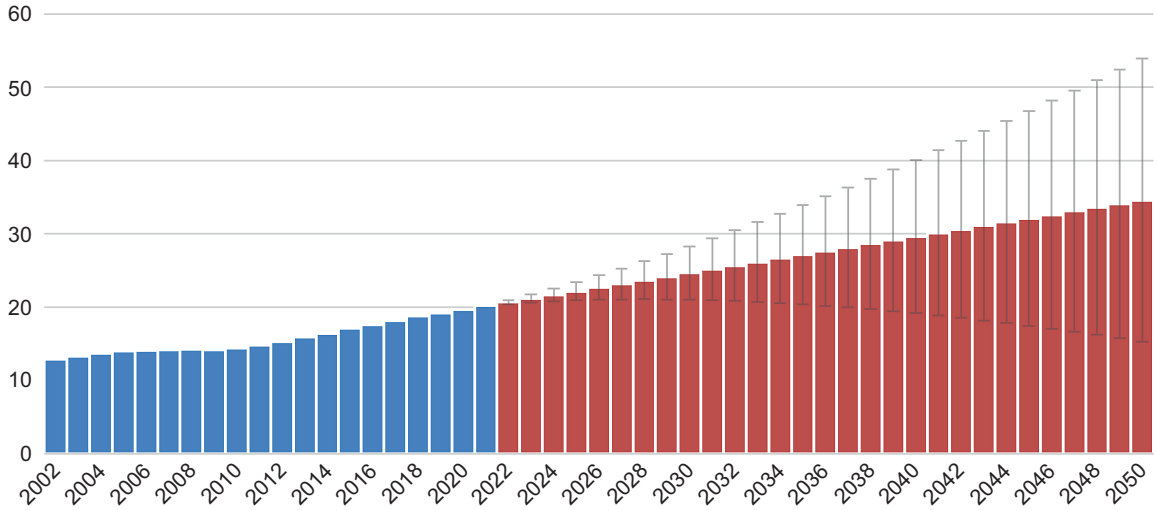
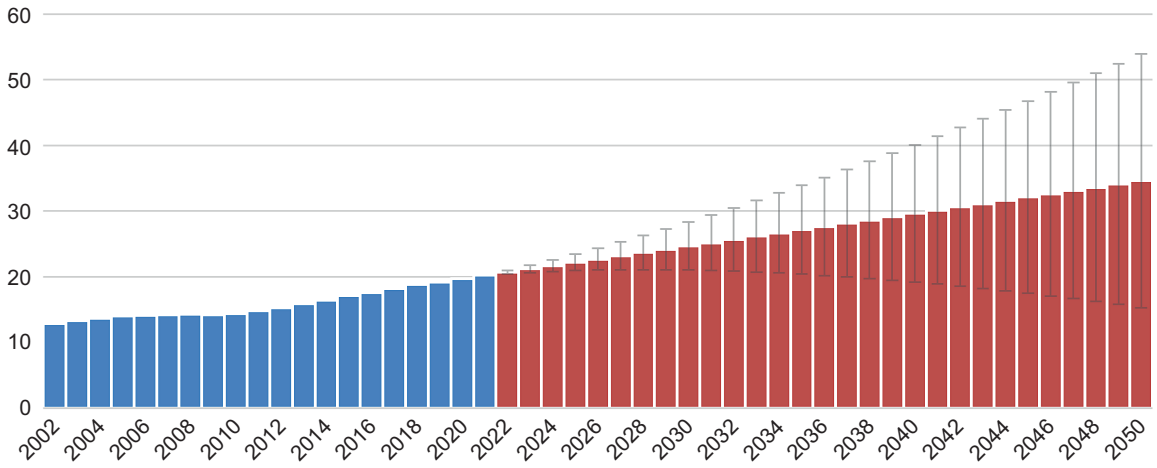


Fig. 2. Share of population aged 65+ in municipalities of Opolskie Voivodeship in 2023 (in %)
Source: own elaboration based on Statistics Poland's Local Data Bank (2026). Prepared in QGIS.



Note: blue colour: current situation, red colour: forecast
Fig. 3. Share of people aged 65+ in the total population in the Opolskie Voivodeship
Source: own elaboration based on the data of Statistics Poland's Local Data Bank.

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Note: blue colour: current situation, red colour: forecast
Fig. 4. Population at retirement age per 100 persons of working age in the Opole region
Source: own elaboration based on the data of Statistics Poland's Local Data Bank.

increasing needs of an ageing population, increasing the range of health and care services provided is becoming an urgent need.

Population ageing issues affect many areas of Poland and the EU: at local and regional level. Public administration at various levels tries to take action to identify risks and counteract negative trends. The tasks carried out by local authorities result from national and EU regulations and, although the study was conducted in one Polish voivodeship – the Opolskie Voivodeship – the conclusions can be generalised to a national and international level. The Opolskie Voivodeship is ahead of other areas of the country in terms of its demographic situation, which is why the example of this region can be used to develop recommendations on a wider scale.

Research gap and detailed scope of research

Although the international literature on public administration is increasingly examining the phenomenon of co-production in senior policy, most existing analyses focus on the national level or the realities of large metropolitan areas (e.g., Cao, 2025; Hartt & Biglieri, 2024; Hartt et al., 2021). This perspective overlooks the specific characteristics of smaller local government units. The research gap lies in the lack of empirical verification of how cooperation between local governments and seniors actually unfolds and what factors influence it in municipalities (including urban, urban-rural, and rural ones) that are facing a demographic crisis and a rapid outflow of residents.

Dealing with an ageing population is a complex issue in which economic, social, political and environmental aspects intersect (Katsarova, 2008). In these circumstances, there is a need to highlight the key issues arising from an ageing population in term of the local development policy. Ferry (2006, p. 6) proposed a model based on five aspects reflecting the main areas of competence of regional and local authorities within the European Union intended to take into account population ageing issues, i.e. 1) general trends, issues and ratios, 2) population ageing and the regional/local economy, 3) population ageing and regional/local development, 4) population ageing and infrastructure, 5) population ageing and regional/local governance, to be considered in the following areas of development: 1) economic development, 2) spatial area, 3) qualifications, 4) housing construction, 5) social integration, 6) local development plans, 7) rural areas, 8) transport. On the other hand, Ferry and Vironen (2011) propose that local strategies aimed at facing the challenges of an ageing society should take into account simultaneous measures in four dimensions: 1) the la bour

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market, 2) spatial planning of technical and social infrastructure, 3) goods and services consumption, and 4) social integration.

The following areas of activity of local public administration actors in terms of the ageing population were considered in the research presented in this paper: 1) health and care services, 2) leisure and education, 3) economic security of seniors, 4) economic activation of seniors, 5) housing, 6) public space, 7) volunteering aimed at the needs of older people, 8) transport accessibility, 9) access to public and administrative services.

As the issue of challenges to local public policies arising from an ageing population in the studied region is a poorly recognised issue, it was decided to conduct qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews (IDI – Individual In-depth Interview) using an in-depth interview form (Czernek, 2016). This method provided the opportunity to understand the local administration's perception of an ageing society, and through the wide variety of responses also to diagnose as much information about the needs of older people as possible.

To ensure the reliability, transparency, and reproducibility of the qualitative research findings, the analytical process followed a rigorous six-step thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data were drawn from original, semi-structured in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) conducted by the research team between 2022 and 2023 as part of the DELTA grant.

The study employed exhaustive purposive sampling, with the reference population consisting of all municipalities in the Opole Province (N = 71). The authors' intention was to conduct a complete survey. The final sample size was N = 64 local government units (representing 90.14% of the general population = representative sample), including 3 urban municipalities, 29 urban-rural municipalities, and 32 rural municipalities (Table 1).

The reduction of the sample by 7 units resulted from an institutional self-selection procedure (refusal to participate in the study due to officials' time constraints or the unavailability of key decision-makers during the fieldwork period). From a methodological standpoint, the achieved research coverage exceeding 90% of the population allows the sample to be considered highly representative and justifies drawing structural conclusions for the entire region under study (Babbie, 2021; Saunders et al., 2019).

Table 1. Number and type of municipalities where qualitative research was carried out

Type of municipalities	Urban	Urban-rural	Rural	Sum
Number of interviews	3	29	32	64

Source: own elaboration.

The respondents were individuals holding key positions in the municipality and relevant to the study's focus, namely: mayors and municipal administrators or their deputies, as well as heads of municipal departments dedicated to senior or social policy.

The procedure was carried out as follows: 1) familiarization with the data: all 64 interviews were recorded and verbatim transcribed, resulting in an extensive text corpus, 2) generating preliminary codes: the transcripts were systematically reviewed to identify significant statements regarding institutional barriers, funding, and co-creation, 3) identifying themes: the codes were aggregated into broader categories corresponding to 9 predefined areas of local government activity, 4) review of themes: the identified themes were verified against official municipal strategic documents (e.g., local development strategies) to achieve data triangulation (Denzin, 2012), 5) defining and naming themes: the final narrative was constructed around the dichotomy of policies for active seniors versus policies for dependent seniors, 6) report preparation: the empirical results were subjected to critical interpretation, using direct quotes from local decision-makers to ground the narrative in institutional reality.

It is worth noting that the distinction between active and dependent seniors identified in the literature (Gawron et al., 2021) directly determined the structure of the research questions and the selected areas of analysis (9 areas of administrative activity).

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The methodological framework of this study is firmly rooted in the paradigms of geographical gerontology and socio-spatial justice (Andrews & Phillips, 2004; Soja, 2010). In the context of demographic transition and severe depopulation of regions, local government units (LGUs) are no longer merely administrative entities; they become key spatial reference points responsible for maintaining territorial resilience (Reggiani et al., 2002). Therefore, the nine areas of local public administration examined in this project (ranging from healthcare to transport accessibility) are not analyzed as isolated sectors. Instead, they are treated as interconnected socio-spatial dimensions that determine the capacity of decentralized authorities to co-create public services alongside an aging community. By examining these dimensions through qualitative, in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) conducted in nearly all municipalities in the region, this study bridges the gap between theoretical models of active aging and the everyday institutional reality of shrinking territories in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The general objectives of the research were to identify the following issues:

- the measures undertaken by public administration towards older people and the related challenges;
- taking account of the ageing population in local strategic documents;
- the perception of the issue of inter-generational integration, understood as the relationship between the senior and young generations;
- the perception of ageing by public administration as an issue or an opportunity for local development.

The following research hypotheses were assumed:

1. Public administration actors recognise population ageing and take specific measures in this regard, but these mainly include basic services and very often result from the opportunity to fund them externally, especially from EU funds.
2. Public administration actors recognise the challenges posed by an ageing population and the need to adapt to the differing needs of this population group in terms of age, gender, health condition, family situation and assets.

RESULTS

Local responses to population ageing: between care provision and active ageing

The accelerating ageing of the population is increasingly recognised by public administration actors. It is pointed out that for at least the last 10–15 years, despite a number of family-friendly measures to increase the fertility rate, there has been a significant increase in the share of older people and thus a significant increase in local budget expenditure on measures targeting the needs of older people. Despite this, the issue of population ageing has only recently been included in strategic documents and most often in general strategies (i.e. urban or rural municipal development strategies or strategies for solving social issues). On the other hand, documents specifically dedicated to this social group (i.e. senior policy programmes) are produced far less frequently. In fact, very few cities and municipalities in the region have such a document.

This finding suggests that, despite the growing awareness of demographic ageing, local governments still tend to perceive ageing as one of several social policy challenges rather than a strategic issue requiring dedicated and long-term policy responses. The limited number of senior policy programmes may therefore indicate a gap between demographic trends and the institutional adaptation of local authorities.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the region's capital city (Opole) has been certified as a WHO *Age-Friendly City*, and is thus one of only four Polish cities to be part of the *Age-Friendly Cities* network. The example of Opole may indicate that larger urban centres possess greater organizational capacity, expertise and financial resources to implement comprehensive ageing policies than smaller municipalities.

The most prominent areas in the current activities of public administration actors include care services for dependent older people as well as leisure and education for active seniors. Other areas (e.g. working activity of seniors, adaptation of public space to the

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needs of older people, housing, transport accessibility) are only just developing or are not addressed at all. This imbalance suggests that local ageing policies are predominantly reactive and welfare-oriented, focusing on immediate care needs rather than adopting a comprehensive active-ageing approach that would also include participation, mobility, housing and age-friendly environments.

Care services (e.g. meeting daily living needs – cleaning, laundry, shopping, meal preparation; hygiene care – washing; physician-ordered care – dependent on health examination; providing contact with the environment – conversation) are the part of activities that is growing most rapidly in terms of need and expenditure from local budgets. In addition to care services, activation or support services for less independent seniors (e.g. occupational therapy workshops, transport to physicians, rehabilitation, church or shopping, tailored to individual needs) are also developing. The aim of these activities is to keep seniors as long as possible in a relatively good physical and mental condition and, most importantly, in their local environment. It is there possible to notice a trend towards the process of deinstitutionalisation of care services promoted by the EU, which is mainly driven by financial considerations related to the high costs of placing dependent people in care homes. The findings therefore indicate that local authorities are gradually adapting to the deinstitutionalization paradigm promoted by the European Union. However, this transition is constrained by the growing number of highly dependent older people and limited local resources, creating tension between policy objectives and implementation capacity.

At the same time, however, there is a steady increase in the number of long-term or chronically ill older people who require 24-hour care. Attention is also drawn to the considerable burden of this type of expenditure on local budgets and, in particular, the insufficient number of facilities providing this type of service. Consequently, population ageing emerges not only as a social challenge but also as a significant financial and organizational challenge for local governments, requiring long-term planning and resource allocation.

However, educational and leisure measures for active seniors are thriving. It should be noted that a large part of these measures is being implemented thanks to EU funding. They are taken by a variety of entities, mainly seniors clubs or centres, so-called day-care centres, social welfare centres, cultural, sports and leisure centres, public libraries, Universities of the Third Age. The range of cultural and educational activities on offer is wide and varied (e.g. trips, sports activities such as Nordic walking or yoga, foreign language and computer courses, meetings with physicians and psychologists), with many more measures being taken in urban than in rural municipalities. The diversity of activities suggests that local actors increasingly perceive older people not only as recipients of care but also as active participants in community life. This observation is consistent with the active ageing framework emphasized in the international literature. However, this urban-rural disparity may reflect differences in demographic structure, financial capacity and institutional resources, indicating unequal opportunities for active ageing across the region.

As it turns out, young people, including the youngest from schools and kindergartens, are involved in such measures. They are taken both on the seniors' own initiative and on the initiative of those implementing activation measures.

Efforts to strengthen the relationship between the older and younger generations, which some respondents even called an inter-generational policy, are therefore evident in current activities. The emergence of intergenerational initiatives indicates that local actors increasingly recognize social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity as important components of responding to demographic ageing. However, they point out that measures integrating the generations are only at an early stage of development and need to be developed further and strengthened.

Local administration is therefore aware of the role of inter-generational ties and the need to support those relationships, which is becoming a key challenge

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in an era of increasing participation of older people in society. Volunteering can be an instrument of this activity. However, while increasing activity of this kind among older or middle-aged people is highlighted (e.g. within the Caritas Catholic charity, which is active in many parishes in the region), younger people lack the will to be socially involved, including in measures specifically targeting the needs of seniors. This finding may reflect broader changes in patterns of civic engagement among younger generations and suggests that building intergenerational solidarity remains one of the key challenges for local communities facing demographic ageing. Developing volunteering among young people is therefore another challenge for public administration and especially the local community to build awareness of demographic change and a good image of seniors in society.

Seniors as a development resource and policy challenge

It is explicitly stated that seniors are a very important, even strategic partner for local authorities. This finding suggests that older people are increasingly perceived not merely as beneficiaries of social policy but also as active stakeholders capable of contributing to local development processes. Such an approach reflects the principles of active ageing and participatory governance, which emphasise the role of older citizens in shaping public policies and community development. It is not only about the increasing activity of older people in initiating cultural and educational measures and, as indicated, in developing positive inter-generational relations. Seniors are also actively involved in setting development directions. Their involvement in defining local development priorities indicates a gradual shift from traditional welfare-oriented approaches towards more inclusive governance models, in which older residents are recognized as a valuable source of knowledge, experience and social capital.

The issue of the ageing population is most often seen in an ambivalent way, i.e. as an opportunity for development, but also as a huge challenge for local authorities. This ambivalent perception reflects the dual nature of demographic ageing frequently discussed in the literature. On the one hand, ageing increases demand for health and care services and generates financial pressures on local governments. On the other hand, it creates opportunities to utilize the economic, social and civic potential of older people. Opportunities are seen in the possibility of exploiting the potential of the older people. A clear distinction is made here between the needs of dependent seniors (e.g. care and health services) and those of independent seniors (e.g. cultural and educational services, assisted housing for seniors). The distinction between dependent and independent seniors demonstrates that local authorities increasingly recognize the heterogeneity of the older population. This finding is important because it challenges the stereotypical perception of older people as a homogeneous group primarily requiring support and highlights the need for differentiated policy instruments. However, the notion of a "silver economy" as an opportunity for specialised development is not being used. The absence of the silver economy concept in local development thinking is particularly noteworthy. Although respondents recognize the growing importance of older people and their specific needs, these observations have not yet translated into a broader economic development strategy. This may suggest that ageing is still predominantly viewed through a social policy lens rather than as a potential driver of entrepreneurship, innovation and market development. So far, measures are mainly taken by public administration actors and non-governmental organisations, while private companies are not particularly active in this field and are so far mostly limited to the creation of private care homes for seniors, the number of which remains insufficient. Local authorities indeed have single ideas in this respect, but – for the time being – they are not being implemented.

The dominant role of public and non-governmental actors indicates that the response to demographic ageing remains largely welfare-oriented. The limited involvement of the private sector may reflect both the early stage of silver economy development and

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insufficient recognition of older people as a growing consumer group with specific market needs.

Responding to an Aging Population: Between Active Aging Goals and Implementation Constraints

Currently, the biggest issue for local authorities is the increasing cost of funding order people's stay in care homes and the provision of care services at their place of residence. This finding suggests that population ageing is increasingly perceived by local authorities not only as a demographic phenomenon but also as a major fiscal and governance challenge. The growing demand for long-term care places pressure on local budgets and limits the resources available for preventive and developmental measures supporting active ageing.

In terms of challenges, however, respondents mainly point to two areas, i.e. the provision of care for seniors and the accessibility and adaptation of public spaces to their needs. Notably, both areas correspond to key dimensions of the active ageing framework, namely independent living and the creation of age-friendly environments. This indicates that local authorities increasingly recognize that responding to population ageing requires more than the provision of welfare services alone.

Providing care for seniors in their local environment is a two-pronged approach. In relation to independent older people, the most frequently raised issue is the creation of housing adapted to their needs (sheltered or assisted housing is mentioned). However, only preliminary measures are being taken in this regard and, if this type of housing is developed (e.g. fully equipped housing with access to a physician, rehabilitation care and a canteen), it becomes very popular. The strong demand for sheltered and assisted housing demonstrates that older people increasingly seek forms of support that allow them to maintain autonomy while remaining within their local communities. This finding is consistent with the active ageing approach, which emphasizes independence and ageing in place as important policy objectives. More often than not, however, local authorities are at the conception stage for this type of housing or are possibly in the process of implementing their first projects. In doing so, they draw attention to the possibility of funding such activities from the EU budget or the Norwegian funds, which can be a factor in intensifying these measures. The reliance on external funding sources suggests that the capacity of local governments to respond to demographic ageing is often conditioned by access to supralocal resources. This reflects one of the key characteristics of local governance, where effective policy implementation depends on cooperation between local, national and international actors.

On the other hand, specialised care facilities will have to be developed (currently, this role is fulfilled by ZOLs Care and Treatment Centres) for dependent seniors, wheelchair-bound, recumbent, chronically and strenuously ill people who require round-the-clock and continuous medical and nursing care. At the same time, the increasing need for specialized institutional care reveals the limitations of community-based support systems. This creates a policy dilemma between promoting independent living and responding to the growing care needs of the oldest and most dependent population groups.

The adaptation of urban spaces is indeed carried out by the public administration (e.g. lifts in public utility facilities, marking of stairs, lowering of curbs, renovation of streets and pavements, strengthening of traffic lights), and is a task set out in the relevant legal act (Act of 19 July 2019 on ensuring accessibility for persons with special needs). However, the law has not been followed by adequate relevant funding in local budgets, meaning that local authorities do not have the funds to do more in this regard. This finding highlights a recurring gap between policy objectives and implementation capacity. Although local authorities recognise the importance of age-friendly environments, their ability to achieve these goals is constrained by financial limitations and competing budgetary priorities. This means that improving accessibility for older people in the broadest sense of the term is being implemented "in small steps", but

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it will certainly be a long-term process. Consequently, the development of age-friendly environments appears to be an incremental rather than transformative process. This suggests that adaptation to demographic ageing is evolving gradually and unevenly across municipalities. Ensuring transport accessibility for the elderly, especially seniors (80+), can be a separate issue. In this context, specific ideas are even being put forward (e.g. senior taxis or senior buses that transport seniors to destinations, e.g. to the physician or to rehabilitation), but limited funding is a significant limitation to their implementation.

DISCUSSION

Population aging is seen as a major development opportunity, but also as a huge challenge for public authorities at various levels, from national to local. However, the local dimension is far less often used to diagnose and assess the course of population aging and related challenges (Balachandran, 2025; Powell, 2024; Wilk & Pietrzak, 2014).

Considering though the cost of access to medical or care services and adequate infrastructure, the aging population is a challenge in financial terms, among others. The situation in Poland is similar to that reported in Finland (Valkama & Oulasvirta, 2021), and is considered rather as a pressing problem to be solved. Few in the literature indicate that population aging can have positive economic effects (Knapińska, 2024).

This framing of population aging predominantly as a fiscal burden – rather than a structural transformation requiring proactive spatial and institutional adaptation – remains characteristic of the post-communist welfare states of Central and Eastern Europe (Sirovátka et al., 2024). Unlike Western European countries, where long-term care systems were developed gradually over decades, the Visegrád Group countries – Poland, Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia – inherited from the socialist period a model of "familialism by default," in which the state implicitly delegated care responsibilities to families, predominantly women, without providing adequate institutional support (Szweda-Lewandowska, 2022). This structural legacy significantly constrains the capacity of local governments to respond to rapidly accelerating aging processes, and is particularly acute in regions such as the Opole Voivodeship, where demographic decline has been faster and deeper than the national average (Heffner et al., 2019).

In the course of the research carried out in the Opole Voivodeship, respondents focused on the issue of adequate adaptation of urban spaces by the public administration, as well as unadapted legislation and insufficient funding of local budgets. It seems that an important aspect is the adequate orientation of development policy at the local level and attention to its coordination in this regard with EU strategies (see: Wierzbicka & Farelnik, 2024), if only to be able to implement EU-funded projects, which can significantly support local budgets of aging municipalities.

These findings resonate with broader challenges documented across the Visegrád region. In Czechia, despite a comparatively stronger position in European aging indices, senior citizens have outnumbered children under 15 since 2006, and local governments face growing pressure on care infrastructure (Czech Statistical Office, 2025). In Hungary, public spending on elder care remains disproportionately low relative to expenditure on family policy, resulting in a structural underfunding of community-based services for the elderly (Gál, 2016, as cited in Sirovátka et al., 2024). In Slovakia, the deinstitutionalization of social care has been formally initiated but has proceeded unevenly at the local level, with significant disparities in infrastructure and human resources between urban and rural municipalities (Repková, 2015). The Opole Voivodeship, however, represents a qualitatively distinct case: as a region that launched a dedicated Special Demographic Zone programme as early as 2014 – the first such initiative in Poland – it has functioned as an institutional laboratory for proactive demographic policy, anticipating challenges that other Polish and Central European regions are only beginning to confront (Heffner et al., 2019). This pioneering role carries important implications

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for territorial planning: the adaptation of spatial infrastructure, including housing stock, public transport accessibility, and the location of care facilities, must be treated as a core component of local development strategy rather than a residual social policy concern.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that local authorities recognize the willingness and openness of the elderly to actively participate in local life, mainly in the cultural and educational dimensions (in the case of independent seniors) and in the dimension of care and medical services (in the case of dependent seniors). This distinction between independent and dependent seniors is somewhat new to the research. However, the very fact of keeping seniors active in the labor market, among other things, corresponds with other results of studies conducted in Poland, among others (Wierzbicka & Farelnik, 2024).

Seniors also actively participate in setting development directions, and these findings parallel some other studies that have reported statorily increased use of cooperative municipal services (Anttiroiko & Valkama, 2017; Sjöblom, 2020; Valkama & Oulasvirta, 2021). Co-production of public services with the participation of the elderly is perceived by local authorities in the region as an added value of the aging population process. Similar findings have been obtained from studies in other regions of Poland (Frączkiewicz-Wronka & Kozak, 2018).

The participatory dimension of senior policy documented in this study reflects a wider European trend. Falanga et al. (2021) identify four patterns of senior citizen involvement in policy-making – ranging from consultation in policy design to co-decision in implementation – and note that institutionalized forms of participation remain underdeveloped in Central and Eastern European countries compared to Western and Northern Europe. The findings from the Opole Voivodeship suggest that, while local authorities are increasingly receptive to senior co-production, this openness tends to be informal and project-driven rather than embedded in durable institutional frameworks. From a local governance perspective, this represents both an opportunity and a risk: without systematic formalization, the participatory capital accumulated by senior communities may not translate into sustained improvements in service quality or spatial planning outcomes. Local administrations should therefore consider establishing permanent consultative bodies for seniors – modelled on solutions documented in Ireland and Germany by Falanga et al. (2021) – as a structural mechanism for integrating experiential knowledge into territorial development planning.

Local authorities in Poland face a major challenge in adapting care for seniors, mainly nursing homes, to the needs of the elderly. This involves adequate infrastructure, care, providing a range of physical and mental activities to keep the elderly in the best possible condition and provide them with adequate stimulation, including in the aspect of using modern technology. One of the best solutions is also to provide conditions for dignified and active aging in the senior's home/apartment. However, seniors themselves cannot always afford to maintain their home/apartment, which poses quite a challenge for local policy. Unlike in Poland, in Sweden most older Swedes enjoy access to high quality and affordable housing and have the skills to use modern technology (cell phone, computer, email address) (Davey et al., 2014).

The comparison with Sweden underscores a structural gap that is characteristic not only of Poland but of the entire Visegrád group. Across Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the transition from institutionalized to community-based care; a cornerstone of EU deinstitutionalization policy, is impeded by a severe shortage of qualified care workers, inadequate remuneration, and insufficient legislative frameworks at the local level (Szweda-Lewandowska, 2022). The situation in the Opole Voivodeship is further complicated by the region's specific demographic trajectory: prolonged emigration, particularly to Germany, has simultaneously depleted the working-age population available for care roles and reduced the pool of informal family caregivers (Heffner & Solga, 2024). This creates a compounding vulnerability that standard national-level policy responses do not adequately address. From the perspective of spatial and

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territorial planning, the practical implication is clear: local development strategies in aging, depopulating regions should explicitly map the geographical accessibility of care infrastructure and anticipate future so called "care deserts". Those are areas where the ratio of dependent seniors to available formal and informal care resources will become unsustainable within the current planning horizon. EU cohesion policy instruments, including the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund+, offer targeted financing mechanisms for this type of adaptive territorial planning, but their uptake requires enhanced administrative capacity and inter-municipal coordination at the NUTS-3 level.

Although this study provides a unique, nearly exhaustive qualitative description of the entire region affected by depopulation (the study covers 90.2% of local government units), certain methodological limitations should be noted. First, the geographical scope is limited to a single specific NUTS-2 region in Poland (the Opole Voivodeship), which reflects the post-communist socioeconomic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe; therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other regions of Poland characterized by different demographic and migration dynamics, as well as to the highly decentralized administrative models of Western Europe or the Nordic countries.

Second, the study reflects the "elite perspective" of local government officials and public managers. While this is highly valuable for understanding institutional capacity, it does not directly capture the subjective, raw life experiences of seniors themselves. Future research should employ a mixed-methods approach, combining these institutional data with spatial accessibility mapping and large-scale surveys of seniors to achieve full socio-spatial triangulation.

The cross-national comparison presented in this discussion also points to a third direction for future inquiry: systematic comparative studies of senior policy implementation at the local level across the Visegrád countries, using harmonized indicators of care infrastructure, participatory governance, and spatial accessibility.

CONCLUSIONS

The Population ageing represents a significant challenge for national and local public policies. Analysis carried out shows that already today, public administration actors in regions that are particularly subject to the ageing process are faced with a number of urgent tasks related to the growing needs of older people.

It seems that managing the seniors' free time will be much less of a challenge. Many seniors are already using various forms of cultural and educational services, and older people show great interest in spending their free time in this manner. With the rapidly increasing needs of an ageing population, the most urgent need is whereas to increase the range of health and care services provided. The lack of sufficient infrastructure is not the only issue. Others include the uneven spatial distribution – institutions and entities of this type are most often found in large cities, with shortages in small towns and rural areas. This phenomenon of regional and local differentiation in access to health services for the elderly is also recognized in other European studies (Valkama & Oulasvirta, 2021).

In the context of these challenges and needs, a more dynamic deinstitutionalization of social services, understood as the development of social services, especially community care services, provided at the place of residence of the elderly, would be advisable. However, in order for this process to take place, it is necessary to prepare an adequate cadre of social services, and perhaps to formulate "Local Deinstitutionalization Plans", defining the goals and scope of activities in specific areas of local senior policy.

There is a disagreement among researchers as to the role of public authorities in creating public services for seniors: on one hand, it is believed that this is a task assigned to the public sphere and should be implemented by it; on the other hand, the need for the participation of the social group for which the public service is to be provided is raised in order to design and implement public services tailored to its

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needs, which is difficult to achieve without the active and real participation of this group's representatives.

Co-production of public services with the involvement of seniors may support the provision of tailor-made public services. Such measures can bring positive effects on many levels, i.e. a better system of accessibility and distribution of public services for older people can be developed by using this group's knowledge and its social involvement potential. As research conducted around the world has shown, the participation of seniors in social and public activities has a positive impact on both their physical and mental health, allowing their long-term and effective functioning in society, giving them a sense of agency and being a source of social recognition. The knowledge capital accumulated by seniors should be an important starting point for designing public services dedicated to them.

In the vast majority of cases, the care and support of older people is provided by immediate family members. However, the progressive weakening of the caring function of the family and the increasing burden of professional responsibilities will require intensive public measures. It is therefore necessary to increase the involvement of institutions in favour of older people, especially lonely and abandoned people, while at the same time creating forms of support for informal caregivers (other relatives, friends, neighbours). More responsibility will fall on local government, NGOs and informal support networks. In this area, too, appropriate care providers must be prepared, including social workers, volunteers, social educators, occupational therapy instructors, and assistants for the disabled.

Although currently seniors do not belong to the group most at risk of poverty, some older people are forced to use benefits provided by social welfare centres. However, the situation of seniors in this respect will deteriorate in the face of demographic change and its impact on the efficiency of the social security system. This means that pension and disability benefits may be too low to cover the increasing costs of using a range of services (e.g. supported or sheltered housing, private care homes). This situation, combined with limited dexterity, often loneliness and digital exclusion, can lead to social exclusion and reduced quality of life for a significant group of older people. In this area, activities should be largely preventive in nature and directed at older people reaching the age of retirement towards encouraging them to become active in the labor force, or directed at integrating social and labor activation activities (e.g., combined programs of social welfare centers and labor offices, alternative forms of employment).

Based on the research conducted, the following recommendations are proposed for local governments:

a. developing a strategy for senior policy – the research showed that most local governments address the issue of population aging only in general development strategies or social policy documents. It is worth requiring municipalities and counties to prepare dedicated senior policy programs that define objectives, actions, indicators, and funding sources. Research indicates that such documents remain very rare;
b. increasing the use of EU funds for senior-focused initiatives – research indicates that many initiatives are implemented using European funds, so it is worthwhile to utilize EU funds to implement the "age-friendly municipalities" model;
c. developing community-based services – research shows a sharp increase in the demand for care services and the high costs of seniors' stays in nursing homes. Therefore, support could come from developing care and assistance services in seniors' homes on the one hand, and on the other, from developing "silver smart" solutions, including: the development of telecare and remote health monitoring services, and support for family caregivers of older adults;
d. adapting public spaces to the needs of older adults, including improving transportation accessibility for seniors – this involves removing architectural barriers and increasing the number of rest areas, public restrooms, and recreational spaces for seniors, as well as developing local on-demand transportation services for seniors to clinics,

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government offices, and activity centers, which is particularly important in rural and outlying areas;

e. involving seniors in the co-creation of public policies – research shows high levels of engagement among seniors and their willingness to participate in decision-making regarding local development. Therefore, the functioning of senior councils should be supported, and a senior-focused component should be introduced into participatory budgeting. Furthermore, projects that bring seniors together with children and youth – carried out in schools, libraries, and senior centers – and foster positive intergenerational relationships should be a key component.

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