



AGE-FRIENDLY BASELINE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE SUCHY DĄB COMMUNE

**DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR MEMBERSHIP
IN WHO GLOBAL NETWORK FOR AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**

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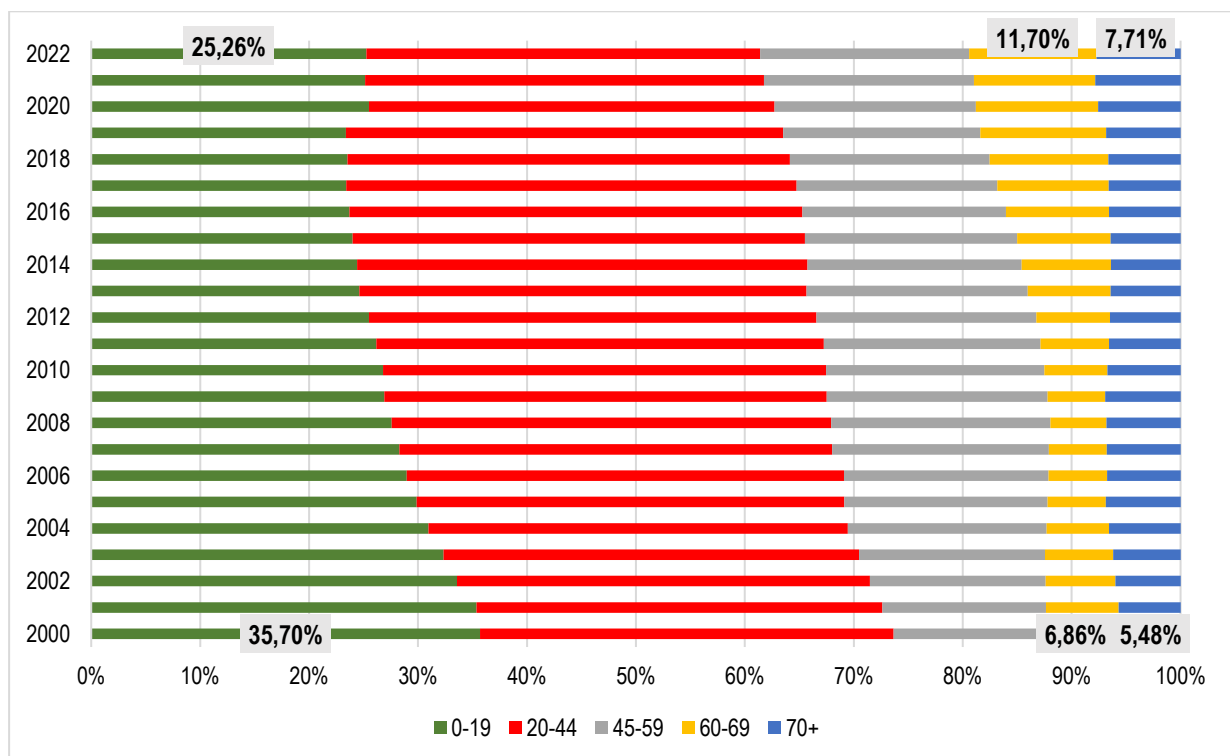
1. POPULATION AGING IN THE SUCHY DĄB COMMUNE

The Suchy Dąb Commune is an attractive place to live, located in the geographical neighbourhood of the Gdańsk agglomeration. It is the commune full of charm, rustic and idyllic character of the landscape.

The commune was reactivated on April 2nd, 1991. It still requires renewing relations between the inhabitants of individual villages and consolidating local identity.

The Suchy Dąb Commune is one of the smallest in terms of the number of inhabitants in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Older adults constitute almost 19.5% of 4,240 inhabitants of the commune. Within last twenty two years, the share of this group has increased by over 7 p.p. (from 466 up to 823 persons). At the same time by 10,5 p.p. decreased the share of the youngest group - persons aged 0-19 (from 1.348 persons to 1.071 persons).

Figure 1. Age structure of the Suchy Dąb Commune population in the years 2000-2022



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

There have been observed the age structure of older adults change too. The number and share of the youngest (60-64 years) is decreasing, while the oldest group aged 75 and over, is growing. The pandemic era and the above-average mortality rate of the oldest slowed down the growing share of “older” seniors (80 years and more) among Suchy Dąb Commune older adults in recent years. Nevertheless, statistics clearly indicate the progressive phenomenon of the so-called double aging process.

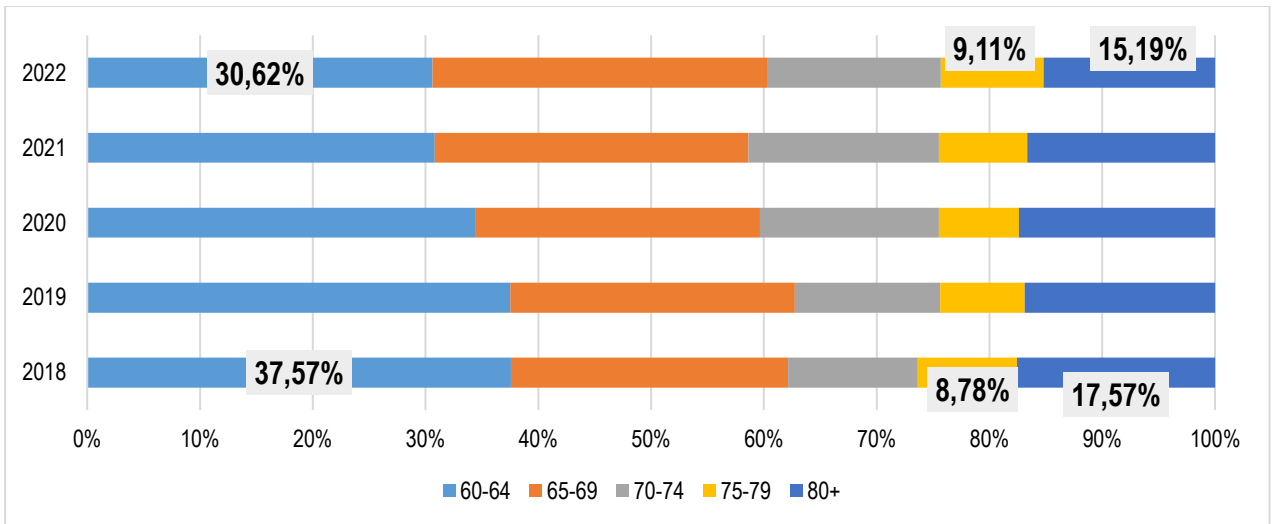
Table 1. The number of older adults in the Suchy Dąb Commune in 2018-2022

Age group	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
60-64	278	291	271	248	252
65-69	182	196	199	224	244

70-74	85	100	125	136	127
75-79	65	58	56	63	75
80+	130	131	137	134	125
TOTAL	740	776	788	805	823

Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

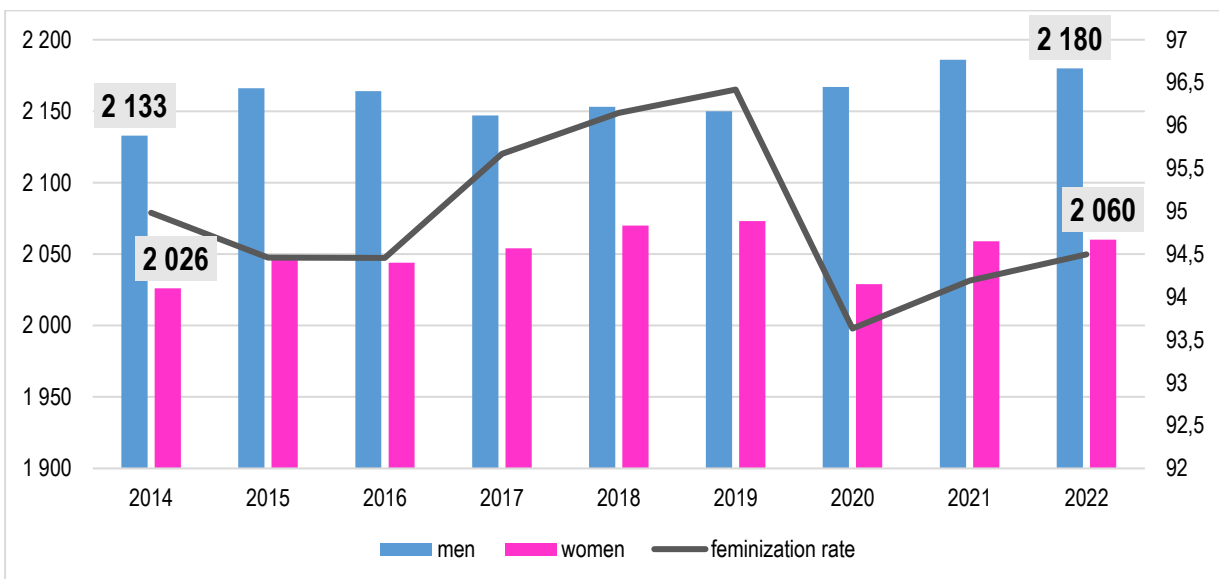
Figure 2. Age structure of older adults in the Suchy Dąb Commune in 2018-2022



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

The Suchy Dąb Commune stands out from Poland in terms of the gender structure of its inhabitants. Probably because the commune is agricultural, the population is dominated by men. The feminization rate is at the level of 94-96% depending on the examined period.

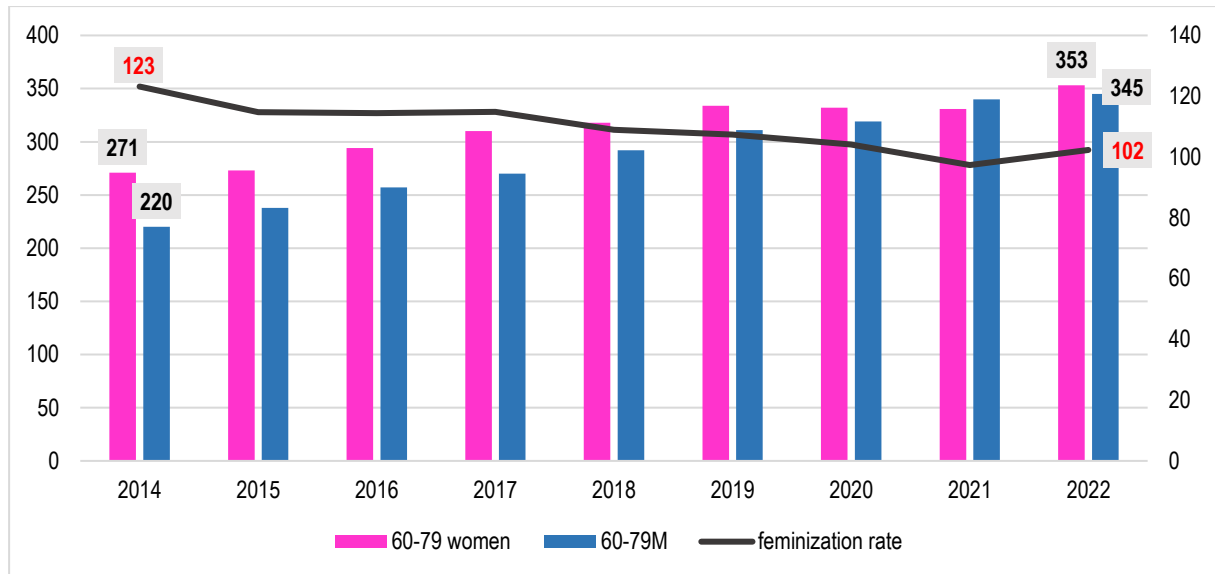
Figure 3. The gender structure of the Suchy Dąb Commune inhabitants



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

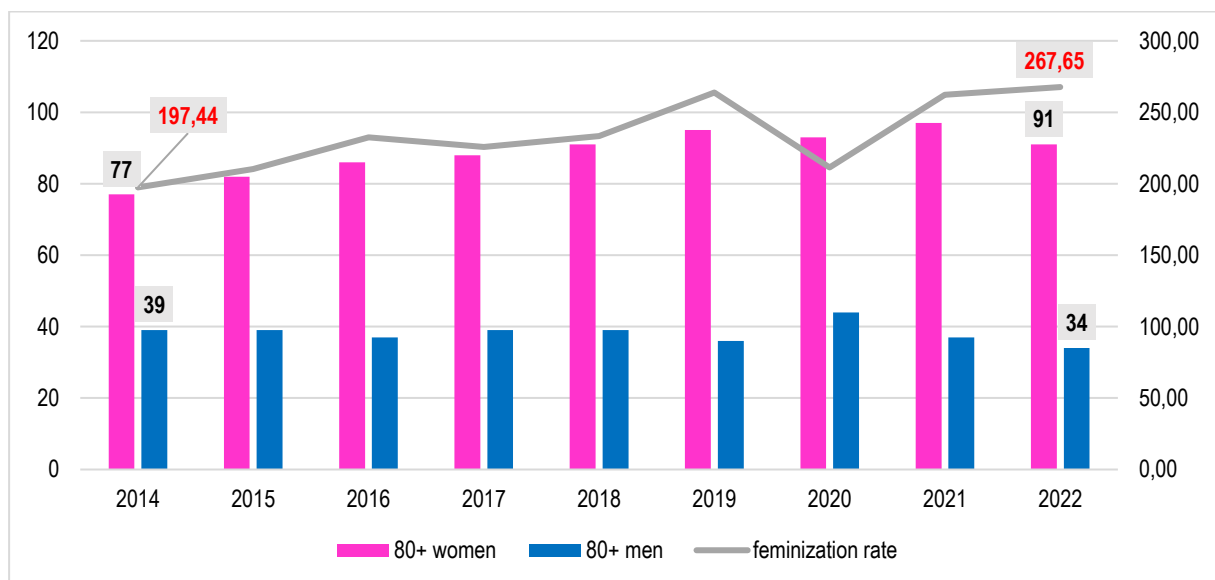
Nevertheless, in older age groups - as in other communes, also in the Suchy Dąb Commune - women dominate. In 2022, in the age group 60-79 years old, they constituted 50.6%, and in the age group 80 years and over - 72.8%.

Figure 4. The gender structure of the Suchy Dąb Commune inhabitants aged 60-69 years old



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

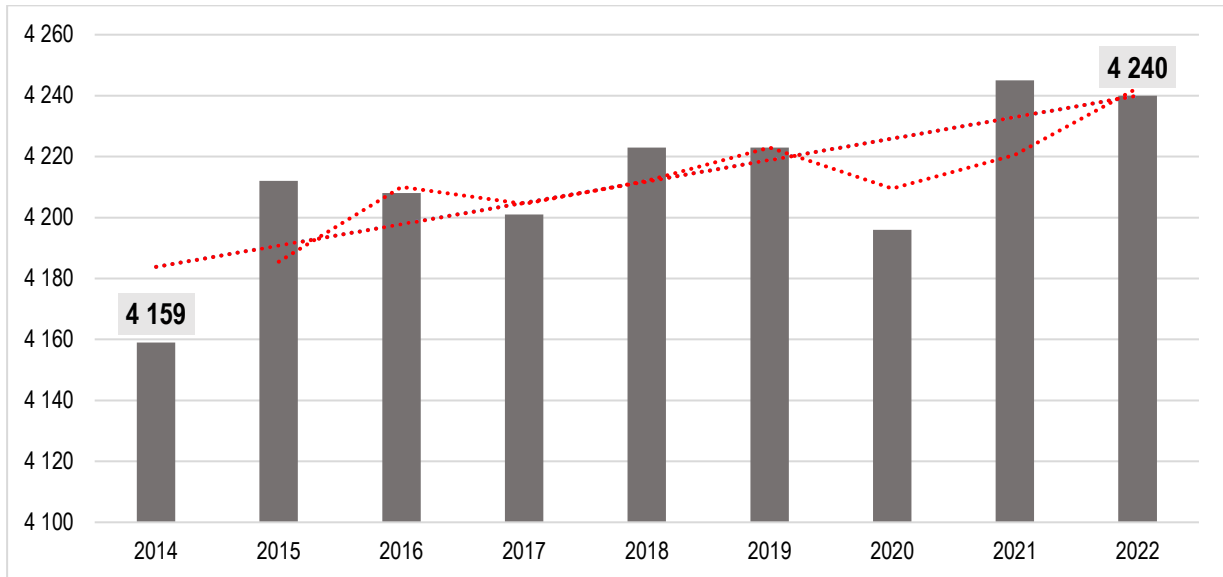
Figure 5. The gender structure of the Suchy Dąb Commune inhabitants aged 80+ years old



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

The demographic situation of the Suchy Dąb Commune is relatively favorable. In the sense that the share of older adults is lower (19,5%) than the average in the country (26%). The commune benefits from the location effect and the phenomenon of suburbanization. The Suchy Dąb Commune is an attractive place to live, that's why in the period 2014-2022 the number of inhabitants increased by almost 2%.

Figure 6. Number of The Suchy Dąb Commune inhabitants 2014-2022 with change trend



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

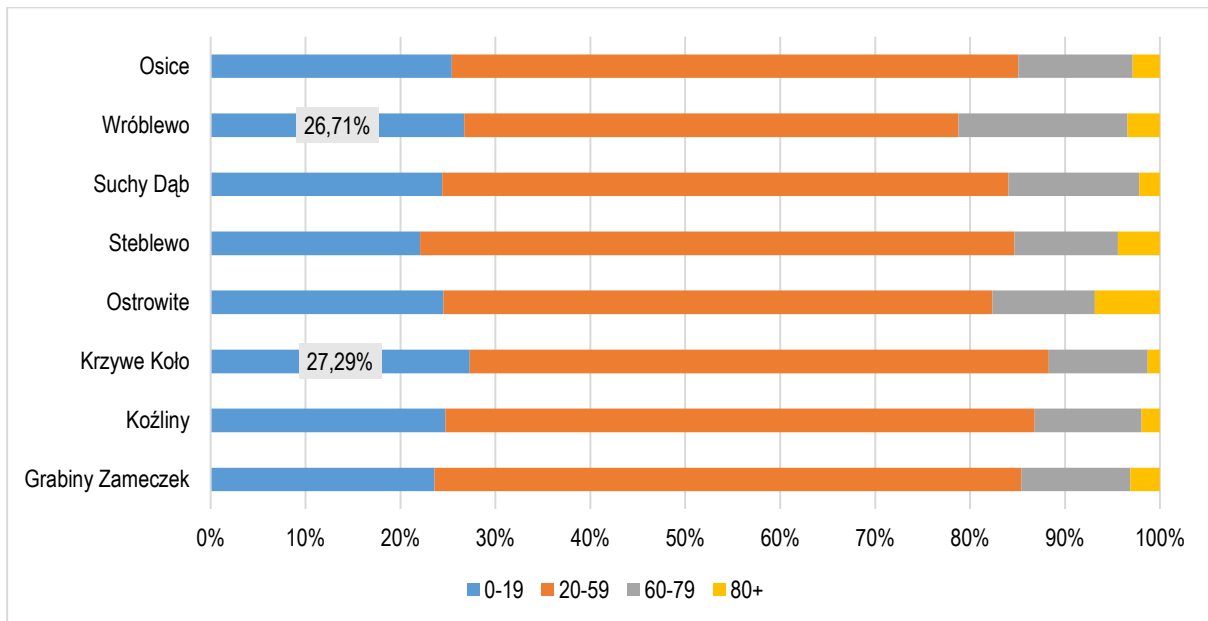
The age structure of residents and its changes are uneven in the Suchy Dąb commune. The demographic situation is slightly different in individual villages.

Table 2. Inhabitants of the Suchy Dąb Commune divided by age and village – place of residence

		Grabiny Zameczek	Koźliny	Krzywe Koło	Ostrowite	Stebkowo	Suchy Dąb	Wróblewo	Osice
0-19	2021	217	176	139	21	83	246	39	85
	2022	213	180	149	25	85	249	39	80
20-59	2021	555	461	336	59	236	623	77	195
	2022	558	452	333	59	241	609	76	188
60-79	2021	110	85	58	9	46	139	26	38
	2022	104	82	57	11	42	141	26	38
80+	2021	27	14	7	7	14	19	5	8
	2022	28	14	7	7	17	22	5	9
TOTAL	2021	909	736	540	96	379	1 027	147	326
	2022	903	728	546	102	385	1 021	146	315

Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

Figure 7. Age structure of the Suchy Dąb Commune inhabitants by village in 2022



Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

The village with the highest share of older people in 2022 was Wróblewo (21.23%) and Ostrowite (17.65%). What is quite interesting, Wróblewo is also the village where is one of the highest share of the youngest age group 0-19 years old – 26,71%.

Under the process of planning local senior policy, it is necessary to take into account which village has the highest number and share of older people among its inhabitants. Specific data for villages in the Suchy Dąb Commune are included in the table below.

Table 3. Number and share of older adults in the villages of the Suchy Dąb Commune in 2022

VILLAGE	THE NUMBER OF 60+ AMONG VILLAGE INHABITANTS	THE SHARE OF 60+ IN THE VILLAGE INHABITANTS
Grabiny Zameczek	132	14,62%
Koźliny	96	13,19%
Krzywe Koło	64	11,72%
Ostrowite	18	17,65%
Steblewo	59	15,32%
Suchy Dąb	163	15,96%
Wróblewo	31	21,23%
Osice	47	14,92%

Source: own study based on data from the Statistical Office.

2. DIAGNOSIS OF THE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS IN THE SUCHY DĄB COMMUNE

One of phases during the work on the application of the Suchy Dąb Commune to the Global Network of Aging-Friendly Cities and Communes of the World Health Organization (WHO GNACC) was the first focus research carried out to diagnose the needs of older adults inhabitants. It was conducted on the 27th of November 2023.

26 participants took part in the study, mainly members of the Dębianie Senior Club. During conversations and workshops, there have been identified strengths and weaknesses of pro-seniors' activities undertaken by local authorities so far, as well as basic expectations for future senior policy designing.

They were classified into the following groups:

- integration and activation in the peer group,
- conditions regarding access to social services, including care services in the place of seniors' residence,
- availability of public space and places for activities dedicated to seniors,
- the problem of digital and communication exclusion.

Table 4. Expectations of the focus research participants regarding future senior policy designing

INTEGRATION AND ACTIVATION IN THE PEER GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — recreational activities, gymnastics for seniors — establishing the senior club with a wide range of activities — creative activities — dance parties for seniors — one-day trips
CONDITIONS REGARDING ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES, INCLUDING CARE SERVICES IN THE PLACE OF SENIORS' RESIDENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — more activities in village centers — more activities of rural women's groups — availability of care services in the senior's place of residence — support for neighborhood services
AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC SPACE AND PLACES FOR ACTIVITIES DEDICATED TO SENIORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — more meetings and activities dedicated to seniors in schools operating in the Suchy Dąb Commune — development of the public transport — cooperation with the Catholic Church in the field of activities for seniors
THE PROBLEM OF DIGITAL AND COMMUNICATION EXCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — digital security courses — computers and internet applications' courses — improvement of abilities to use the cultural offer available in Internet

Source: own study based on results of focus research carried out to diagnose the needs of older adults inhabitants.

The results of the study clearly indicate that older adults want to actively participate in the public and cultural life of the commune, have the opportunity to develop their passions and participate in informal senior groups and implement intergenerational projects and undertakings. The key challenge in the Suchy Dąb Commune seems to be increasing the availability of public transport and creating a place where seniors could meet regularly.

3. SENIOR POLICY IN THE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES OF THE SUCHY DĄB COMMUNE

Demographic transition determines lots of challenges for the authorities. They focus mainly on creating offers ensuring active ageing of older adults and development of care services in the senior's place of residence. For many reasons, but primarily due to the commune's agricultural character, the type of dominant buildings (single houses located far from each other) and the low quality of social capital, the task is particularly demanding.

For five years, the Suchy Dąb Commune has been taking small steps to integrate and activate older adults inhabitants, intergenerational dialogue, cooperation with organizations supporting seniors, and reaching out to seniors who require support in their place of residence. The investment involving the construction of a municipal facility where the first seniors' club will be located is nearing completion.

Activities implemented in the Suchy Dąb Commune dedicated to the older adults are consistent with the priorities of the Commune Development Strategy - Suchy Dąb 2020 Plus, however, they still require systematization and expansion of the institutional and organizational base.

The main goal of senior policy in the Suchy Dąb Commune is the integration and activation of older adults residents and the development of different forms of their support, adequate to the diagnosed needs. Its implementation is to be achieved with activities that fall within four main priorities:

- 1) promotion of active aging
- 2) intergenerational dialogue promotion
- 3) development of care services for seniors in their place of residence
- 4) older adults' safety

The Suchy Dąb Commune carries out tasks addressed to seniors by the Commune Public Library and the Commune Social Welfare Center, as well as cooperating non-governmental organizations.

Table 5. Care services, including home care and companionship for seniors

CARE SERVICES AT OLDER ADULTS HOMES SERVED BY SOCIAL WORKERS	These care services are provided for those who live alone and due to their age, illness or other reasons, require the support of other people and are deprived of this help. Services can also be given to people who require assistance and the family cannot ensure it.
SPECIALIZED CARE SERVICES AT SENIORS HOMES	Specialized care services served by social workers, dedicated for persons with mental disorders.
DISABLED PERSON PERSONAL ASSISTANT	The program is addressed to disabled, who require the services of an assistant. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to benefit from the support of a personal assistant, among others while performing everyday activities or undertaking social activity. The program also aims to counteract discrimination and social exclusion of people with disabilities.
RESPIRE CARE AS THE SUPPORT/ RELIEF FOR SENIORS' USUAL CAREGIVERS	The program is addressed to family members who require support in the form of an ad hoc, temporary break in providing care for children with a disability, as well as for seniors.

Source: own study.

Table 6. Active ageing and seniors' integration

DĘBIANIE SENIOR CLUB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — informal group of app. 30 seniors interested in spending time together — meetings once a week at Commune Public Library — different activities developing the interests and hobbies — support by local the Meyer of the Suchy Dąb Commune
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SPORT AND RECREATION	— gymnastics for seniors
CULTURAL EVENTS	— concerts dedicated to seniors — dance parties
INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	— cooperation with primary schools and kindergardens
POSITIVE IMAGE OF OLDER ADULTS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY	— promoting seniors' activities and achievements of seniors — involving seniors in the organizing important commune's events

Source: own study.

Age-friendly public buildings/space

There has been carried out the audit of the accessibility of public space and public facilities in the commune. The needs/ expectations of seniors and disabled were taken into account.

A self-assessment of the accessibility of public sector institutions websites and mobile applications was also carried out.

Conclusions from both procedures constitute the basis for the currently implemented modernization works, adapting public space to the needs of people with disabilities and people with the need for support in the field of mobility due to old age or health.

4. OLDER ADULTS IN THE SUCHY DĄB COMMUNE – SUMMARY

Demographic transition determines lots of challenges for the authorities. They focus mainly on creating offers ensuring active ageing of older adults and development of care services in the senior's place of residence. For many reasons, but primarily due to the commune's agricultural character, the type of dominant buildings (single houses located far from each other) and the low quality of social capital, the task is particularly demanding.

For five years, the Suchy Dąb Commune has been taking small steps to integrate and activate older adults inhabitants, intergenerational dialogue, cooperation with organizations supporting seniors, and reaching out to seniors who require support in their place of residence.

The Suchy Dąb Commune carries out tasks addressed to seniors by the Commune Public Library and the Commune Social Welfare Center, as well as cooperating non-governmental organizations.

The Commune Public Library in Suchy Dąb has been the main place for integration and activation of older adults for several years. Members of the Dębianie Senior Club meet there regularly. The Commune Social Welfare Center is responsible for the development of care services and support for seniors with special needs.

Local non-governmental organizations, including volunteer fire brigades and rural housewives' associations, also play an important role in activities for seniors. They integrate residents, promote intergenerational dialogue, and activate seniors nearby their place of residence.

Other units of the commune office, public institutions, informal groups and local entrepreneurs also join activities for seniors on an ad hoc basis. Dębowa Seniorada it is the event that integrates all local institutions, organizations and social activists. This seniors' dance party attend over 200 seniors – the Suchy Dąb Commune residents. It's organized once a year to celebrate the International Seniors' Day.



For the first time, the needs of seniors were professionally diagnosed and priorities for the future senior policy in the commune were set. That was provoked by preparations on the application of the Suchy Dąb Commune to the Global Network of Aging-Friendly Cities and Communes of the World Health Organization (WHO GNACC).

The Suchy Dąb Commune is open to new proposals and experiences of other cities and communes in activities for the seniors'. The authorities declare active participation in the exchange and promotion of good practices for active aging, creating age-friendly societies and age-friendly public spaces.