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Desafío demográfico del siglo XXI: el envejecimiento de la población en la República Checa y su impacto en los sistemas sociales, sanitarios y económicos en el contexto de los servicios sociales residenciales

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Resumen. El artículo aborda los cambios demográficos fundamentales en la República Checa, especialmente el envejecimiento de la población y su impacto en la atención sanitaria, la atención social y la economía. El análisis se basa en datos estadísticos disponibles y en proyecciones para los próximos 50 a 100 años, identificando desafíos clave como el aumento de las enfermedades crónicas, la escasez de atención geriátrica y la necesidad de innovación en los cuidados de larga duración. Al mismo tiempo, el trabajo explora el concepto de envejecimiento saludable y su implementación mediante estrategias de políticas públicas, innovación tecnológica y la promoción de una sociedad inclusiva. Se pone especial énfasis en la lucha contra el edadismo y en el uso de tecnologías modernas, como la robótica y la telemedicina, para garantizar una atención digna y eficaz a las personas mayores. El texto formula recomendaciones para la adaptación sostenible de los sistemas públicos de atención en el contexto de los cambios demográficos previstos.

Palabras clave: edadismo, innovación, envejecimiento de la población, servicios sociales.

Demographic challenge of the 21st century: ageing of the population in the Czech Republic and its impact on social, health and economic systems in the context of residential social services

Abstract. The article deals with the fundamental demographic changes in the Czech Republic, especially the ageing of the population and its impact on health care, social care and the economy. The analysis is based on available statistical data and forecasts for the next 50-100 years, identifying key challenges such as the increase in chronic diseases, the lack of geriatric care and the need for innovation in long-term care. At the same time, the paper explores the concept of healthy ageing and its implementation through policy strategies, technological innovation and the promotion of an inclusive society. Particular emphasis is placed on combating ageism and on the use of modern technologies, such as robotics and telemedicine, to ensure dignified and effective care for the elderly. The text makes recommendations for the sustainable adaptation of public care systems in the context of expected demographic changes.

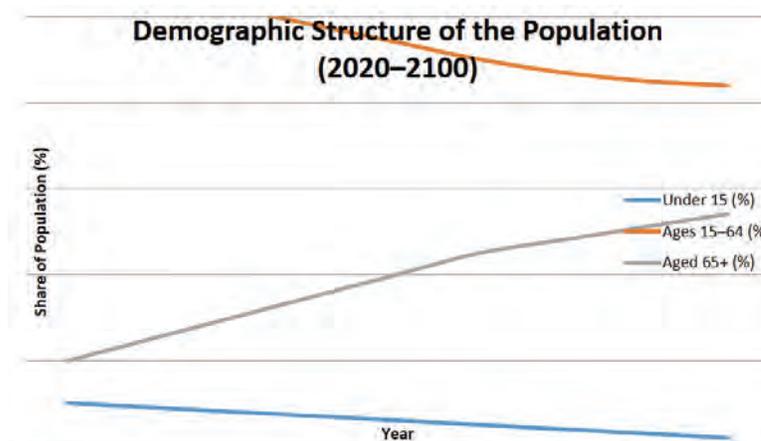
Keywords: ageis, innovation, population ageing, social services.

INTRODUCTION

The composition of the population of the Czech Republic is currently changing and this trend will be even more pronounced in the coming decades. A major factor in this change is the ageing of the population, which brings major social, economic and health challenges. This article focuses on an analysis of the current situation and forecasts for the next 50-100 years, with an emphasis on the growing share of the elderly in the total population.

According to Eurostat statistics - Český statistický úřad/Czech Statistical Office (online, 2024), 20.5% of the Czech Republic's population will be over 65 years old in 2020, making it one of the countries with a significantly ageing population in Europe. This proportion is estimated to continue to rise in the coming decades.

GRAPH 1. Age distribution of the population in the Czech Republic in 2010-2100.



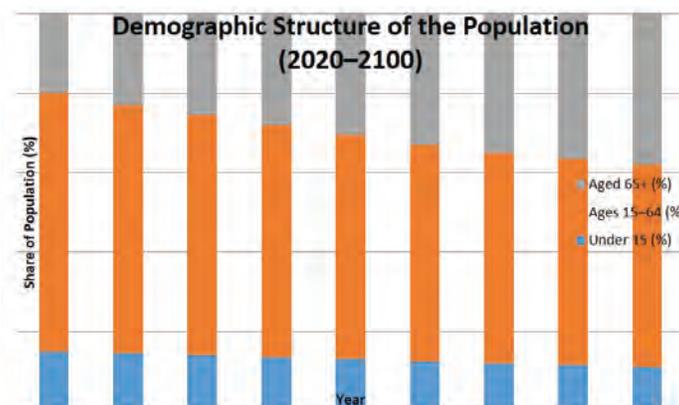
Sources: Český statistický úřad/Czech Statistical Office (online, 2024).

The chart shows estimates of the percentage of the population aged 65 and over, 15 and under, and 15-64 between 2020 and 2100. We can see that the share of the population aged over 65 will increase, while the share of the population aged under 15 and the population aged 15-64 will decrease (Český statistický úřad/Czech Statistical Office, online, 2024).

Currently, the Czech Republic already has a high proportion of seniors in its population, and the ageing trend is deepening. According to the Czech Statistical Office, more than 20% of the population will be over 65 years old in 2020. Based on demographic models, it can be predicted that the proportion of seniors (people over 65) in the population of the Czech Republic will increase significantly over the next 50-100 years. This increase will be supported by a decline in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy. The impact of migration and life expectancy will also enter into this variable. The increased proportion of the elderly has consequences for the economy, such as an increase in the cost of health care and social benefits. These factors will require new strategies and policies to ensure sustainable financing of public budgets. As the population ages, the demand for specialised health care, geriatric services and care for the elderly increases. Investment in infrastructure and training of health personnel will be necessary. The growing proportion of older people poses a challenge to public finances, health, social care and the labour market. Policies and systems will need to be adapted to be sustainable and capable of providing quality care and support for the growing number of older citizens (Horecký and Lusková, 2019).

The outlook for the composition of the population of the Czech Republic over the next 50-100 years indicates a significant demographic shift towards a higher proportion of seniors, as shown in the following graph (Czech Statistical Office, online, citation 2024-04-25), which shows the total share of each age group, in percentage of the total population in given years, in a bar chart. This trend will require a comprehensive approach and preparation in the areas of health, social care, economics and public policy. Ensuring the sustainability of care and support systems for the growing number of older people will be a priority to ensure their quality of life and contribution to the overall well-being of society. The forecast of the proportion of older people in the Czech Republic by 2100 is based on demographic patterns and trends that show a significant increase in the proportion of the population in the older age groups. This development has major implications for the country's social policy, economy and health care.

GRAPH 2. Age distribution of the population in the Czech Republic in 2010-2100.



Sources: Český statistický úřad/Czech Statistical Office (online, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ageing in Illness and the Trend of Healthy Ageing in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, like many other European countries, is facing a significantly ageing population, making it one of the countries with the oldest population in Europe. This trend has serious implications for health and social systems, as well as for the economy and the labour market. It is therefore essential to focus on promoting healthy ageing, which will enable older people to live independently and well for as long as possible. *The Global Action Plan on Healthy Ageing* (Tomeš and Šámalová, 2017), published by the World Health Organization (WHO), defines healthy ageing as a process that ensures that older people are able to maintain the functional abilities that will enable them to live well in later life. This plan includes four key areas. The first is changing the way we think about ageing and older people. Combating ageism and promoting a positive perception of aging. Changing the way we think about ageing and older people. Combating ageism and promoting a positive perception of ageing.

Ageing is a natural physiological process that involves a number of changes affecting the organism. Changes in the physical field are reflected in education primarily by worsening resistance to adverse and disruptive influence, loss of energy, by reducing sensory capacity (Špatenková and Smékalová, 2015; Na et al., 2024; AlZubi, 2023; Kusuma et al., 2022).

Population ageing is one of the most important demographic trends of the 21st century, bringing many challenges but also opportunities. One of the key areas to focus on is changing the way we think about ageing and older people. Ageism, or prejudice and discrimination based on age, is a widespread problem that negatively affects not only older people but society as a whole. Ageism manifests itself in a variety of ways, from stereotypes and negative attitudes towards older people to systematic discrimination in all areas of life, including employment, healthcare and social services. This phenomenon has serious consequences for the physical and mental health of older people, their social inclusion and overall quality of life (Sýkorová, 2017).

Research conducted by the Státní zdravotní ústav/National Institute of Public Health (online, 2024) in 2004-2014, with an update in 2020-2022, further shows that ageism can lead to poorer health: Older people who face negative attitudes and discrimination have a higher risk of developing depression, anxiety, and other health problems. Reduced self-esteem and self-worth. Negative stereotypes can undermine older people's self-esteem and their willingness to participate in society. There may also appear to be limited opportunities. Age discrimination often leads to limited employment opportunities and less access to education and retraining (Sýkorová, 2017).

Positive perceptions of ageing and older people are key to creating an inclusive society that values the contributions of all generations. Several strategies can help change the way we think about ageing. Education and awareness raising. Education campaigns and programmes can help dispel myths and prejudices about ageing and highlight the value that older people bring to society. Intergenerational projects. Projects that bring people of different age groups together can promote mutual understanding and respect. Examples include intergenerational training programmes where younger and older generations learn from each other.

Presenting positive stories and successful older people in the media can inspire others and help to shift perceptions of ageing. Policies and legislation against discrimination: promoting laws and policies that protect older people from discrimination is essential to creating a just society (Ptáček and Ptáček, 2021).

Combating ageism and promoting a positive perception of ageing is essential to ensure a dignified and quality life for older people. A society that values and supports its older members not only improves their living conditions but also strengthens social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity. We all have a responsibility to contribute to this change and to create an environment where old age is seen as a natural and valuable part of life. Ensuring that every country has a healthcare system that promotes healthy ageing. Access to quality healthcare for older people. Creating communities that enable older people to maintain their independence and participation in society. Supporting community services and infrastructure for older people. Ensuring better data collection and research on ageing. Improving evidence and research in geriatrics and gerontology (Dix et al., 2024).

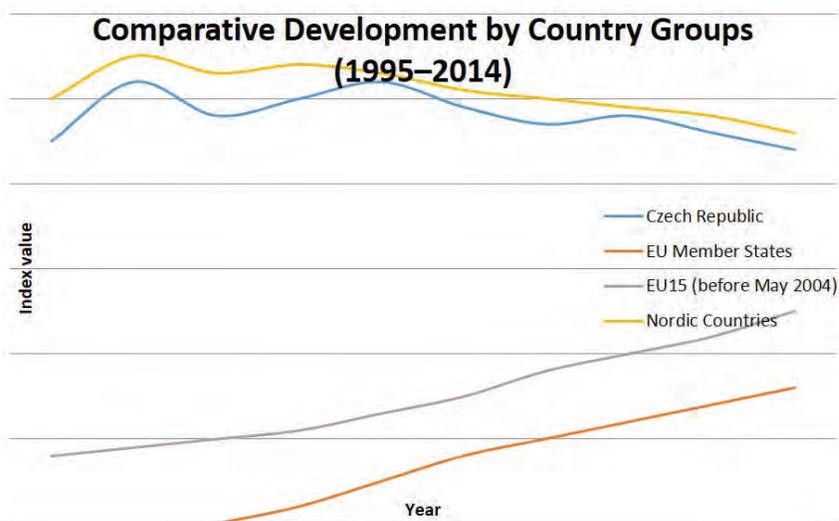
Current status and challenges in the Czech Republic

According to the Strategy for Preparing for an Ageing Society 2019 - 2025 (Ondrášek et al., 2024), published by the Association of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, there are several key challenges in the Czech Republic. Increasing prevalence of chronic diseases. As the population ages, the number of seniors suffering from chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and dementia is increasing. Shortage of medical personnel specialized in geriatric care. Geriatrics is a demanding field requiring specific knowledge and skills that are currently underserved.

A questionnaire survey conducted by the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic confirms that the elderly are a very frequent target group of the analysed services. They were identified as one of the primary target groups in 37% of day care providers. In terms of the age structure of their clients as of 31 January 2020, 17% of the facilities were dominated by clients from the category of younger seniors (65-80 years old), and 17% by older seniors (over 80 years old). However, almost half of the facilities surveyed are adults aged 27-64. In the smallest number of facilities, young adults (19-26 years old) predominate - 11% and children and adolescents (0-18 years old) - 10%. Seniors are the primary target group for 99% of nursing home providers. Older seniors predominate in 74% of facilities, while younger seniors predominate in the remaining 26%. Seniors are also the predominant age group in assisted living facilities, although they were identified as one of the primary target groups in 45% of facilities. Older seniors are the predominant group in 43% of residential care homes, compared to 40% of younger seniors. Respite homes are less common, with a predominance of adults (16%) or young adults (1%). 78% of respite respondents identified seniors as one of their primary target groups, which is reflected in the age structure of their clients. In 40% of facilities, younger seniors are the predominant age group, and in 37% older seniors. Less frequently, adults (10%), young adults (8%) and children and adolescents are the predominant groups in respite services (Asociace poskytovatelů sociálních služeb ČR/Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic, 2021).

Inadequate infrastructure and lack of beds in long-term care. Lack of capacity in long-term care facilities and their outdated infrastructure. Figure 3 showing the capacity to ageing population ratio shows that the existing population will need a greater proportion of care than at present. Not only is there insufficient bed capacity, but there is and will be a shortage of care and support staff (Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí ČR/ Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2023).

GRAPH 3. Capacities as a proportion of the population 65+.



Sources: Ministerstvo práce a sociální věcí ČR/ Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (2023).

The healthy ageing trend is gradually being promoted in the Czech Republic through various initiatives and programmes. Programmes promoting an active lifestyle for seniors. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic organise various programmes focused on physical activity and healthy lifestyle for the elderly. Community centres and clubs for the elderly. Promoting social participation of seniors through community activities. Innovations in home care and telemedicine. Developing new technologies and services that enable seniors to remain in their home environment for as long as possible.

Population ageing represents a significant challenge for the Czech Republic. However, through the implementation of measures aimed at promoting healthy ageing and the use of the recommendations of *the Global Action Plan* (Vidovičová et al., 2020) for healthy ageing, it is possible to ensure that ageing is associated with quality of life, independence and active participation of older people in society.

Old age is an inevitable part of human life and can be a time of joy, fulfilment and wisdom. According to Holmer (2019), a leading expert on aging, emphasizes that with attitude and support, old age can be not only bearable but graceful. What factors and practical tips can contribute to making old age beautiful and fulfilling?

According to Jirkovska (2022), one of the key factors for a graceful old age is maintaining an active lifestyle. This gerontologist has inspired me with many reflections, lectures, publications. Regular physical activity not only strengthens the body, but also improves mental health and overall well-being. Practical tips include taking daily walks, a simple way to stay physically active while enjoying the outdoors. Special exercises such as yoga or tai chi can improve flexibility, balance and strength, reducing the risk of falls and other health problems. Activities that are gentle on the joints while effectively strengthening the whole body are excellent swimming and water aerobics.

Social isolation can have negative effects on mental and physical health. Holmer (2019) stresses the importance of maintaining social contact and being actively involved in community life. Some tips on how to achieve this. Local community centers, especially in my area, not a large metropolitan city, often offer a variety of programs and activities for seniors that provide opportunities to meet and socialize, focusing specifically on the traditional activities of the region. Our Central Bohemia is unique in its versatility. The overlap with other regions gives the opportunity to be drawn into activities typical of other regions. Involvement in volunteer activities can bring a sense of fulfilment and meaningfulness, while allowing you to meet new people. Regularly seeing family, including grandchildren, can bring joy and strengthen family bonds.

Maintaining mental activity is key to healthy ageing. Ondrusova and Krahlucova (2020) recommend several strategies. Learning new things, such as learning a foreign language, playing a musical instrument, or taking courses, can stimulate the brain and improve cognitive function. Regularly reading books, magazines and writing (e.g., journaling, articles) helps keep the mind active and sharp. Any activities such as board games and puzzles. Games like chess, crossword puzzles or sudoku can be a fun way to exercise the mind. Regular medical care and a healthy lifestyle are essential for a quality old age. Ondrusova and Krahlucova (2020) recommend the following: doctor visits and preventive check-ups can detect and address health problems early.

A diet rich in vitamins, minerals, fibre and healthy fats is the key to maintaining good health. Quality sleep is essential for the regeneration of body and mind. In the elderly, sufficient sleep is quite often forgotten, which may be only fragmentary, but its insufficiency leads to moodiness, aggression, lack of appetite, especially in clients affected by dementia, the manifestations of basic deficiency are very high (Dragomirecka, 2022).

Mental well-being and a positive approach to ageing can significantly affect quality of life in old age. Some tips from Holmer. Cultivating hobbies and interests is what gives life meaning, a sense of self-fulfillment, having joy in the little things. Engaging in activities that you enjoy and find fulfilling can bring joy and meaning to everyday life. Meditation and relaxation is what the generation of today's seniors is not very familiar with, they were used to a different way of life where there was not much room for this activity. Meditation and relaxation can help manage stress and improve overall mental well-being. Practicing gratitude and focusing on the positive aspects of life can bring greater contentment and happiness (Holmer, 2019).

Old age can be graceful provided it is accompanied by an active and healthy lifestyle, social engagement, mental stimulation and a positive attitude. Stárek (2022) stresses that everyone can contribute to making their old age fulfilling and joyful. Implementing these practical tips can help older people live their golden years with grace and dignity.

Social exclusion is discussed by Daněk, Klugerová (2023). Social exclusion is a major issue that modern society is attempting to address. It has negative impacts not only on a local level but also on a national, European, and even global scale. In today's interconnected society, it is important to recognize that social exclusion issues in other countries or on other continents will have an impact on us. Therefore, it is crucial to strive for the elimination, prevention, and combat of social exclusion through all possible means. Cooperative learning, which replaces traditional competitiveness, plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds among students and developing their collaborative skills (Bačová, 2024).

The future of residential care services with a view to the use of new technologies

Residential care services are an essential part of supporting not only older people who are no longer able to live independently and need an individual level of support. Due to the growing number of older people and staff shortages, modern technologies are increasingly being researched and implemented that could revolutionise this area. Robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies promise to improve the quality of care, efficiency of services and well-being of clients.

Robotics is one of the fastest growing technologies in social care. Modern robots can assist in many activities that increase the comfort and safety of seniors. Assistive robots can help seniors with everyday tasks such as getting out of bed, getting dressed, or moving between rooms. For example, robots like „Robear“ are designed to safely lift and move people with limited mobility. Social robots like „Pepper“ or „Paro“ provide companionship and emotional support to seniors. These robots can hold simple conversations, respond to emotional needs and help alleviate feelings of loneliness. Robotic assistance in therapy can be used in rehabilitation programs to help seniors exercise and maintain physical fitness. For example, exoskeletons promote movement and strengthen muscles in people with reduced mobility (Navratl and Příhoda, 2022).

Artificial intelligence and smart technologies can significantly improve the quality of care and enable better monitoring and anticipation of seniors' needs. AI systems can analyse health data and predict potential health complications, enabling early intervention and prevention. For example, monitoring systems can detect changes in behavior or health status that may signal the onset of disease. The integration of smart technologies in residential facilities can enhance the safety and comfort of seniors. Sensors can monitor movement, detect falls, control temperature and humidity, and automate lighting and other home systems. Virtual assistants, such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home, can help seniors with daily tasks, remind them of medications, set alarms, or facilitate communication with family and staff (Hricova et al., 2024).

Telemedicine is becoming an increasingly important tool in the field of social care, especially in the context of pandemic situations or shortages of health personnel. Telemedicine allows seniors to consult their health problems with doctors and specialists remotely, which is particularly advantageous for people with limited mobility, or in remote areas. Wearable technologies such as smart watches and health sensors can monitor seniors' vital signs and send the data to health professionals for analysis.

Apps and online platforms can provide therapeutic programs focused on the physical and mental well-being of seniors, such as exercise, meditation, or cognitive training (Jochmann et al., 2022).

Despite the many advantages, new technologies also bring certain challenges and ethical issues. Not all seniors are open to using modern technology. It is important to ensure that new technologies are intuitive and easy to use. With the increasing use of digital technologies, increased attention must be paid to the protection of seniors' personal and health data. While technology can greatly improve the quality of care, it is important not to forget the human touch and personal interactions that are indispensable to many seniors.

The future of residential care services in the Czech Republic promises significant changes thanks to the integration of robotics, artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. These innovations can improve the quality of life of seniors, increase the efficiency of care and enable better adaptation to individual needs. However, it is crucial that this transition is carried out sensitively and ethically, with an emphasis on safety and humanity in elderly care.

It is necessary to mention the aspect of professional practice and professional training, as stated by Stárek, Klugerová & Víšek (2022) The development and nature of quality work placement is not only the work of the university but also each student, specifically from the perspective of representation of the given university when a student creates the first impression not only in itself but also in the university itself and may thus open or close the gates to undertaking further work placement. The ever-expanding portfolio of institutions with which they collaborate or participate in project activities, conferences, professional seminars generates awareness of the diversity of the profession, but also the interconnectedness and transfer of information that evaluates the student, the university and their expertise or performance.

Providers of residential social services in the regions of the Czech Republic

The system of social services in the Czech Republic is a key part of the state policy aimed at ensuring support and protection of vulnerable groups. These services are provided by a wide range of entities, including state institutions, regions, municipalities, non-profit organisations, religious organisations and private entities. The diversity of providers not only allows for a wider range of coverage of the needs of individual target groups, but also for a variability of approaches in their organisation and implementation. Within the Czech Republic, however, it is necessary to take into account regional specificities, which are reflected in different capacities, forms and availability of residential social services.

Each region of the Czech Republic faces its own demographic, geographic and socio-economic challenges that affect the way social services are provided. For example, **the Central Bohemian Region**, which is the largest and one of the most populous regions in the Czech Republic, shows considerable variability in the structure of the needs of its inhabitants. This variability is due to the combination of densely populated areas close to the capital Prague and rural regions with significantly lower population density. The provision of social services in this region therefore requires a comprehensive approach that reflects geographical, demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

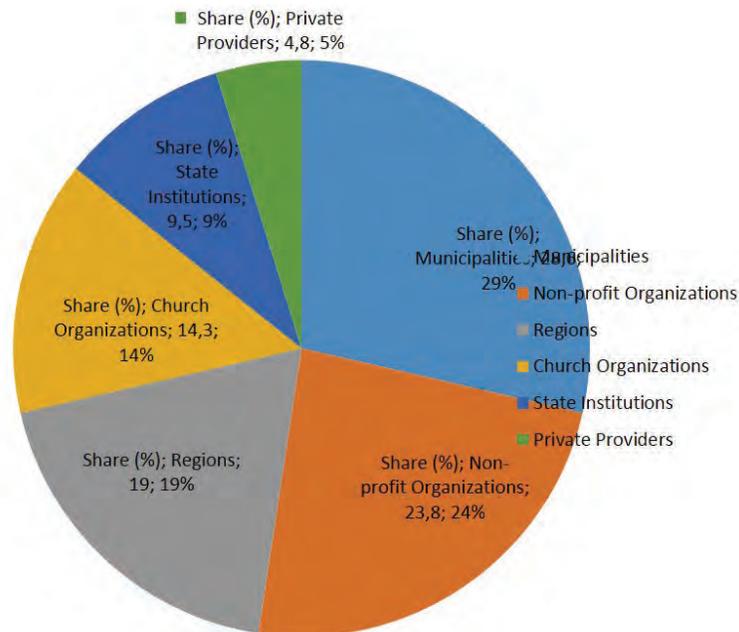
In line with the data presented by Wija et al. (2019), there are significant regional differences in the number and structure of residential social services in the Czech Republic. These differences are based not only on historical contexts, but also on the different availability of financial resources and organisational capacities in different regions. The graphical overview mentioned in this study points to the uneven distribution of social service facilities, which has a major impact on their accessibility for different target groups, such as seniors, people with disabilities or people in crisis situations.

TABLE 1. Distribution of the number of residential social services by region.

| Region | Number of Residential Social Services | Rank |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|------|
| Karlovy Vary | 60 | 1 |
| Vysočina | 65 | 2 |
| Liberec | 70 | 3 |
| Pardubice | 75 | 4 |
| Zlín | 80 | 5 |
| South Bohemian | 80 | 6 |
| Hradec Králové | 85 | 7 |
| Plzeň | 90 | 8 |
| Olomouc | 95 | 9 |
| Ústí nad Labem | 110 | 10 |
| South Moravian | 120 | 11 |
| Moravian-Silesian | 130 | 12 |
| Prague | 140 | 13 |
| Central Bohemian | 150 | 14 |

Sources: Wija et al. (2019).

From the point of view of providers, the system of residential social services in the Czech Republic is characterised by considerable diversity. According to the data of the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (2021), different types of providers account for the total volume of services provided: state institutions (10%), regions (20%), municipalities (30%), non-profit organisations (25%), religious organisations (15%) and private providers (5%). This dispersion of providers reflects not only different approaches to the organisation of services, but also different sources of funding and priorities of individual entities. Municipalities, as the most important providers of residential social services, usually respond to the acute local needs of the population. In contrast, non-profit and religious organisations often bring innovative approaches and long-term oriented services, while regions and state institutions focus on systematic planning and support of specific services with higher professional intensity.

GRAPH 4. Distribution of social services in the Czech Republic by provider.

Sources: Asociace poskytovatelů sociálních služeb ČR/Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (2021).

Specifically in the Central Bohemian Region, it is necessary to adapt the system of social services to the diverse needs of the population in different types of localities. Densely populated areas around Prague often require services aimed at supporting families, seniors and low-income people, while rural regions face challenges related to lack of transport accessibility and limited capacity of facilities. These differences require a coordinated approach that includes not only regional planning, but also support for innovation and increased collaboration among providers.

One of the main objectives in developing the system of residential social services is to ensure their uniform availability and quality across the region. This can be achieved through better coordination between different types of providers, greater support for non-profit organisations and increased financial investment in infrastructure and service capacity, particularly in less accessible areas. Another key step is the use of modern technologies and best practices that can make the organisation of services more efficient and accessible.

The system of residential social services in the Czech Republic is a complex structure whose functionality depends on the cooperation of a wide range of actors. Although the current system allows a high degree of adaptability, there are still challenges related to regional inequalities, capacity constraints and different sources of funding. These challenges require continuous reflection and innovation to ensure that residential social services remain an effective tool for supporting vulnerable populations in all regions of the Czech Republic.

The need for legislative changes

The law no. 108/2006 coll. about social services when it was released was revolutionary as it influenced all perspectives of and systems of social services. However, the development of society is crucial and thus it is important to continue with improvements. The novel of law no. 108/2006 coll. is long-term topic which still does not change the reality.

Into priorities that are possible and needed we include these:

- 1) Support for informal care - adding care givers to aimed group for the law including the definition in the law.
- 2) Contribution for care - to add the responsibility of an applicant to provide owner of the account to where the financial contribution is sent.
— To add responsibility for regional office of Office for Labour of Czech Republic which controls the usage of the financial contribution, to legally define the process of controls.
- 3) The changes are of social services - to add the subsidiarity into primary principles of the law. To define social services of community character. To join the residential service) housing for elderly people, housing with specific regime, and housing for people with health handicap) into new social services „house of social services“. to extend the primary activities of care services to „help while securing the safety and possibility to stay in natural environment“, to extend the asylum housing also for people with addiction for substances and some other services like „learning of skills for gaining independent housing“. To extend the circle of services that are provided without any financial contribution, to broaden the aimed clients' group of social counselling for people who are in danger of becoming substances addicted and victims of gender violence.
- 4) To anchor the standard of material, technical, and personal provision for social services (the closer fixture will be provided in legal transcript).
- 5) To set up the valorisation mechanism for maximum spending for social services. Improving the system for calendar years based on legally defined conditions.
- 6) Changes in quality of provided services. The revision on provider's responsibilities which will be followed by change of quality standards + adding the responsibilities focused on protection of clients' rights. In relation to changes responsibility for modification and origin of new delicts in area of protection client's right + adjustment of legal definition of quality.
- 7) Changes in adjustments of clients' movements. The cancellation of mandatory usage of specific adjustments to limit clients' aggression towards the care givers in order to respect clients' individuality. The modification of obligation to use some adjustment. Further, to completely omit the use of adjustments (i.e. usage of medicaments).
- 8) The changes in the area of social services registration. The placement of an extra step for possible clients interested into obtaining the registration. Further, to add more details into responsibilities of a client interested into registration in order to changes of relevant information without previous request of a provider due to changes in primary registration. The changes will affect process of registration, request of a provider to be included into register of social services, records of information and even its separation into private and public part.

- 9) The change in area of effectivity during provide the social services = securing the social work. Limitation of activities involved in social work and responsibilities of social workers in offices 3rd type involving the definition of term social worker - social curator. The responsibility of assigned local office to directly search for subject which provide social services without registration.
- 10) Changes in area of classification for social services provision. Exact definition that social services are provided by social workers assigned by regional office. The adjustment of definition of term social worker based on notes from practice. Also, including new activities which are realised by social workers. The modification of study programs responding to changes conducted within the law. Plus, it is suggested to add more details in area of social workers leaders' work.

(Stárek and Zpěvák, 2024)

Social work with the elderly is an essential tool to support their dignified, active and meaningful ageing. Demographic changes, which bring an increase in the proportion of the elderly population, not only create an increased demand for specialised social services, but also the need to adapt existing approaches and methods. Social work focuses on the elderly and their families and responds to their changing needs, which include not only the practical aspects of life but also emotional, psychological and social dimensions. Ensuring their full participation in society is therefore a key challenge that requires innovative approaches, interdisciplinary cooperation and systemic change (Stárek, Klugerová, Daněk, Vlach, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Demographic changes associated with population ageing represent a major challenge for the sustainability of health, social and economic systems in the Czech Republic. The proportion of the population over 65 years of age reached more than 20% in 2020 and this trend is projected to continue, leading to a significant increase in the number of seniors in society over the next 50-100 years. This demographic shift has wide-ranging implications in many areas. One of the most important aspects is the need to expand and innovate geriatric and long-term care, which must respond to the increased incidence of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and dementia. Insufficient capacity in inpatient facilities, outdated infrastructure and a lack of qualified medical staff are major barriers to effective care delivery. Current care systems face not only staff shortages but also insufficient support for informal carers, whose importance will grow in the coming decades. An important contribution of this article is the emphasis on the implementation of the concept of healthy ageing, which promotes the active participation of older people in society, the prevention of disease and the maintenance of functional autonomy. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines healthy aging as a process that enables seniors to maintain functional abilities and live a full life. In the Czech Republic, however, healthy ageing is still in the phase of gradual integration into practice, with the priority remaining the fight against ageism, whose manifestations negatively affect the physical and mental health of seniors, their self-esteem and social participation. The article also identifies the use of modern technology as a key factor in sustainable care. Robotics, artificial intelligence and telemedicine can make a significant contribution to addressing staff shortages and improving the quality of care.

For example, assistive robots are already helping seniors with daily activities such as transferring or dressing, while AI systems enable health monitoring and predicting complications. Yet, it is essential to be mindful of the ethical issues involved in integrating these technologies, particularly the protection of personal data and maintaining a human touch in care. Another key area identified in the text is regional inequality in access to social services. The capacity and structure of residential facilities varies across regions, reflecting historical, demographic and economic differences. This problem requires a coordinated approach, involving better planning, increased investment in infrastructure and capacity expansion, particularly in less accessible areas.

In order to address these challenges, it is essential to introduce legislation that reflects the current needs of an ageing society. Priority changes include supporting informal carers, broadening the definition of community and residential services, introducing quality standards and a systemic reassessment of funding. The implementation of these measures can contribute to the creation of a sustainable care system that will ensure that older people can live with dignity and have access to modern services. Population ageing should not only be seen as a threat but also as an opportunity for the development of society. Adopting innovative approaches, strengthening intergenerational solidarity and promoting healthy ageing are the way to tackle this challenge successfully. The Czech Republic has the opportunity to become an example for other countries on how to effectively integrate demographic change into their policies and practices, while strengthening the quality of life of all generations.

Population ageing is a universal phenomenon that affects all developed societies, regardless of their geographical or cultural differences. This process highlights the deep interconnectivity of the social, economic and health systems that form the backbone of modern society. Although demographic change often raises concerns about the increasing burden on public budgets and care capacities, it is also necessary to see this development as an opportunity to redefine society's values and priorities. In the context of an ageing population, it is crucial to strengthen systemic resilience, which consists not only in effective resource management but above all in building an inclusive society. Such a society must be able to see old age not only as the final stage of human life, but as a natural part of it, enriched with experience, wisdom and the potential to contribute to society. Intergenerational solidarity, based on mutual respect and cooperation, is an essential tool that can support this approach. The importance of innovation as an engine of social and economic transformation should also be emphasised. Technological advances such as artificial intelligence, telemedicine and robotics can not only mitigate the effects of ageing but also contribute to greater personalisation and humanisation of care. At the same time, however, there is a need to ensure that these technologies serve as tools to empower and support the individual, rather than as mechanisms to isolate or dehumanise them. A fundamental question raised by the ageing process is that of the values on which society is built. Ensuring a dignified life for all its members, regardless of age, is a test not only of organisational and financial capacity, but also of the moral principles by which society operates. Population ageing must therefore be seen in the wider context of sustainable development, which takes account of environmental, social and economic aspects and which emphasises the fair distribution of resources between generations.

In conclusion, the ageing process is above all a challenge to change. It requires strengthening solidarity, deepening international cooperation and linking scientific knowledge to concrete action by politicians, care providers and civil society. Any strategy to respond to this phenomenon should be based on the principles of humanity, innovation and sustainability, which will be the basis for the harmonious development of future societies.

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