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Title: DEMOGRAPHICAL CHANGES OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACT ON WALKING AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ELDERLY

Presenting Author: Karel Schmeidler

Authors: K. Schmeidler 1;

Affiliation

1. Urban and Transport Sociology Dept., Transport Research Centre Brno, Vinohrady 10, Czech Republic,

Abstract:

Context, aim methodology:

European policy regarding the elderly aims at maintaining their mobility. This is a central element of their integration in society. Senior citizens want to stay autonomous and independent as far as possible. Without the possibility to maintain mobility, senior citizens cannot lead an independent life, with many other problems, such as isolation and health problems as a consequence.

Many older people make their journeys by walking. However, pedestrian casualty rates are much higher among people over 60 compared with younger adults, and fatalities of people aged 75 and over account for a quarter of all pedestrian fatalities. Although walking and cycling are recommended to older people as the best way to keep fit and healthy, the conditions are often difficult for older persons.

Life quality of senior citizens in relation to mobility conditions SIZE – “Life quality of senior citizens in relation to mobility conditions” (project number QLK6-CT-2002-02399) was a project in the framework of the specific research and technological development programme “Quality of life and management of living resources”, key action 6 “The ageing population and disabilities” in EU’s Fifth Framework Programme.

The user-oriented approach calls most of all for an analysis of how senior citizens, or different groups of them - especially elderly women, look at today's transport and mobility preconditions. Measures should be built on that analysis.

Project objectives are:

- To explain and to describe the present mobility situation of senior citizens.
- To motivate action from the side of the authorities and other relevant groups.
- To provide guidance for the setting up and the implementation of policies.

Results and conclusions:

The investigations point out the subjective view of elderly road users, focusing on the importance of social relations and social behaviour in the public areas. There are plenty of suggestions and ideas of older people concerning the improvement of public spaces, walking and cycling paths and their connections to other means of transportation.

A central goal of policies regarding the senior citizens especially elderly women is to maintain their mobility, as this is a central element of their integration in society. They want to lead an autonomous and independent life (everything from shopping to visiting friends) as much and as long as possible without the help of others (for example the family). Losing the ability to participate in outdoor activities can create a vicious circle of immobility, implying that an important stimulus for the elderly women to remain active vanishes. This regularly leads to passivity, which affects health. This, in turn may induce still greater isolation and passivity. Thus, the provision of transport and mobility for the elderly women is a central societal goal.