Government Aid Programmes in Developing Security of Senior Citizens in Poland

Introduction

Government aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens have the goal to implement the social mission of developing security, in a broad sense of this term. These tasks are guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. Aid programmes undoubtedly provide considerable support to senior citizens, however such aid is often still insufficient. Poverty is a serious social problem, especially during the pandemic, inflation and energy crisis (e.g. one senior citizen was living in a flat where the temperature was only 9°C). Therefore, as far as the principle of meeting the requirements of everyday life is concerned, its high quality must be guaranteed to senior citizens. The problem requires a detailed scientific diagnosis and postulative solutions. The subject of the analysis includes government aid programmes developed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

In accordance with the standards provided by EUROSTAT and OECD, it has been assumed that senior citizens are people at and over the age of 65. The Act of 11th September 2015 on Senior Citizens defines senior citizens as people who have turned 60; also, according to this Act, senior policy includes ‘all activities undertaken by units of public administration.
and other organisations and institutions that implement tasks and initiatives for the development of dignified and healthy ageing.\(^7\)

The living conditions of senior citizens in Poland have always been difficult. However, the current situation related to threats of war, demographic and economic problems, domestic violence, problems referring to the pandemic, inflation, energy crisis, and poverty only exacerbate senior citizens’ quality of life. Therefore, aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens become a necessity to provide them with at least partial relief.

The Ministry of Family and Social Policy implements the following aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens:
- *Mama 4+* is a supplementary parental benefit;\(^8\)
- *Emerytura+ (Pension+)* is a one-off monetary benefit for retired people and pensioners\(^9\) (a 13th and 14th monthly pension payment for the most deprived);
- social insurance; the Ministry of Family and Social Policy develops the policy under the social insurance system. The Ministry supervises pension, disability, sickness, maternal and accident insurance;
- *Opieka 75+ – (Caring 75+)* is an aid programme developed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy implemented by self-governments. The programme involves providing caring services to people over 75 at the places of their residence;\(^10\)
- *Aktywni+ (The Active Ones+)* – a multi-annual programme dedicated to senior citizens in 2021–2025; the aim of this aid programme is the increased participation of senior citizens in all areas of social life;\(^11\)
- a pre-defined project *Counteracting Violence towards Senior and Disabled Citizens* – a project implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy under the *Justice* programme. The aim of the project is to support senior and disabled citizens. It is implemented with funds obtained from the Norway Grants;\(^12\)
- a support programme dedicated to senior, disabled and ailing citizens. The support can be provided at their places of residence during the day or at caring centres or places of permanent residence at social welfare homes.\(^13\)

The aid programmes listed above come only as some support to senior citizens who find themselves in a very difficult social situation. The analysis indicates that not all senior citizens who are in a difficult situation

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\(^{7}\) Ustawa z 11 września 2015 o osobach starszych (DzU, 2015, item 1705), Art. 4(2).
have become beneficiaries of these programmes. There should also be separate programmes dedicated to senior citizens who live alone, in poverty or who are inept or helpless.

**Methodological framework**

Methodology is an indispensable element for defining research procedures. A selected fragment of reality requires an adequate definition of a research problem. An adequate determination of research stages guarantees a correct course of scientific actions. Moreover, indication of an aim and a research subject also guarantees the right procedures. Application of adequate research methods to solve the research problem and formulation of a research hypothesis define the substantive research aspects. Considered from a social point of view, the topic cannot be underestimated because it refers to the existential aspects of senior citizens’ lives.

The main research problem is the following question: how do government aid programmes affect the social security of senior citizens in Poland? The research subject is an analysis of aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens, providing a list and characteristics of the particular government aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens. The research aim is to define the efficiency and the role of aid programmes in the social functioning of senior citizens. Moreover, it is also to present a vision of changes in developing programmes that would be dedicated to all senior citizens: those who really need financial, material, psychological, economic, and social support. The main research hypothesis is an assumption that the State provides senior citizens with opportunities to benefit from aid programmes. The analysed research covers programs implemented by the current government.

One of the research methods is a critical analysis of the literature and legal acts, and reasoning, induction, synthesis, observation of social life and deduction. Finally, the report of the Supreme Audit Office was used in the work.14

Developing social security comes as a task to be performed by the State, including government, self-government, non-government entities, associations, and foundations whose statutory responsibilities include supporting senior citizens. Security of senior citizens is one of the fundamental tasks of the State. It is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2nd April 1997.15

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Characteristics of the aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens and developed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy

Government programs are designed to help seniors in the daily hardships of life. A large number of them may make it difficult to choose an appropriate one for the situation of the elderly.

1. **Emerytura+ (Pension+)** is a one-off monetary benefit paid at the amount of the minimal pension in a current calendar year.¹⁶ The Ministry of Family and Social Policy developed a draft act¹⁷ which entered in force in 2019. In 2019, 9.72 million citizens receiving pensions and disability benefits became beneficiaries of the Emerytura+ programme. In 2021, all retired citizens and pensioners received the so-called thirteenth pension and those who received the lowest pensions also received the fourteenth pension. The Emerytura+ programme will also provide the thirteenth and the fourteenth pensions to retired citizens and pensioners in 2023. However, such one-off support is still insufficient in the current economic and social situation of senior citizens.

2. **Opieka 75+ (Caring 75+)** is an aid programme developed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy implemented by self-governments. The programme involves providing caring services to people over 75 at the places of their residence.¹⁸ It is a carer’s allowance provided to citizens who are completely incapable of work and independent existence.¹⁹ The carer’s allowance is valorised on an annual basis and since 1st March 2023, it has been PLN 294.39. The allowance is free of income tax and is also not subject to court or administrative execution.²⁰ The carer’s allowance is paid with a pension or disability benefit. The Opieka 75+ comes as important support to senior citizens, however its amount is still insufficient, considering the age of the beneficiaries. When people turn 75, they most frequently struggle with various health problems that definitely require much higher financial means to cope with.

3. **Aktywni+ (The Active Ones+)** – a multi-annual programme dedicated to senior citizens in the years 2021–2025; the aim of this aid programme is the increased participation of senior citizens in all areas of social life. The general aim of the programme consists of four specific aims:
   — The first aim is to involve senior citizens into social relations by the popularising an offer to manage their free time. It also aims to activate local communities in order to develop voluntary services in favour of senior citizens at the places of their residence, and to support and help

¹⁶ Ustawa z 4 kwietnia 2019 o jednorazowym świadczeniu pieniężnym dla emerytów i rencistów w 2019 (DzU, 2019, item 743), Art. 1.
¹⁷ Ustawa z 4 kwietnia 2019 o jednorazowym świadczeniu pieniężnym dla emerytów i rencistów w 2019 (DzU, 2019, item 743).
dependent senior citizens and provide them with opportunities to engage in the labour market.

— The second specific aim is to increase the involvement of senior citizens in participatory processes and social interactions in public life and to strengthen the self-organisation of senior citizens and their increased participation in decisions that impact their quality of life.

— The third aim is to enhance practical skills and digital competences in senior citizens and also to develop behaviour favourable for applying modern technologies in private life. Senior citizens should acquire skills to use new media that favour activating and developing the security of senior citizens. The knowledge and skills acquired by senior citizens in the above-mentioned field are very important, considering the social point of view and cyber threats.

— The fourth aim is to develop a positive image of old age and ageing process, and to develop social interactions and competences, including knowledge and skills related to ageing in people of all age groups. Friendly and permanent inter-generational relations foster the development of a positive image of senior citizens, which directly affects their security.\(^{21}\)

The programme is implemented in the years 2021–2025 with the State funds. An amount of PLN 40 million has been assigned to each year of the programme. Hence, the total budget of the programme in the years 2021–2025 is PLN 200 million.\(^{22}\)

4. Senior+ – a multi-annual programme in the years 2021–2025, aimed at increasing activities undertaken by senior citizens in the field of social relations. The programme assumes financial support for territorial self-government units in the implementation of their own tasks related to running and providing admittance to Senior+ support centres.\(^{23}\) The financial support provided under the programme is to go to developing support centre infrastructure in local communities and also increasing the number of places for senior citizens at Senior+ support centres. The programme is intended to provide support to self-government units in the development of a network of Senior+ daily care homes and Senior+ clubs. The operational aim of the programme is activation of senior citizens in the field of physical activities, kinesiotherapy, education, cultural, recreational, and caring offers. It also provides opportunities for higher involvement of senior citizens in the active spending of their free time and self-assistance actions. An important element of the programme is the opportunity provided to self-government units to

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22 Uchwała nr 167 Rady Ministrów z 16 listopada 2020 w sprawie ustanowienia programu wieloletniego na rzecz Osób Starszych „Aktywni+” na lata 2021–2025 (MP, 2020, item 1125).

participate in an open bid competition and to obtain funds to implement their projects:

‘a) one-off financial support to establish and/or equip a support centre, up to 80% of its total implementation costs. The amount cannot be higher than PLN 400,000 for a Senior+ daily care home and PLN 200,000 for a Senior+ club. If the building is not the property of a particular territorial self-government unit, the funds granted under Module 1 of the programme can be obtained only to equip this particular support centre;
b) maintaining the operation of the existing support centres established under the framework of Module 1. Activities related to the year-round ongoing maintenance of a support centre can also be funded from the State budget in each budget year, under the bid competition mode. The monthly amount of the funds dedicated to the current operation of support centres established under the programme can be no more than PLN 400 per one place at a particular support centre and no more than PLN 200 at a Senior+ club. The fund cannot exceed 50% of the total cost of the implementation of the task’.

5. Mama+ – is a supplementary parental benefit paid under the programme dedicated to people who have raised at least four children. They have been in a situation when they have not been able to work or have had to resign and, as a result, they have been living in poverty and have not obtained any benefits, even at a minimum level. Undoubtedly, this financial benefit comes as some support to people who have found themselves in such a situation.

The benefit is paid to the following groups of people:

‘a) mothers who have birthed and raised or raised at least four children; if the mother is deceased or has abandoned the children or been deemed incapable of raising the children for a long time, the benefit is paid to the father who has raised at least four children;
b) people who do not have any indispensable means to live on but who have reached the retirement age. In Poland, the retirement age is 60 for women and 65 for men;
c) people who live in Poland only and who (after they turned 16) have had their centre of interest in the territory of Poland for at least 10 years;
d) Polish citizens or people who have been granted the right of residence or the right of permanent residence in Poland or citizens of the EU member countries, citizens of the EFTA member countries and foreigners who are legally staying in the territory of Poland’.

The benefit is granted to ‘people who have already been obtaining benefits lower than the lowest pension; the parental benefit is supplementary to such benefits, up to the amount of the lowest pension (since 1st March 2019 it has been PLN

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24 Ibid.
25 Ustawa z 31 stycznia 2019 o rodzicielskim świadczeniu uzupełniającym (DzU, 2019, item 303).
If the person does not have any rights to any benefits, the amount of the parental benefit will be paid at this amount.\textsuperscript{27}

6. social insurance includes: pension, disability, sickness, maternal and accident insurance, war veterans and victims of oppression, individual pension accounts (IPAs), individual pension security accounts (IPSAs), employee pension schemes (EPSs), and pension funds.\textsuperscript{28}

The Ministry of Family and Social Policy develops legal acts on the amounts of insurance contributions, the rights to obtain insurance benefits dedicated to senior citizens, war veterans, people disabled in war, and military disabled people. The Minister of Family and Social Policy supervises the National Insurance Agency.\textsuperscript{29}

A new pension scheme in Poland has been in operation since 1st January 1999. The changes have not covered all the insured people because of the scope of those changes and the costs of the reform. ‘Moreover, the Legislator recognises the fact that the principles of granting benefits and their calculation must not be altered for people who have been insured for a long time (sometimes for a few decades) under the previous system’.\textsuperscript{30}

Pension benefits are granted to people who are covered by pension insurance, except for those who exercise personal custody over a child and ‘who do not meet the requirements for being subject to compulsory pension and disability insurance, as stated in Art. 6a of the Act on the social insurance scheme’.\textsuperscript{31}

The Act of 13th October 1998 on the social insurance scheme specifies the people who are entitled to disability insurance.\textsuperscript{32}

7. the pre-defined project \textit{Counteracting Violence towards Senior and Disabled Citizens} – a project for the years 2020–2024, implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy under the Justice programme. The programme is supported with funds obtained from the Norway Grants.\textsuperscript{33}

The forms of violence towards senior citizens are very specific, considering their family situations. The most frequently observed acts of violence towards senior citizens include ‘isolation, extorting money (their pensions or disability benefits), verbal abuse related to senior citizens’ disabilities or illnesses, blackmailing, threats, bad names, limiting senior citizens’ freedom of decision, threatening with sending senior citizens to a nursing home for permanent residence, insisting and telling senior citizens that they suffer from mental illnesses, forcing some amendments to senior citizens’ wills, charging them with

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} DzU, 1998, No. 137, item 887, Art.6, 8, 9, 36a.
various costs (mortgages or loans), persuading them into donations, neglect in terms of providing proper care, food, medications, personal hygiene, medical care, their caretakers abandoning them, and leaving senior citizens without care and assistance. The Covid-19 pandemic contributed even further to increased problems of family violence that affect children, disabled people and senior citizens. These are people who are dependent on others and who are in an extremely difficult social situation. Whenever senior citizens experience violence, it is necessary to react to break the silence and to help. Senior citizens themselves should confide in someone they trust, inform a social service worker, a police officer or a representative of a non-government organisation (a foundation or an association) that deals with security of senior citizens. The aim of the programme is to react to harm done to senior citizens by diagnosing violence towards senior and disabled citizens. It is also to provide support in local communities in the field of family violence. Considering the social point of view, mass media, including digital media, play a significant role in that process. First contact emergency services should be provided with training in the field of recognising family violence and further actions undertaken in such situations. ‘On 8th January 2021, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy signed an agreement with the Ministry of Justice on the implementation of the pre-defined project Counteracting Violence towards Senior and Disabled Citizens. PLN 6,200,000 was assigned for the implementation of that project under this agreement’.

Violence towards senior citizens is a social problem, and it requires professional systemic solutions. Starting the procedures under the Blue Card is still not enough. If there is violence against the elderly, social services should appoint a family assistant trained in this type of family situation.

Evaluation of Senior+, a multi-annual government programme provided by the Supreme Audit Chamber

The statistical data provided by the Central Statistical Office clearly indicate that the Polish society has been ageing very dynamically. More people die than are born, so the social group of people of working age has been decreasing very quickly. Moreover, the number of women of

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36 Ibid; Electronic source: https://pacjent.gov.pl/aktualnosc/reaguj-na-przemoc-wobec-osob-starszych, accessed: 13.12.2022. (e.g. it is possible to call the Elderly Project Foundation on +48 537 375 505 in Poland).
childbearing age has also been decreasing; the age median of women who can bear children has been getting higher and higher. If the data provided by the Central Statistical Office are confirmed, every third Pole will be 60 or more year old by 2050. The analysis of the demographic data provided by the Central Statistical Office indicates the importance of the senior policy, which must provide senior citizens with broad space to participate actively in social life.

The Senior+ government multi-annual programme for the years 2021–2025 is aimed at the intensification of senior citizens’ activities in social relations. The audit performed by the Supreme Audit Chamber confirmed that during the years 2018–2020, the programme came as significant support to self-governments that organised Senior+ daily care homes and Senior+ clubs. In its report no. KPS.430.011.2021, register no. 155/2021/P/21/044/KPS, the Supreme Audit Chamber clearly confirms that the Senior+ programme is a good idea, however the principles of its financing should be corrected. The conclusions provided by the Supreme Audit Chamber in its report to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy are very significant, regarding the following issues:

— financial covering for additional places at already functioning Senior+ centres established by self-government units with the exclusive use of their own funds under the Senior+ programme for the years 2021–2025, in the case of incomplete allocation of funds dedicated to the implementation of the programme during the particular year;
— standardisation of the amounts of funds granted under the Senior+ programme for the years 2021–2025 for the establishment of Senior+ centres. The amount of the funds should depend on the number of places in a particular centre.

In 2019, the Supreme Audit Chamber stated that over 60% of the analysed self-governments declared that they were unable to finance Senior+ daily care homes and Senior+ clubs with their own funds after the mandatory duration of the programme – namely, after three years. The Supreme Audit Chamber also observed another tendency in the implementation of the programme for the years 2015–2020: only every third municipality applied for the funds. Other municipalities ‘lacked their own funds or selected some more favourable EU programmes where they could obtain financial coverage up to even 85% of the total costs of the particular task’. Moreover, the Supreme Audit Chamber indicated that ‘during

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42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
the analysed period, PLN 240 million was assigned to establish centres under the Senior+ programme and the municipalities used only 80% of that. Other government and EU programmes were found to be more financially advantageous.45

There is a particularly interesting entry in the report provided by the Supreme Audit Chamber: ‘The amount of the funds granted for implementing the Senior+ programme depends on the types of established centres. During the analysed period, the maximum amount for the establishment of a daily care home was PLN 300,000 and for a club, it was PLN 150,000. At the same time, the minimum number of places in the established centres was undefined. As a result, there were considerable discrepancies in the funds: the amount of funds assigned to one place established at a daily care home ranged from PLN 1,334 up to PLN 20,000 and to one place established at a club, the amounts granted ranged from PLN 833 up to PLN 15,000. If senior citizens were more interested in the established centres, the municipalities could not obtain funds to establish more places at already existing centres because such a possibility was not provided.46

The analysis of the senior policy in the municipalities audited by the Supreme Audit Chamber indicates that improving the quality of senior citizens’ lives should be prioritised in the activities undertaken by government, self-government and non-government organisations. The fundamental aim of the programmes should be activation of senior citizens to improve their security and quality of life to a level that would enable them to resign from using institutional help, such as social welfare residential homes, or to start using them much later.

The senior policy, including meeting senior citizens’ needs, should be implemented at the level of local communities, where senior citizens should obtain the support and real help they require. Material, psychological and financial assistance should be included in the municipal strategy of solving social problems.48 The report provided by the Supreme Audit Chamber indicates that the strategies pursued in the analysed municipalities are too general. There are no forecasts for expenditures or income. There is no method of monitoring the activities undertaken there, which means that there is no coordination of such activities. This is a statutory obligation that results from the Act on Social Welfare.49 According to the Supreme Audit Chamber, the senior policy does not fully take into consideration the opportunities included in the Act on Social Welfare. Local self-governments are more focused on financing senior citizens’ residence in social welfare residential centres. Other alternative forms of support provided to senior citizens are omitted, such as establishing so-called

45 Ibid.
49 Ustawa z 12 marca 2004 o pomocy społecznej (DzU, 2004, No. 64, item 593).
protected flats or family assistance homes. Most frequently, other forms of support are definitely cheaper than social welfare residential homes. Moreover, these forms are more friendly to senior citizens, considering the individual character of the situation they are currently in and their personal interactions.

**Developing government aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens**

Government aid programmes for senior citizens who are in a difficult material, financial or psychological situation come as support and an opportunity to improve their quality of life. However, it is necessary to state that these programmes are insufficient as they involve senior citizens in a selective way and the financial means are definitely insufficient or erroneously distributed, such as the Mama+ government aid programme, which is a supplementary parental benefit.\(^50\) The Act on a supplementary parental benefit defines conditions and terms for the payment of the funds. It is dedicated to mothers who have had to raise at least four children and therefore they have had to resign from work.

There are numerous government aid programmes for senior citizens. The author, however, has been confined to present only government aid programmes implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. Similar programmes dedicated to senior citizens are also implemented by other Ministries, for example, the Ministry of Health, which implements a programme in which free medicines are distributed to senior citizens who are aged 75 or older;\(^51\) the Ministry of Development and Technology, which implements the Fairs for Senior Citizens\(^52\) programme; the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, which implements the Therapeutic Luncheons\(^53\) programme, and the Ministry of Investment and Development, which implements the Accessibility Plus\(^54\) programme. So, the number of government

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\(^50\) Ustawa z 31 stycznia 2019 o rodzicielskim świadczeniu uzupełniającym (DzU, 2019, item 303), Art. 1.1.

\(^51\) The draft list was developed based on the current announcement of the Minister of Health of 29th June 2016 on the List of Reimbursed Medicaments, Food of Special Nutritional Purposes and Medical Products as of 1st July 2016 (DzU MZ, 2016, item 68).


\(^53\) Electronic source: https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony, accessed: 13.12.2022. The Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy has issued a notice of a competition for the broader use of social innovation: Therapeutic Luncheons. It is aimed at popularising a model of social integration dedicated to people with disabilities and senior citizens who need support in their everyday life. The idea is to prepare and to deliver lunch to senior citizens and participants of occupational therapy workshops.

\(^54\) Electronic source: https://www.funduszeeuropejskie.gov.pl/strony/o-funduszach/fundusz-europejskie-bez-barier/dostepnosc-plus/o-programie/, accessed: 13.12.2022. The Accessibility Plus programme comes as the first and a comprehensive approach towards accessibility in Poland. It is aimed at providing free access to all facilities, services and possibilities to participate in social and public life to people with special needs. The programme is focused on adjusting the public space, architecture, means of transport and products to the requirements of all citizens, including senior citizens.
aid programmes is very high. Hence, it is reasonable to pose the question of how familiar senior citizens are with the programmes in which they can participate. The situation of senior citizens who live in poverty is much worse because of their age and limited possibilities to take care of themselves and improve their quality of life. Ailing senior citizens need care and support even more. In its annual Poverty Watch report\textsuperscript{55} published in 2022, the European Anti-Poverty Network\textsuperscript{56} states that the situation of senior citizens (aged 65+) has been worsening in terms of some indicators. In comparison to the previous year, the number of senior citizens who live in relative poverty\textsuperscript{57} has not changed but since 2019, this number has been increased by 100,000 people. The share of senior citizens who rely on food aid has been systematically increasing – from 64,000 people in 2015 up to 157,000 people in 2021 (an increase by 147%). At the same time, in comparison to the previous year, the number of senior citizens who live in extreme poverty has decreased and the number of those who live in severe material and social deprivation has increased.\textsuperscript{58} The forecasts for Poland provided by the Poverty Watch 2022 report are bad. The scope of poverty is going to expand and unemployment is going to grow by 2%. Considering the scope of extreme poverty of senior citizens, there are no clear trends in the years 2018–2021. In 2020, a slight increase was observed in that field: from 3.8% up to 4.4% and in the subsequent year, there was a decrease by 1%. The number of senior citizens who lived in extreme poverty in 2021 decreased by approximately 67,000. However, senior citizens who are above this threshold are still often very poor.\textsuperscript{59} The number of senior citizens who rely on food aid has tripled over several years.\textsuperscript{60} Hence, the situation is definitely very hard, considering the fact that the society has been ageing quickly. It can be supposed that the number of poor senior citizens will grow. Moreover, some senior citizens are forced to use social welfare benefits that are too low.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Electronic source:} https://stat.gov.pl/metainformacje/slownik-pojec/pojecia-stosowane-w-statystyce-publicznej/3215,pojecie.html, \textit{accessed:} 19.12.2022. The percentage of people living in households where the level of expenses (including the value of articles obtained for free and the value of natural consumption) was lower than the relative poverty threshold, assumed at the level of 50% of the average monthly expenses established for all households with the consideration of the so-called original OECD equivalence scale.


Considering the above-mentioned facts, it is advisable to consider what the report provided by the Supreme Audit Chamber\(^62\) indicates, namely: the fact that local communities should precisely diagnose the financial, material, psychological, social and economic problems of senior citizens in their areas. Territorial self-governments have their tools and capabilities to gather information about the situation of senior citizens. Local communities are much better informed about who needs support or specialist assistance. Neighbourhood social interactions, interest shown by close family and relatives, police officers, local parish priests, community nurses, professional and social probation officers, education workers, and members of the commissions for solving alcohol problems can provide all the necessary information on senior citizens’ living conditions. This kind of diagnostics referring to the people in need in the area of territorial self-governments could largely contribute to applying sufficient government aid programmes. Having their own registers of citizens who need systemic support, social welfare departments at the self-governments could also obtain information about senior citizens who – for various reasons – have not been put into the official registers of people in need and who live in extreme poverty. Sometimes, the living conditions of a particular senior citizen might seem good for social services but in reality, their life or health may be under threat. Therefore, a proper diagnosis of senior citizens’ living conditions cannot be underestimated. Extreme poverty means that consumption below that level poses a threat to human life and health. This parameter is defined by the Central Statistical Office, based on the subsistence minimum, estimated by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2021, the extreme poverty threshold in a one-person household was defined as PLN 692 and for a four-people household, it was defined as PLN 1,868.40.\(^63\)

Undoubtedly, the very functioning of government programs that improve the quality of seniors’ functioning is a great value. Unfortunately, even increasing financial outlays does not significantly affect the poverty of seniors. The above programs are not always changing in the right direction. New ones are created quickly, and they overlap the existing ones. The multiplicity of programs, including their specification, makes them illegible and even often unfamiliar to seniors. The senior would have to consult the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Policy and such offices as the City Hall or the Commune Office on a permanent basis.

To sum up, it is necessary to consider some postulative solutions of providing real assistance to senior citizens, especially those who need it most. The Poverty Watch 2022 report provides a real picture of the situation of senior citizens and it is highly unfavourable for them. The social, demographic and economic situation in Poland does not foster developing


the security of senior citizens because the inflation, the pandemic, the mass inflow of refugees, the war in the territory of the eastern neighbouring countries, the polarisation of the Polish society and average salaries that have decreased in real terms come as factors that pose a threat to senior citizens.\textsuperscript{64}

Conclusions

Providing assistance to senior citizens who are in a very difficult situation is a priority task of the State. Therefore, numerous government aid programmes have been developed to support them. The ideas in the development of these programmes are good but the methods of their implementation are frequently questionable. Hence, the development of an interministerial common aid programme dedicated to senior citizens should be seriously taken into consideration. This is reasonable because of the number of government aid programmes dedicated to senior citizens by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and other numerous Ministries and government agencies. Being provided with a verified diagnosis of senior citizens’ poverty, social welfare units would be able to offer them assistance in a more efficient way. Furthermore, they would be able to adjust aid programmes to particular senior citizens’ situations. Senior citizens who live in extreme poverty, with disabilities or those who face violence should always obtain support and become beneficiaries of appropriate government aid programmes. Territorial self-governments that are very well informed about the requirements of senior citizens are also able to respond efficiently.\textsuperscript{65} Moreover, non-governmental organisations that declare in their statutes to provide support to senior citizens can also offer considerable support in assistance to senior citizens.

Assistance provided to senior citizens sometimes includes activities required in everyday life, such as hygiene care, washing clothes, preparing meals, cleaning apartments, daily and 24-hour care, buying medications, medical treatment, physiotherapy, visiting healthcare centres, and contacting other people, for example voluntary workers.\textsuperscript{66}

The hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the text has been positively verified. Government aid programmes provide senior citizens with support, however, they require further development in terms of their implementation. Frequently, they are of selective nature, and they do not cover their entire target groups.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid}.
References

Keywords: security, security strategy, senior policy.

Summary: The paper provides an analysis referring to the security of senior citizens in Poland. A critical scientific analysis presents the true significance of government aid programmes in the development of senior citizens’ quality of life in Poland and the scope of impact exerted by such programmes on their everyday life. The analysis of particular aid programmes defines their social usefulness. Undoubtedly, senior citizens are a social group that needs state support. The subject of the analysis is the common accessibility of aid programmes in developing the security of senior citizens in Poland. The efficiency of government aid programmes in supporting senior citizens is invaluable. Therefore, considering the threats and factors affecting the quality of senior citizens’ life, their analysis seems to be advisable and rational.

Palarbas clave: seguridad, estrategia de seguridad, política de la tercera edad

Resumen: El artículo aborda el análisis de la seguridad de las personas mayores en Polonia. Un análisis científico crítico presentará la verdadera importancia de este grupo social en la formación de la calidad de vida de las personas mayores en Polonia. ¿En qué medida pueden mejorar sus vidas los programas gubernamentales de asistencia? Un análisis de los distintos programas determinará su utilidad social. Es innegable que las personas mayores son un grupo social que necesita el apoyo del Estado. El objeto del análisis es la universalidad del acceso a los programas gubernamentales en la configuración de la calidad de vida de los pensionistas en Polonia. La cuestión de la eficacia de los programas gubernamentales es importante, por lo que su análisis parece razonable teniendo en cuenta los riesgos y el impacto en la calidad de vida de los mayores.