**Innovative practices on ageing in Russia**

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The Russian Federation belongs to countries with an old population. As of 1 January 2017, the number of people over the working age is 36.7 million people or 24.99% of the total population of Russia, almost one in four were older than the working age.

In the light of the current situation, the Strategy of action for the interests of citizens of the senior generation in the Russian Federation to 2025 was adopted in 2016. It is designed to coordinate the work of state and public institutions to address the existing problems of senior aged citizens. An outcome of implementing the Strategy should be the creation of conditions for "active longevity" of Russian seniors, which will improve their standard of living and quality of life.

Above all, it means creating a special social infrastructure geared to the needs of an increasing number of senior-aged citizens. Modernization is important in healthcare, education and social services systems. In each of these areas, intensive work and search for new approaches and best practices are under way.

For example, in the healthcare sector, innovative solutions such as mobile medical complexes ("wheeled clinics" and "health trains") equipped with medical portable diagnostic equipment were invented to resolve the issue of service availability for inhabitants of remote residential places.

The development of a network of "third-age" regional universities has begun in the education area to provide an opportunity for elder persons to study in various fields. Programs that provide computer equipment usage skills as well as Internet-based work are particularly in demand - and this, in turn, not only makes it easier to obtain public services for seniors and to expand the range of their communication with relatives (in social networks and via Skype), but also makes it possible to introduce innovative technologies to serve elderly people. For example, the "virtual tourism" technology is gaining popularity at social service organizations: "guided tours" on the Internet of museums and memorials, which help to improve the overall emotional background and physical well-being of seniors.

In order to address the issue of the elder persons in rural and remote areas, social service technology on a district basis is important for Russian Federation with its huge territory. Local social service specialists are the first to receive “distress signals” on seniors' ill-being, to know the needs of virtually every senior rural resident, and regularly provide social services to them.

Among innovations to improve the health of elder persons living at public social service organizations, innovative elements are introduced in non-pharmacological methods of prevention and treatment of elder persons, including:

"Balneotherapy" - treatment using mineral water (local and communal baths, bathing in basins)

"Oxygen therapy" - a method of treating diseases with oxygen.

"Speleotherapy" - treatment via long stays in a peculiar micro-climate of caves, salt deposits, etc.

"Garden therapy", which allows elder persons to be involved in plant work, which has a beneficial effect on the physical and psychological well-being of the individual.

"Zoo therapy" - contact with animals, birds, inhabitants of the aquatic world, (pets' corners, aquariums, organization of opportunities for hippotherapy classes, etc.).

"Art therapy". It is well known and proven that singing and dancing, drawing, knitting, embroidery, beading, pottery, woodcraft, pyrography (wood burning), modeling from salt dough, clay, playdough, etc., enable activating the personal activity of seniors, improve their vitality, prevent the occurrence or restore memory violations. Here are the broadest opportunities for innovative practices. For example, the development of "Sand therapy": drawing with sand on back-lit glass, compositions made of sand and materials at hand.

According to Rosstat, in 2016 in Russia there were over 1270 social service organizations for seniors with permanent residence (residential homes, gerontological centers, special homes for elderly, etc.), in which over 253 thousand people received social services. A new geriatric service model launched in 2016 assumes a single three-level system, which includes outpatient care, inpatient care, and scientific-methodical geriatric centers.

However, in contemporary Russia facing new demographic challenges the standard approach - the construction of new social service institutions with permanent residence for elderly people - does not solve the problem entirely at any of the regions. The residential social services model is not only highly expensive, but it does not fully meet the requirements of contemporary society, does not fit interests of modern seniors. Moreover, and most importantly, it fails to replace the family, the home life.

Every year, 1.2 million elderly Russians receive social services at home, but there is still a shortage of such services. Understanding the issue leads to the search for new solutions, building on the main goals and objectives:

- bring services as close as possible to the recipient, to extend the person's stay in the usual social (domestic) environment;

- change qualitatively the social services infrastructure (develop stationarity substituting, improve the efficiency and mobility of services, expand the market through non-state service providers).

In particular, according to official Rosstat data, the total number of non-state social service organizations for elder and disabled persons increased from 95 in 2013 to 282 in 2016.

**An example of regional innovative social project is "Living in dignity, living at home" (Vladimir Oblast)**

The project's authors started with door-to-door (house-to-house) survey to make an objective assessment of potential needs of elderly persons. It became clear that some were in need of one-time or temporary assistance, some had to retain domestic life, some needed permanent residence. The decision was as follows: to meet the challenges by combining existing experience, innovations and resources within an innovative social project.

Thus the idea of the "Living in dignity, living at home" project came out, which uses a variety of practices and technologies:

* ***Foster family for elder persons***[[1]](#footnote-1)***.***

This form is introduced inin the Vladimir Oblast since 2013. The conditions have been defined under which a foster family can be established: both elderly person and foster family members should want and be ready to live together. Preliminary training at the "foster family school" is compulsory, social workers and psychologists teach the candidates. Only then can a trilateral agreement be signed between the assistant, the guardian, and the social service institution.

Complex centers are always in touch. Monthly visits to families, monitoring, evaluation of the living conditions of the ward, the relationship between the assistant and the ward, the psychological climate in the foster home are performed.

Taking an elderly person into the family is, above all, a movement of the soul, compassion, a desire to help. That is why foster families are more actively formed in rural areas. People are more open, make contact better, more familiar with each other. No family disintegrated in the course of the project for mutual rejection reasons.

There were several cases where a foster family was organized by a social worker. Usually the elder person is for many years served at home, and when domestic service is not sufficient, it is about moving to a social service institution with permanent residence. Still, by this time both sides are already so accustomed to each other that almost kinship relationship have already formed. In this case, a foster family is the most appropriate decision.

In the four years of implementation of the "foster family" technology, 129 foster families established, with 133 seniors admitted.

* ***Personal assistants for persons with severe limitations of the musculoskeletal system function[[2]](#footnote-2).***

There are still many houses in Russia that are not equipped for the disabled in wheelchairs, and those living in such homes have difficulties with integrating into public life. They require external physical assistance and support. Assistance is also needed in the provision of sanitation services. The experience of the project has shown that the assistant and the ward tend to find each other, since the needed assistance is very specific, often delicate, and people must fully trust each other.

* ***Compensated custody of disabled elderly persons[[3]](#footnote-3).***

Rewards from the regional budget are now paid to the guardians of incapacitated seniors (those who are not close relatives). There may be both social services at home and social assistance.

All these practices are combined within a developed project technology scheme that is designed to be as focused as possible on the individual needs of an elderly person. First social services at home are offered or a personal assistant; then one of the "external" forms of support, guardianship, foster family. The elderly person has the right to use several forms at once: for example, to use the services of a social worker and, at the same time, to have a personal assistant. Only in rare extreme case moving to a social service institution is proposed.

The *main result* is the improvement of the quality of life of elder persons, the implementation of their unconditional right to live and receive social services within the family, with the preservation of living conditions, of the accumulated domestic and social links, and meeting the need of productive life - domestic, cognitive, cultural and rehabilitating.

An important point: volunteers and non-state organizations ' participation in the project. In the Vladimir Oblast budget funds are allocated for non-state organizations ' support (in 2017 it was approximately 29 million rubles).

It has already emerged that the financing of stationarity substitution technologies is much more effective: in 2017 budget figures of the year - 32.3 million rubles against almost 200 million rubles that would have had to be spent if a boarding house was held in which all the older persons lived, supported by the project "Living in dignity, living at home".

**An example of innovation project in the field of intergenerational ties is the project "Point of Growth"**

Among the objectives of the project, bringing together different generations, are reducing aggression in the society, switching to productive activities, increasing the level of social activity of seniors 55+, expanding real social contacts of children 10+. Broad variety of forms, methods and approaches are used to conducting classes for people of different age (lecture and training forms, dance-motor activity and creative kinds of training, master classes in cooking and creating social clips with animation elements, etc.). The conditions for the development of interest in new activities (for example, the basics of design), the inclusion of participants in the process contribute to the creation of a motivating environment for personal development. As a result, there is growth of social motivation of participants, development of communication methods, as well as methodology for solving the tasks assigned, and the team building.

The structure and logic of all project activities take into account the group dynamics of the project, fatigue and the degree and threshold of activity of participants, age and training load.

In the project, there are additional options for elderly persons 55+ and children 10+: visits to performances and exhibitions, excursions and other cultural events, etc. All this contributes to the cohesion, social inclusion, activity, diversity of cultural leisure. Elderly persons have the opportunity to feel care and attention of the society. For children 10+, in the framework of joint activities at partner sites, additional resources are used to increase their motivation. For example, a fitness coach conducted training sessions with students of junior and senior classes at the conference on healthy lifestyles; in the frame of the culinary project, young professional cooks were invited who organized, masterfully and pedagogically correctly, the work of the intergenerational team.

Carrying out of activities beyond the scheduled program sessions (tea, informal communication) contributes to the development of the initiative, project thinking and organizational skills of the participants, necessary for inclusion in the teamwork as the important stage of the program. These events undoubtedly form the basis for further interaction of participants outside the project framework and potentially (with due coordination) can be the beginning of new ideas and projects initiated by the participants.

**An example of a systemic innovation in the public-private partnership is the social project "50 PLUS"**[[4]](#footnote-4)**.**

The "50 PLUS" project is a civil initiative aimed at prolonging the active life of seniors and implementing their moral and economic potential. The goal of the project, which started in 2011, is to unite the efforts of the state, society and business, with the aim to improve conditions for active longevity of Russian seniors. The project boosts the formation of a non-state system of social adaptation, public support and protection for elderly people**.**

At the initial stage, еhe project received support of Moscow businesses, a pool of companies was formed to support the first major project event, the I International Forum&Exhibition "50 PLUS. All pros of adulthood", which took place in November 2011 in Moscow. Over 15,000 people attended, 120 exhibitors presented their goods and services, a number of activities for seniors were conducted, from fashion shows to work opportunities. By establishing a communication site, the "50 PLUS" project proponents were given a real opportunity to build sustainable contacts with those stakeholders who had participated in the preparation and holding of the Forum. The media have dedicated almost two hundred publications to the project. As a result, interest towards the goals of the project increased sharply. In 2012, the project gained support of the Federation Council, the Government of Moscow and the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The project was recommended for the Russian regions as a prospective example of innovative strategic initiative.

Thus, the project managed to draw attention to seniors needs, to compile Russian and international experience in improving their quality of life and to give impetus to bringing together the efforts of the state, public organizations and business. In 2017, the VII International Forum&Exhibition "50 PLUS. All pros of adulthood" took place in Moscow. The number of visitors of the Forum has grown from 15 thousand to 35 thousand people. At present, the "50 PLUS. All pros of adulthood" is a ***cross-branding communication space zoned by the thematic principle***. Acceleration of interaction with target audiences is achieved through the new navigation system and the 50 PLUS marker system. Specially equipped sites enable exhibitors to expand the capabilities of their stand (seminar halls, fitness hall, master-classes zone). At the VII exhibition Forum 2017, over 150 events (consultations, seminars, master classes) were conducted. The schedule of events is within the program of the Forum, with the possibility of announcing the exhibitor's activities.

The International exhibition Forum became the “reference unit” of the system, which eventually linked all the Project's communication and marketing sites:

* International Forum&Exhibition
* "50 Plus" Spring Exhibition
* Annual conference
* Mature-Age Persons Creativity Festival
* "50 Plus New Life" Award Festival
* The "50 Plus" association of companies
* Independent goods and services Award
* Information and Analytics portal [www.50plus.ru](http://www.50plus.ru)
* Social actions

Together with the Department of Social Protection of the population of Moscow, the "People's map" project is being implemented to systematize information on goods and services for seniors on the interactive platform. The initiative to develop formal methodologies and technologies for project implementation at the scale of a region or federal district is also of particular importance. The corresponding methodologies are being developed in practice at regions participating in the "50 Plus" project (Vladimir Oblast, Orenburg Oblast, Bashkortostan Republic and several others). The "50 PLUS" trust council includes representatives of all branches of government, business and society.

Thus, in the current decade, a lot has been done in the field of innovative practices on ageing in Russia, of the development of the market for goods and services for seniors. However, this is only the beginning of the road, and much remains to be done.

1. *The Decree of the Governor of the Vladimir Oblast of 16.08.2012 No. 920 "On introduction in Vladimir Oblast of stationarity substituting technology" "Foster family for senior citizens and disabled Persons"* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Decree of the Governor of the Vladimir Oblast from 12.03.2013 No.262 "On the introduction of the "Personal assistant" technology in the Vladimir Oblast for disabled persons with severe restrictions on the functions of the locomotor system"* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Regional law of 14.02.2013 No. 22-RL* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.50plus.ru/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)