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## PREVENTIVE POLICE MEASURES FOR THE ELDERLY IN TERMS OF THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY AS PART OF SENIOR CITIZEN POLICY IN POLAND

### ПРОФІЛАКТИЧНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ПОЛІЦІЇ ЩОДО ЛЮДЕЙ ПОХИЛОГО ВІКУ З ТОЧКИ ЗОРУ ЇХ ОСОБИСТОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ ЯК ЕЛЕМЕНТ ПОЛІТИКИ СТАРШОГО ВІКУ В ПОЛЬЩІ

*Разом зі старінням населення зростає значення державної політики щодо проблем людей похилого віку. Серед низки питань, пов'язаних із безпекою цієї вікової групи, суттєвою проблемою є особиста безпека її представників, пов'язана з ризиками діяльності на шкоду людям похилого віку. Законодавчий обов'язок, пов'язаний з громадською безпекою, вказує на поліцію, до сфери діяльності якої входить безпека громадян, у тому числі людей похилого віку. Як правоохоронний орган поліція не тільки бореться зі злочинністю, а й запобігає цьому явищу, що підтримується проведенням профілактичних заходів. У Польщі таку діяльність здійснюють усі територіальні підрозділи поліції.*

*Метою статті є представити напрямки соціальної політики польської держави у сфері особистої безпеки людей похилого віку, а також вказати на особливу роль поліцейських формувань у запобіганні злочинам на шкоду цій групі. У практичному та прикладному вимірі вказівка на передову практику в цій сфері має на меті ознайомити зацікавлені установи та людей з превентивною діяльністю, яку проводить поліція в Польщі.*

**Ключові слова:** люди похилого віку, особиста безпека, поліція, профілактика.

*As societies grow older, the importance of state policies covering the problems of older people increases. Among a number of issues relating to the safety of this age group, a significant problem is the personal safety of its representatives related to threats of actions to the detriment of the elderly. The statutory duty related to public safety points to the Police as the formation in whose area of activity is the safety of citizens, including seniors. As a law enforcement agency, the police not only fight crime, but also prevent it by carrying out preventive measures. In Poland, all police territorial units carry out such activities.*

*The aim of the article is to show the directions of social policy of the Polish state in the area of personal safety of the elderly and to indicate the special role of the police formation in preventing crimes against this group. In the practical, applied dimension, the indication of good practices in this area is aimed at familiarizing interested institutions and people with preventive activities conducted by the Police in Poland. In the research process, the analysis of available projects and prevention programs concerning the safety of the elderly in Poland and the literature on the subject were used.*

**Key words:** Seniors, personal safety, Police, prevention.

**Research issue.** The preventive activities of the Police regarding the personal safety of the elderly in the aspect of the senior policy of the Polish state is an interesting research issue. The growing population of elderly people makes it increasingly necessary for the state to carry out an appropriate policy on seniors especially in the area of ensuring their safety in the broadest sense. The police are the entity that ensures public safety, including for the elderly. These people are vulnerable to actions by criminals using fraud and extortion. Also, the safety of these people in traffic is a significant problem. Hence, it is

interesting to undertake a study of the nature and preventive activities of the Police in this regard.

**Analysis of recent studies and publications.** The solution to the problem was the analysis of documents on the state's senior citizen policy and prevention programs and projects implemented by the Police in Poland. Obtaining the information and content of these materials made it possible to publish them by all territorial units of the Police (Provincial Police Headquarters, Municipal Police Headquarters). The issue presented in the article is discussed in the literature in Poland, but these are publications on specific regions of

the country or contain knowledge that needs to be updated. The publications of such authors as B. Szczypta-Kłak, K. Pobuta (B. Szczypta-Kłak, K. Pobuta, 2020), E. Bieńkowska (E. Bieńkowska, 1999), J. Stawnicka (J. Stawnicka, 2018), M. Kordaczuk-Wąs (M. Kordaczuk-Wąs, 2017) should be indicated here. Relevant source documents were the Act of September 11, 2015 on the elderly, Social Policy Towards the Elderly 2030, Safety-Participation-Solidarity, and Assumptions of the Long-Term Senior Policy in Poland for 2014-2020.

**Purpose of the article and research.** The purpose of the article is to show the directions of the social policy of the Polish state in the area of personal safety of the elderly, together with the indication of the special role of the police formation in the prevention of crimes against this group. In the practical, application dimension, the indication of good practices in this area is aimed at familiarizing interested institutions and individuals with the preventive activities carried out by the Police in Poland.

**Research methods.** The research process used the analysis of available projects and prevention programs on the safety of the elderly in Poland and the literature on the subject.

**Conclusions and findings.** The research shows that all territorial units of the Police Department carry out preventive activities on the safety of the elderly in cooperation with state and local administrations and other entities, such as financial institutions and NGOs. In this way, they implement the state's senior policy on the physical security of this age group. The programs implemented by the Police in their design meet the formal criteria for this type of project, and in terms of subject matter they mainly deal with such actions to the detriment of the elderly as fraud, extortion of money or valuables, traffic safety and also disappearances. It has also been made apparent that all activities are planned and aggregated in nature, also representing a response to the dynamically changing security environment for the elderly.

According to the wording of the Law on the Elderly, they are defined as people who have reached the age of 60 [1]. The monitoring of the situation of these people is carried out, among others, by public administration bodies, whose interest, in accordance with statutory requirements, includes: demographic situation, income situation, housing conditions, professional activity, family situation and household structure, situation of disabled people, social and civic activity, educational and cultural activity, sports and recreational activity, health status, availability and level of social services, equal

treatment and prevention of age discrimination [1]. In detail, the problem of necessary measures in the field of physical security of seniors is discussed in the document Social Policy Toward Older People 2030. Safety – Participation -Solidarity [2]. One of the objectives of the state policy outlined therein was "increasing physical security – preventing violence and neglect against the elderly" [3]. The public administration monitors the implementation of the state's senior policy, which also includes issues related to the physical security of this age group [4].

In 2020, there were 44,402 criminal acts identified against the elderly. In 2019, 46,632, and in 2018, 42,092 acts [5, p. 26]. Most acts involved burglary, theft and criminal fraud [5, p. 27]. In doing so, it is pointed out that these people are mainly victims of accessions directed against property [6, p. 116]. The reasons for the selection of the elderly as a target for attack by criminals are age-related physical and mental disabilities. Social seclusion caused by the loss of loved ones and acquaintances and the phenomenon of age group segregation are also mentioned [6, p. 111]. These people correspond to the victimological characteristics of the group of victims who are "socially weak" and at the same time as "The elderly are exposed to victimization due to the weakness of their social status, from which stems a particular ease of inflicting harm on them in the broad sense – the perpetrator is directly responsible for victimization here, but indirectly the socio-political and legal system, which does not sufficiently protect the rights of people with a reduced social status" [7, p. 27].

Loneliness along with reduced ability to properly assess the situation, the desire to be useful cause these people to become victims of criminal fraud crimes. These are acts that are penalized in the Polish Criminal Code in Article 286, para. 1 of the Criminal Code, according to which "Whoever, in order to gain a financial benefit, leads another person to an unfavorable disposition of his own or another person's property by means of deception or exploitation of an error or incapacity to grasp the intended action" [8]. Similarly, in the Ukrainian Criminal Code, fraud is described in Article 190 [9]. According to the Police, the most recognizable fraud against the elderly is the exploitation of their characteristics related to their readiness to help their loved ones [10]. The modus operandi in this case is based on the empathy of the elderly towards their grandchildren (the "grandchild" method), who, according to the scammers, were supposed to be in a difficult situation requiring support with money. This is not the only way for fraud perpetrators to extort funds or valuable

items. They can take advantage of the public's trust in representatives of law enforcement agencies (the "policeman" method) or pretend to be a representative of social welfare institutions (the "social assistance" method), administration, a gasworks employee, a door-to-door salesman and even a person distributing Christmas wafers (the "a wafer" method) [11]. In the course of the operation, the scammers can orchestrate the whereabouts of the elderly person's valuables and carry out their taking. The perpetrators' conduct is based on surprising the victim, taking advantage of his credulity, gullibility, trust in other people – especially those who present themselves as someone who does not arouse his suspicions.

Diminished ability to perceive and react to the surrounding reality and situations causes the elderly to succumb to illusory promises of gaining benefits as a result of transactions or appropriate investment of their own monetary resources. These people become victims of promotional and "bargain" sales of household appliances, which ultimately turn out to be very unfavorable deals.

Threats to the physical safety of the elderly also arise from their participation in traffic, both as a driver of a vehicle and as a pedestrian. In 2020, 28,954 people were injured in road accidents in Poland, including 2,491 deaths and 26,463 injuries [12, p. 35]. The largest group of those killed – 732 people (29.4% of the total) – were in the age bracket of over 60 years, and those injured in this age bracket were 5,261 people [12, p. 36]. Threats to this group occur not only outside of their place of residence but also in their places of residence, where they may face both physical and psychological violence, and from those closest to them.

The problem of threats to the safety of the elderly is recognized by both state institutions and non-governmental organizations. Hence, the issue of neutralizing dangers has become an element of the state's senior policy, as well as measures taken by society. This was served by the adoption of such documents as the Act of September 11, 2015 on the elderly, Social Policy Towards the Elderly 2030: Safety – Participation -Solidarity and the Assumptions of the Long-Term Senior Policy in Poland for 2014-2020 [13].

On the basis of these documents (as well as the documents normalizing), state institutions carry out activities in the area of the status of the elderly. At the central level, these are: Ministry of Digitization, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Sport, Ministry of Family

and Social Policy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, as well as the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection, Social Insurance Institution and National Institute of Freedom – Center for Civil Society Development [14].

Each of the ministries is acting within the scope of its authority as it relates to the elderly. In the area of health security, the need to secure this age group in connection with the pandemic threats of COVID-19 has increased. Hence, among the main lines of action were, those related to preventive health care and protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection. The strengthening of activities in the area of health has not removed the need to continue activities in the sphere of social security. Regardless of the development of changes in the broader security environment for the elderly, special attention should be paid to their personal security related to criminal activities committed to the detriment of the elderly.

The dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic have necessitated the need to limit interpersonal contacts in order to reduce the possibility of getting infected by the disease. In this regard, physically staying at the place of residence was promoted along with more frequent use of the opportunities offered by the use of cyberspace. The Ministry of Digitization especially encouraged the elderly to use services such as official services using e-services. Using the Internet involves a number of risks, the Ministry informed. Dissemination of knowledge on avoiding online threats was served by the project "Seniors let's meet online" carried out jointly by the Ministry of Digitization, the National Research Institute NASK and the Warsaw Banking Institute [15].

The elderly and their vulnerability in market trading have been recognized by the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (OCCP), according to which, "By virtue of their physical characteristics (worse eyesight and hearing, slowed reactions) and character (politeness, faith in people), this social group is particularly vulnerable to sociotechnical and manipulative treatments, and thus extremely susceptible to the impact of unfair market practices applied to them" [14, p. 126]. The OCCP is undertaking a number of awareness-raising initiatives aimed at all consumers, including the elderly. Emphasis has been placed on countering unfair activities related to the offering of household appliances, offers related to the sale of medicines, and offers in the telecommunications market [16]. The authority makes extensive use of mass media, as well as social media platforms (Twitter).

It should be pointed out that prevention activities regarding threats to the elderly are carried out in cooperation with various entities, which is due to the nature of crimes against seniors. In terms of OCCP's activities, its representatives interact with the police, senior citizens' organizations (University of the Third Age), local governments and church organizations (parishes).

The primary institution acting in the field of public safety in Poland is the Police, which, according to the Police Act, is tasked with protecting life, health and property, as well as guarding "public safety and order, including ensuring peace and quiet in public places and in means of public transportation and public communication, in traffic and on waters intended for public use" [17]. The formation is also supposed to prevent the commission of crimes and misdemeanors and criminogenic phenomena, in which it is supposed to cooperate with state and local government bodies and social organizations [17]. In the structure of the police force, prevention activities and social prevention are handled by the prevention service, within which there are separate appropriate units for social prevention (the Bureau of Prevention of the Police Headquarters, the Department of Social Prevention). The tasks of the Department of Social Prevention include developing and implementing preventive measures aimed at reducing crime, pathologies and other criminogenic phenomena, initiating nationwide programs on the prevention of criminogenic phenomena, adapting preventive activity to the changing situation regarding the crime phenomenon, and conducting cooperation with governmental bodies, local governments, non-governmental and social organizations regarding local, regional and national preventive programs [18]. The police perform preventive activities in various forms, which include: educational impacts (trainings, lectures, competitions, lessons, workshops), informational impacts (preventive meetings, lectures, social campaigns, prevention points, debates), alternative impacts (festivals, art competitions, sports tournaments, self-defense workshops, theater workshops, film workshops), intervention impacts (prevention patrols, cooperation platforms) [19, p. 114]. The implementation of programs that coincide with impacts is also indicated: information, educational, alternative, intervention programs, as well as environmental changes (identifying and changing environmental factors) and regulatory changes (shaping the legal environment for criminalizing behavior) [20, p. 48].

A study of the gradation of security threats and related prevention activities shows that,

according to police officers, the issue of the physical safety of the elderly, as an area of prevention, is placed by the formation in sixth place after such problems as drugs, legal highs, intoxicants; traffic safety, the safety of children and adolescents – education for safety and domestic violence [21, p. 10].

After 2015, the Police Department's prevention programs were properly standardized in terms of compliance with the principles of their creation, which caused their number to decrease significantly [19, p. 110]. After a review of the implemented programs, it was recognized that they should contain elements that would ensure their effectiveness. A model project of a prevention program implemented by the police should contain the following elements: general data about the program (name, author, entity responsible for implementation, type of program); period of program implementation; description of the problem with diagnosis, program objectives; program recipients (target group); indicators for measuring the progress of the program; planned activities (their type, length and intensity); outlays (material, personnel); method of implementation (supervision, evaluation, introduction of changes, training of those implementing the program, cooperating entities – e.g. NGOs); evaluation of the process; sources of knowledge about the program along with ways to disseminate it [19, p. 59]. Guided by these criteria, the police are conducting a number of prevention programs, including on the safety of the elderly.

The issue of preventive policing is included in the document: Priorities of the Chief of Police for 2021-2023 (Priorities of the KGP) [22]. The safety of the elderly was included as a task in the priority: Increasing the effectiveness of Police activities to meet public expectations. The document recognizes that it is necessary to adapt the Police's preventive activities to "diagnosed social risks in the following areas: addictions: drugs, new drugs, alcohol; cyber threats; human trafficking; hate speech, including hate, hate crimes; safety of seniors" [22]. As part of aligning the work of the Police with the content of the KGP Priorities, they were included in documents issued by provincial commanders implementing the KGP guidelines. In the Plan of Activities of the Provincial Police Chief in Bydgoszcz for 2022, it is indicated that the indicated task will be carried out by "Monitoring the reports on the evaluation of the effectiveness of police activities in the area of prevention of social threats undertaken by the Police City/County Police Headquarters in selected areas in accordance with the Plan of Activities of the Police Chief for 2022. To

familiarize themselves with the content of the proposals on current threats prepared by the units subordinate to the Provincial Police Headquarters in Bydgoszcz. Monitoring the implementation of activities in the areas specified by the KGP for 2022 undertaken by the Municipal Police Headquarters/County Police Headquarters" [23]. The measure of the effects of the Police indicated by the Police Headquarters in Bydgoszcz was to be: "The number of major initiatives implemented over the year in each priority area included in the qualitative assessment sheet. Types and forms of preventive interventions most often used in the implementation of police programs, preventive actions and ad hoc activities. Types of preventive materials prepared and used in preventive activities by police organizational units", and the overall assessment was to be qualitative and descriptive [23].

Tasks in the area of safety prophylaxis of the elderly are carried out in all field units of the Police in Poland. Representatives of the Police, carry out prevention programs independently or in cooperation with other entities, which primarily include state administration, local governments and non-governmental organizations. In addition, they cooperate with units of the State Fire Service, health care and social welfare institutions. The primary goal is to strengthen awareness of threats from the environment. As mentioned, the main problem related to the safety of the elderly is fraud to their detriment, but also road safety and the danger of vulnerability to disappearance. Hence, the goals identified in prevention programs include: Increasing awareness of fraud-related safety and familiarizing program participants with the nature of crimes against seniors by presenting the forms and methods of the perpetrators. Acquisition of knowledge and skills by seniors of the proper response in situations of attempted crimes against their person or loved ones (theft, violation of bodily integrity, assault). To make those closest to them (family, caregivers) aware of the dangers involved (disappearances, fraudulent extortion of money or valuables). Influencing the public's attitude toward threats to the elderly (prevention of situations that threaten the safety of the elderly). Raise awareness among employees of financial institutions (Banks) to prevent situations in which fraud or extortion crimes are committed against the elderly [24].

The names of prevention programs and actions carried out by the Police usually include subject information, indicating which groups are targeted by the actions taken under specific projects. Typically, the name includes the term "security" and a designation of the program's addressee:

"seniors": "Safe Senior", "Conscious Senior = Safe Senior", "Senior Academy", "Seniors – take care of your safety". An interesting project, implemented by the police of Malopolska (Krakow), which, in addition to the area of safety, influences cooperation and intergenerational liaison, is the project "Granddaughter, grandson educate – grandma, grandpa listen!" [25]. The project activates schoolchildren in supporting the safety of the elderly in their family and closest environment. Children, through the use of handmade information materials (photo, graphics), make the oldest generation aware of the dangers they face and how to avoid them.

The Katowice Provincial Police Station provides the most extensive information on the dangers affecting the elderly. On its website it aggregates the dangers in question in several areas, titling them: Safety in the place of residence; Safe consumer; Safe on the telephone; Safe in the store on the street and on the road; Shopping on the Internet; Safety in traffic (Pedestrian, Cyclist, Senior driver) [26]. Both the threat factors, methods and ways of carrying out criminal activities, as well as methods and ways of responding to repel the attack – including fraud attempts – are indicated here. It is also important to point out the program implemented by the Olsztyn Municipal Police Station "Safe Senior", the objectives of which are generally implemented in other units of the Polish Police. Among the goals identified in this project are: gaining and strengthening the knowledge of senior citizens "on the methods of action of perpetrators of crimes against the elderly and how to respond and contact assistance services; expanding knowledge of road safety (including, among other things, promoting the wearing of reflective elements); providing a picture of the phenomenon of domestic violence and the offer of assistance for those experiencing it; increasing the sense of security among seniors, among others. by promoting the application National Safety Hazards Map and a short training course on how to use it; supporting the creation of coalitions of entities, municipal institutions and non-governmental organizations to support the elderly; integrating the local environment of the elderly, aimed at strengthening the role and importance of neighborly assistance; supporting preventive actions aimed at improving the quality of life of seniors and strengthening their sense of security; raising awareness of existing dangers associated with: use of electrical, gas and heating appliances, as well as weather anomalies and addictions" [27].

The prevention projects carried out are primarily informational and awareness-raising in

nature. In addition, in the course of their activities, police officers show how to react in specific risk situations. The dynamically changing security environment for the elderly forces an appropriate response from the institution obliged to protect them. It is therefore necessary to monitor the techniques and methods of those who carry out acts to the detriment of the elderly. Hence the construction of new preventive programs and permanent preventive activity aimed at the elderly community.

As the population of the elderly grows, the group of people vulnerable to threats of actions against people in this age group increases. The

main threats to the personal safety of seniors include fraud, traffic hazards and going missing. In order to prevent these threats, the Polish Police conducts prevention activities to raise awareness of the existence of these threats and to provide information on how to respond to ensure personal safety. Prevention programs carried out by the Police are part of the state's senior citizen policy, the principles of which are described in relevant documents such as the Law on the Elderly and the document Social Policy for the Elderly 2030. Safety – Participation – Solidarity. Also, the activities of the Police are based on developed prevention procedures.

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