

HOW IS AGEING ADDRESSED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Talk at UNeECC General Assembly and Annual
Conference

Maribor, 18 October 2012

1. **General**
2. **Curricula at the department of SW**
3. **Philosophy of ageing at FH JOANNEUM**
4. **Current trends in ageing**
5. **Social risks**
6. **Social work with adult and elderly people**
7. **Future trends**
8. **Principles**

- **Youth welfare = origin of social work**
- **Young professional field: social work with adults and elderly people**
- **Trends: increasing demand for assistance, rising cost, decreasing family networks, growing care industry**
- **Social responsibility: economic goals vs. public and private funding**

Generalist principle: theory, methods and practice

- **6-semester Bachelor program**
 - **Adult and elderly clients**
 - **Chronic and psychological illness**
 - **Migration**

Each course consists of theory and practice and accounts for 4 ECTS points.

Focus: SW with adult and elderly clients

- **4-semester Master program**
 - **Generations living together (4 CP)**
 - **Gender-specific aspects of ageing (3 CP)**
 - **Retired adults (3 CP)**
 - **Health, illness, disability (5 CP)**
 - **SW with the eldest (5 CP)**

- Ageing depends on culture and society.
- Agency – are elderly people given the opportunity to participate?
- Policy of ageing: political regulation and action.
- Conflicting goals in securing and furthering integration > risk distribution
- Postmodern society polarizes > positive and negative age

Consequence: highly qualified practitioners needed.

Observed trends:

- **Increasing life expectancy**
- **Increased population ratio of over 60-year olds**
- **Ensure quality of post-professional life**
- **Feminization of ageing**
- **Above-average increase of aged migrants (male)**
- **Increasing ratio of the eldest**
- **Increasing number of inpatients in care facilities > old people in need of assistance**

General risks:

- **Lack of social networks**
- **Social isolation and disintegration**
- **Dire financial situation and poverty**
- **Need for social assistance**
- **Illness**
- **(early) disability**
- **Lack of perspectives**
- **Scarcity of old-age provision for „non-normal biographies“**

Specific risks for the eldest:

- Isolation
- Chronic illness
- Multimorbidity
- Dementia
- Increased need for care
- Dependency on assistance

Prognosis: today: 18.8 mio eldest / 2030: 34.7 mio eldest

In addition to medical assistance and care, we need increased:

- **financial assistance**
- **material substance (savings, property, etc.)**
- **contacts, networks, cooperation**
- **facilities for learning**
- **participation**
- **space for creativity and recuperation**
- **support through family and neighborhood**

Challenges:

- **generation mix**
- **normalization**
- **describe clear goals**
- **pinpoint the social return of investment**
- **interdisciplinarity > cooperation with other health professions as well as information technology**

Social work will facilitate and further the following processes:

- **Individualization of services > inpatient/outpatient**
- **Assistance of the eldest requires coordination of referrals, psychosocial counseling, case management, family assistance**
- **Increased need for functional and reliable technologies**
- **Offer of educational facilities and cultural participation**
- **Promotion of self-help groups**

- **Preservation of skills, development of competencies, support in self-determined and independent actions**
- **Empowerment**
- **Assistance in planning and directing charity work as well as ensure quality**
- **Assistance in goal development**
- **Nurture of learned hopefulness**
- **Political change**
- **Encourage the community to participate and assist**

In assisting elderly clients, social work will have to take into consideration:

- **Daily life and lifeworlds of clients**
- **Existing and potential networks**
- **Individual biographies**
- **Existing resources**
- **Community resources**
- **Existing or potential conflicts among the client group as well as between generations**



Despite all core elements of working with the elderly, e.g. resource orientation, empowerment and mediation, we must neither forget about nor deny that conflicts exist and are part of life.