

**Ludmiła Dziewięcka-Bokun**

University of Lower Silesia  
in Wrocław, Poland

**ELŻBIETA TRAFIAŁEK, *INNOVATIVE SENIOR CITIZEN POLICY  
OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.*  
*AGEISM, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ACTIVE AGEING,*  
TORUŃ: WYDAWNICTWO ADAM MARSZAŁEK, 2016, PP. 310**

The key themes of the book revolve around several social and economic issues generated by demographic changes, trends and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Poland and Europe. The matters of the monography have been organized according to the subheading *ageism, social protection and active ageing*, and it is presented in five chapters on: first – ageing of the population, second – the issues of ageing and old age in research and social initiatives, third – stereotypes and areas of potential discrimination against older people, fourth – innovative senior citizen policy for active ageing, fifth – a new model of life in old age. The author concludes the book with the far-reaching conclusions and recommendations for innovative senior citizens policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century worthy to be taken into consideration.

Based on over 25 years of the author's research experience and findings on gerontology, demography and social policy, the monography focuses on currently prevailing determinants of modern senior policy. The elderly people nowadays encounter classic, well known and described in the scientific literature, problems dealing with ageing and people getting older, as well as new issues waiting to be "discovered", analysed and transformed into a new multidisciplinary approach, and consequently, a new open senior citizens policy. In the light of the fact that neither concepts nor senior citizens policies are adequate in the current situation, and the task is urgent, considering the prospect of the needs of the old population in the foreseeable future.

The general conclusion, with which I totally agree, is clear: there is a growing need of a new developmental paradigm that would help to rearrange social links toward more solidarity and responsibility for each other, more empathy for the weaker members of our society, among them first and foremost the elderly people. To put it briefly, for putting a human being in the center of the interest of politicians and developing culture of sustainable solidarity. Without this the efficiency of the economy and the viability of the political system will be less than optimal.

In fact, the new approach to innovative senior citizen policy implies that society should agree on certain fundamental values, such as respect of others, solidarity, responsibility, dignity of the human body and mind, participation of all members of the

society, commitment to a democratic system of government. Respecting these values would ensure more solidarity, maturity in respect to the others, and thus result in better social cohesion. This is an essential precondition for finding the way to a true partnership with the population we want to support. In other words, it is a case of being willing to listen and take the time to understand, and above all, take the time necessary to establish confidence. Good will alone is not enough, it is not a matter of thinking of the ways in which we want to help, but rather the one of treating elderly people as partners in the difficult time of their life.

One characteristic of the modern society appears to be that people no longer know how to live together and how to listen. We live in society without precise contours, which is becoming more and more multicultural, and in which it is necessary to approach others with respect. The question of the representation of older people in the societal debate is one of the biggest difficulties for the people who live in less favourable individual and/or social conditions. This difficulty is often accompanied by great incredulity, and even suspicion towards the initiatives coming from these people themselves. Society has a difficulty with accepting the idea that the elderly people are capable of any initiative of their own. This is indicative of the extent to which the society's attitude to the old generation is frequently negative and pejorative. In addition, as professor Trafiałek explains, because of the individual's utility to the society, the investment are often aimed at the people who can be a factor for the economic growth. Other types of contribution to the society are relegated to second place, and thus we end up accepting that a certain minority of the population is useless, and hence not worthy of interest and investment. Another package of tasks is rebutting negative stereotypes of old age and ageing.

Public opinion and the public authorities find it difficult to see processes of growing vulnerability of the elderly people, as well as their progressive social exclusion and lowliness as a cause of progressing discrimination and marginalization of population approaching the retirement age. This is an essential precondition for finding the way to a true partnership with the population we want to support. In other words, it is a case of being willing to listen, take the time to understand, and above all, take the time necessary to establish confidence. Good will alone is not enough, it is not a matter of thinking in the ways in which we might help those people, but rather taking them as partners in the difficult time of their life.

The author stresses also the great need for sharing the information and practices to favour the dissemination of knowledge about experiences already implemented elsewhere, which could be usefully adapted to national, regional and local conditions.

I hope that this brief presentation has proved that the innovative senior citizen policy is desperately needed in Poland and majority of EU countries. This task should be backed up by pragmatic policy measures, which leave sufficient room for inventiveness, dynamism and people's sense of the solidarity with the mankind. It is also necessary that these qualities are developed right from the beginning of childhood and thus, the will of the whole society to protect the elderly population in a more complex could blossom and bear real fruits.

Finally, this well written book showing the author's erudition, maturity and passion, and with provocative, frequently controversial statements, suggestions and recommendations, is a proposition for the readers coming from many scientific disciplines and societal areas, with social policy specialists, demographists, politicians, journalists, as well as students of advanced level of social studies.

Yes, I strongly recommend this book.

### **Summary**

**ELŻBIETA TRAFIAŁEK, INNOVATIVE SENIOR CITIZEN POLICY  
OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.  
AGEISM, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ACTIVE AGEING,  
TORUŃ: WYDAWNICTWO ADAM MARSZAŁEK, 2016, PP. 310**

The public opinion and the public authorities find it difficult to notice processes of growing vulnerability of the elderly people, their progressive social exclusion and lowliness as causes of progressing discrimination and marginalization of population reaching the retirement age. While the scale of the problem and its causes are not primarily the fault of particular governments, but rather of wider social and economic forces, they can be exacerbated or diminished by the actions of the government. In spite of the growing evidence, many governments have been slow to fully understand the fact that nowadays neither concepts nor senior citizens policies are adequate in the context of the needs of the old population in the current situation and in the foreseeable future. Thus, to recognise the need for new approaches and policies for innovative senior citizens policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become an urgent task.

Developing innovative senior citizen policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires new ways of sharing social responsibility, new types of solidarity involving both "insiders" and "outsiders", and strengthening the social fabric at a community level.

This well-written book showing the author's erudition, maturity and passion, with provocative, frequently controversial statements, suggestions and recommendations is a proposition for the readers from many scientific disciplines and societal areas with social policy specialists, demographists, politicians, journalists, as well as students of advanced level of social studies.

**Keywords:** senior citizen policy, ageism, social protection, active ageing

### Streszczenie

**ELŻBIETA TRAFIAŁEK, INNOWACYJNA POLITYKA SENIORALNA XXI WIEKU. MIĘDZY AGEIZMEM, BEZPIECZEŃSTWEM SOCJALNYM I ACTIVE AGEING,**  
**TORUŃ: WYDAWNICTWO ADAM MARSZAŁEK, 2016, SS. 310**

Procesy słabnącej kondycji, narastającej niesprawności i osamotnienia ludzi stałych, jako przyczyny ich postępującej marginalizacji i wykluczenia społecznego, są z trudem dostrzegane zarówno przez opinię publiczną, jak i przez autorytety publiczne. Choć zarówno za skalę problemów, jak i za przyczyny generowanych przez procesy społeczne i ekonomiczne zjawisk i zdarzeń trudno obwiniać rządy, to jednak właśnie na rządach państw w pierwszej kolejności spoczywa przeciwdziałanie ich skutkom. Niezależnie od rosnącej dokumentacji, wiele rządów zdaje się wciąż nie rozumieć faktu pogłębiającej się nieadekwatności i koncepcji, i aktualnie prowadzonych senioralnych polityk w stosunku do dzisiejszych i przewidywanych przyszłych potrzeb starości i starzejącej się populacji. Uświadomienie potrzeby nowych koncepcji i senioralnych polityk stało się zadaniem niecierpiącym zwłoki. Rozwój innowacyjnej polityki senioralnej na miarę potrzeb XXI w. wymaga nowych sposobów dzielenia się odpowiedzialnością społeczną, nowych rodzajów solidarności angażującej wszystkie strony – podmioty “zewnętrzne” i “wewnętrzne” oraz wzmacnienia więzi społecznych na poziomie lokalnym.

Ta bardzo dobrze napisana, bogata w każdym wymiarze książka, z licznymi wątkami wskazującymi na nieprzeciętną erudycję, dojrzałość i pasję autorki, z prowokującymi i nierzadko kontrowersyjnymi opiniemi, głęboko przemyślanymi sugestiami i rekomendacjami stanowi propozycje dla czytelników z wielu dyscyplin naukowych i obszarów życia społecznego, z demografami, politykami społecznymi, politykami i dziennikarzami, a także studentami zaawansowanych poziomów studiów społecznych na samej górze.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka senioralna, ageizmem, bezpieczeństwo socialne, aktywne starzenie

The date of submitting the paper to the Editorial Staff: May 19, 2016.  
The date of initial acceptance of the paper by Editorial Staff: May 30, 2016.