

Introduction of the Pilot Project for Quality Ageing

Dear Reader!

Our home, Alsómocsolád, is an over 700 years old settlement with 351 inhabitants in the northern corner of Baranya County, within a distance of 25 kilometres as the crow flies, to the north from the county seat, Pécs. The town lies on the picturesque downhill of the Mecsek Mountains, in the so-called „Ridge” geographical region, surrounded by hills on the east and enclosed by lakes on the west.

Alsómocsolád has all public utilities, as well as an established rainwater-drainage system; and all of its roads are asphalted. The town also has a piped water network - the generated waste-water is cleansed by the town’s own sewage works - using the so-called „living machine technology”⁵. Alsómocsolád provides advanced telecommunication and IT services which cater for every need. The town’s streets, squares are ordered and tidy.

The area’s agricultural traits are not very favourable, yet it possesses a significant crop farming-culture and has highly developed stock-raising traditions. The local agricultural entrepreneurs ensure the arable lands always being well-cultivated.

We, the citizens of Alsómocsolád try and do our best to bring family farming back. Our goals are to re- create the traditional rural values and to protect our current ones, as well as to profit from the established resources in an economical and efficient way; so that the inhabitants of the town may again benefit from the agricultural opportunities provided by the environment: the local gardens, agricultural buildings and tools, forests, and meadows. For the sake of improving our town’s self-sufficient capacity, we have launched several programmes - the ones that must be emphasised are the Fate-Changing Fate-Shaping Programme, the START Work-Programme, and the “Our own bread” local agriculture-development programme.

The citizens of Alsómocsolád form a strong community that has the will and the ability to live among any circumstances. We walk our own path, having searched for the possibilities of renewal, realising almost everything that we have ever imagined. We protect our remaining values, and guard all those left to us by our ancestors. Committed citizens, colleagues and collaborators have lined up behind the local government in order to help attain our plans.

We share our collected and organised spiritual values with others as well - we strive to create new things in all walks of the small village life, serving the common good.

In Alsómocsolád, the supreme value is the human being: every single citizen of our town is equally important in the eyes of the community. We regard children and youths as the foundations of the future. We use the resources available to us and operate our institutions in such a way that ensures for our youths to possess adequate skill, ability, openness, flexibility and tolerance. We want them to generate change instead of enduring it; to become conscious and responsible citizens, able to face the challenges of the globalised world but being aware that there is a place in the world which awaits them, where their roots and their homes are.

Here in Alsómocsolád, we also pay exceptional attention to the elderly generation who raised us in difficult conditions, from whom we have learned honour, dignity, the love of work and the importance of family.

⁵ A method developed by Hungarian engineers, which involves bacteria, various plants, clams, snails and fish in cleansing sewage.

It is of great importance in any age - even more so as the years pass - that we feel ourselves useful, to feel that we belong somewhere and be able to honestly tell others about our problems; to be healthy in body and soul. We must celebrate holidays and other occasions when we may enjoy the company of others, when we can relax, learn something new, or act together for the sake of the community. A great example of the local government's diversity of thought is the "Generational bridge" programme, connecting the youth with the elderly.

The way a society treats the weak and the vulnerable also represents its state of development. In our town, we endeavour to establish a complex safety-net which would help eliminate the present inequalities, protect those who cannot protect themselves, motivate those feeling hopeless or disillusioned. An excellent case of supporting the socially disadvantaged was the Public-Space-Net programme carried out by our management in which eleven towns participated. Our citizens are also provided with daily assistance by the village caretaker service as well as by the Autumn Light Nursing Home Integrated Social Institution, or by the innumerable programme options of the Telehouse. The latter aims to shape perspectives and improve life quality by building on the activity of those in need of help - not only acting for but acting together with them for their own sake!

We are open-minded, ready to experiment with and adopt any new initiative that we believe could be of use for us. We would gladly learn from others, but we also welcome wholeheartedly those arriving to us: we are eager to show our guests all that we have created, to present our current programmes and those under preparation, emphasising the elements exploitable for them as well, but pointing out the inconveniences as well as the incidental pitfalls.

In this issue, the reader may learn about the project entitled Pilot Project for Quality Ageing - under the registration number HU11-0005-A1-2013 -, and acquire any current information related to it. This project was submitted to the call entitled "Capacity-building of Local Governments for Enhancing Quality of Public Services and for Promoting Local Economic Development", announced in the framework of the Capacity-building and Institutional Cooperation programme of the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.

László Dicső

Mayor

The Norway Grants in a nutshell

Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are partners with the European Union (hereinafter: EU) based on the Agreement on the European Economic Area (hereinafter: EEA-Agreement) approved by the 94/1/EC, ECSC decision. The EEA Agreement makes possible the free movement of goods, services, people and capital in the internal market.

The EEA Agreement also includes as a common goal the reduction of social and economic disparities in Europe. Ever since the agreement entered into force in 1994, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein have contributed to the social and economic development in the less prosperous countries of the EU and the EEA by creating Grants. Hungary also belongs among these countries as the third biggest beneficiary country.

As the aforementioned three countries are members of the EEA, but are not members of the EU; these countries do not contribute to the cost of the community, however, they enjoy the advantages of the common economic area. The Grants – including the Norway Grants – have been founded for the purpose of taking part in the cost of the continental economic and

social unification and closing the gap between the states that are more prosperous and those that are in less favourable positions.

The purposes of the Grants are the reduction of economic and social differences and the strengthening of bilateral relations between the sixteen Northern-, Central-, and Southern-European member states of the EU. Through the Grants, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein – the Donors – are also contributing to the strengthening of fundamental European values such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law.

The Donors and the EU agree both to the total extent of the contribution and to the distribution of funding per beneficiary state. Within the national allocation, the Donors negotiate with each beneficiary country and agree which programmes to establish, set their objectives and agree to the size of the allocation to each individual programme.

The agreements are based on national needs and priorities of the beneficiary states and on the scope for cooperation with the donor states.

The National Focal Point is responsible for the overall management of programmes in each beneficiary country. Programme Operators develop and manage the programmes, often in cooperation with a partner from the Donor states. Most projects are selected following calls for proposals organised by the Programme Operators.

The beneficiaries of the Grants reflect the criteria set by the EU Cohesion Fund which targets member states where the Gross National Income per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. The funds are given to the countries which have joined to the EU during or after the expansion in 2004 and three further southern member states. However, those countries which have entered the EU before 2004 cannot receive funding from the Norway Grants. The contributions have been channelled through the Financial Mechanism (1994-1998), the Financial Instrument (1999-2003) and the EEA and Norway Grants (2004-2009 and 2009-2014).

Since 2004, there have been two separate mechanisms: the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants. 95,8% of the EEA Grants and 100% of the Norway Grants come from the contribution of Norway.

In the agreements on the Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014 (also known as: the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants 2009-2014) reducing social and economic disparities was introduced as an overall objective in addition to strengthening the bilateral relations between the donor and the beneficiary countries.

The cooperation agreement about the implementation period of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Hungary was enacted by the 236/2011. (XI. 15.) Gov. Dec. as a part of the national legislation of Hungary.

The 'Pilot Project For Quality Ageing' (HU11-0005-A1-2013) is implemented on the basis of the Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014.

In the second period of financing – 2009-2014 –, Hungary received a total of 153.3 million EUR. The Grants provide support for 12 projects in this period: seven of these belong to the EEA Grants and five to the Norway Grants. Strengthening civil society, increasing the competitiveness of green companies, adaptation to climate change as well as research collaborations to boost research-based knowledge are all major goals.

Programmes under the EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014 run until 2017. More than 80 programmes are implemented in cooperation with public entities of the Donor states. More than 20% of the projects have partners in either Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein.

Our project, which includes a close cooperation with our Norwegian partner, will be implemented through the grant obtained with the application submitted to the announced programme area entitled 'Capacity Development and Inter-Institutional Cooperation', exclusively financed by the Norway Grants.

The amount of the grant obtained: 1.300.312,- €.

Short summary of the 'Pilot Project for Quality Aging' project

In 2013, the Local Government of Alsómcsolád, in cooperation of its partners, submitted a project proposal for the implementation of the project entitled 'Pilot Project for Quality Aging' to the call entitled 'Capacity-building of Local Governments for Enhancing Quality of Public Services and for Promoting Local Economic Development' announced in the framework of the Capacity-building and Institutional Cooperation Programme under the period of Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014.

The overall objective of the project: raising the standard of caring for the elderly in the small-village areas of the rural territories of Hungary

The primary immediate goal: human capacity-building in the common sector and in caring for the elderly which provides opportunity for a change of attitude and conscious activity, involving older people living in small settlements in the local community life and creating the conditions for an active and happy ageing.

Nine activity groups contribute to attaining this first immediate goal, which groups include 19 trainings, preparation of 5 curriculums, organisation of 3 conferences, a creative workshop, carrying out 3 researches, an intensive English language course, 3 study-trips to Norway; during the trips elderly care, equal opportunities and gender, as well as rural development and small communities - sustainable development will be covered as subjects. Exchange visits of 2-2 caretakers give insight into the everyday life of Hungary and Norway. Methodological lessons are included in the activities organized in the spirit of solidarity between the generations, for the sake of ameliorating the relationship between young and old. In the focus of these activities are the mayors and the decision-makers of small communities, and the workers and leaders involved in the social areas of the reorganized district administration institutions. The managers, caretakers and nurses of nursing homes, social workers, dieticians, psychologists, civil society leaders and activists, Hungarian and Norwegian students also belong to the target group of the project.

The secondary immediate goal: establishing quality services aimed at the elderly care in Alsómcsolád. To this end, 6 three-bedded rooms will be rearranged into double-bedded ones and the hot water supply will be provided by solar energy in the Autumn Light Nursing Home. A room will be furnished for group and individual therapeutic purposes, a gym designed for seniors and a management room which will be the methodological and consultative centre of the Nursing Home. The kitchen will be expanded and equipped for preparing a selection of special dishes, and the restaurant will be also expanded. Strategic documents will be drawn up that will serve to aid the preparation of the local government and the Nursing Home for the Programming Period of 2014-2020.

The project will be implemented together with the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning and the Foundation for Alsómcsolád, as partners, as well as with the University of Pécs, as an associate partner.

As a result of the project, a well-prepared human capacity will be created among the mayors and employees of the small communities as well as the managers and nurses of the nursing homes in the region. This will allow for other settlements - following the example of the model settlement - to promote their own local actions supporting active ageing. The professional workers, due to their new skills, can provide a higher quality of leadership and nursing work. The trainings and the conferences will result in a new attitude among the local decision-makers, and in a wider extension of the idea of actively preparing for the elderly years in the local communities.

The development of quality services will be a significant result of the project, including more comfortable accommodation for the elderly and the enrichment of nursing activities.

The matter of equal opportunities and gender will be presented through research results in the public sector in Baranya County. Strategic materials will be drawn up to aid the preparation of the local government and the Autumn Light Nursing Home in the following period. For some of the trainings, written course materials will be available.

Every new information and knowledge will be shared on the website of the project, therefore not only those living in Southern Transdanubia can follow the project unfolding, but other small-village area residents of the country as well.

New methods will be developed in elderly care through a creative seminar with the involvement of Norwegian and Hungarian experts and university students.

The project symbolises the solidarity between the generations, as it makes possible the relationship between old and young generations through various methodological programmes.

A significant result of the project will be the Methodological and Consultation Centre, which will be established in the framework of the Autumn Light Nursing Home, supported by local and international partners.

Our partner, the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL)

The NAAL is the national non-governmental umbrella organization for adult learning in Norway. Among its members are 15 governmentally approved adult learning associations with a member network of 475 adult learning non-governmental organizations nationwide.

NAAL has its central administration in Oslo, and has autonomous regional offices covering all the 19 counties of Norway.

Last year, our members' activities totalled approximately 44 500 courses with 508 000 participants, of which 217 000 - 88 600 men and 129 000 women - were over the age of 50.

The purpose of the NAAL is to

- advocate the common interests of the associations and their participants towards the Government, the Parliament and the Ministry of Education
- promote non-formal adult learning in the society
 - advise the members and other third parties concerning laws and regulations
 - give advice within the field of adult learning theory and practice
 - provide counsel within education planning
 - coordinate projects
 - advocate and lobby

The diversity

The adult learning associations represent a multitude of interests and ideologies. The largest associations offer a wide range of themes on several levels, with or without formal exams and parallel programmes in the public school system. Other associations emphasise more voluntary adult learning activities, organisational training of members, learning for the development of the local community and sustainable development. Others emphasise political education, culture and creativity, aesthetics and practical topics.

The humanistic adult learning

The common denominator of the adult learning organized by the non-governmental organizations is a profile of equality and equal opportunities; a humanistic adult learning theory and practice and the belief in every person's development potential.

Government support

Based on the Norwegian Adult Education Acts of 1976 and 2009, the associations which meet the legal criteria may receive grants for the adult learning organised by the members of the NAAL from the Government in most the counties and in many towns. The amount of the Governmental grants for 2014 was 196 371 000 NOK.

Adult Learners' Week

The NAAL is the Norwegian coordinator of Adult Learners' Week. Throughout the country, local governments and all partners involved in adult learning participate in the Adult Learners' Week to gain information about the wide range of available possibilities. Several conferences, stalls, open lectures and other programmes await those interested. The Adult Learners' Week was initiated by the UNESCO Adult Education Conference (CONFINTEA) in 1997. The purpose of the international event series is to strengthen adult learners' rights, motivate them and provide opportunities of learning by broadly advertising and demonstrating the wide range of activities, methods and organisations and institutions available to them.

Nordic Network for Adult Learning – NVL

The NVL is a Nordic meeting place (physical and virtual) for the participants involved in adult learning. It is an information bank, propagating results achieved through cooperation projects, and is the place of initiating debates and innovation, being the embodiment of the Nordic competence and values in adult learning. Its information activities produce added Nordic value through the creation of projects and networks. New policy suggestions are formulated concerning adult learning, based on the diversified networks and the experience gained through the cooperation projects. The activity of NVL is supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, with the explicit purpose of cooperation and dialogue between the Nordic countries and with the Baltic countries, Northwest Russia and Europe. The NAAL coordinated the Norwegian activities during the period of 2005 – 2008, and continues to do so in the current period (2013 – 2016).

International Adult Learning Cooperation

The NAAL is a member of the Nordic Network of Adult Learning umbrella organisations. Furthermore, it is also a member of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Within this network, different cooperation activities take place in

close contact with the European Union, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Foundation for Alsómocsolád – project partner

The aim of our foundation is to give assistance to the population of Baranya Ridge, especially to the inhabitants of Alsómocsolád in overcoming their disadvantages with cultural, economy developing, community developing, youth helper, equal opportunity, health- and environmentally-conscious, educational and informative programmes in order to produce a unified Hungarian society which ensures equal opportunities.

The objectives of the Foundation:

- ensuring the development of Alsómocsolád, promoting the fulfilment of the inhabitants' physical, mental, spiritual, cultural and social needs;
- supporting any initiative, study draft, and thesis that aims at realising the modern convenience of the town;
- striving to overcome unemployment, preferably by creating new jobs in the village;
- supporting any activity that aims at a better maintenance of the settlement;
- promoting the organization of tourism in the countryside;
- providing the opportunity to preserve cultural traditions, explore the past, protect the culture;
- supporting school-leavers and young married couples;
- supporting youth initiatives, youth work and youth protection;
- reducing the social burden of the unemployed and pensioners;
- development of the infrastructure;
- keeping in mind and supporting the environmental aspects;
- supporting adult learning, providing scholarships.

The tasks of the Foundation for Alsómocsolád to achieve the aforementioned goals:

- joining the rural and urban development processes, initiating and managing rural and urban development programmes, particularly in the area of tourism;
- initiating and managing labour market programmes;
- initiating and managing youth programmes;
- promoting environmental awareness, initiating and managing programmes for natural and built environment protection;
- initiating and managing cultural mediation programmes;
- initiating and managing community development programmes;
- initiating and managing equal opportunity programmes;
- the distribution of information on the concerned topics, supporting the PR activities and media appearance of the organization;
- establishing international relations;
- continuing adult learning activities, providing extra-curricular trainings;
- providing services related to adult learning;
- other educational activities.

A regular information and consulting service is operated by our foundation in the Integrated Community and Service Space in Alsómocsolád. The primary target group of our services is

the population of Alsómcsolád, our services are easily accessible and open for anyone regardless of age, sex and place of residence.

Our services include collecting and delivering public information – grants, tenders, employment, volunteer work, further education, flat-renting, entertainment – to the target group, application monitoring, assistance to application writing, project management, consulting service (economic, career guidance, career planning, legal etc.), and community organization.

Our secondary target group consists of the non-governmental organizations of Baranya Ridge; as a regional non-governmental resource centre, we provide application-related, legal, economic, operational consultations; furthermore, trainings are regularly organized on topics which may assist their works.

We participate in the regional planning processes, the implementation of the programmes, particularly concerning the areas of cultural mediation, environmental protection, rural and urban development, labour market, education and community development.

During our community development activities we collaborated with local and state organizations. We regularly organize programmes together with the Green Bridge Foundation in Pécs, the Educators' Hall Association, the endpoints of Tett-Hely Network and the Youth of Baranya County Non-Profit Ltd. on the topics of equal opportunity, education, environment protection and voluntarism.

Regular cultural events are organized by the Foundation, such as book clubs, writer-reader meetings, photograph clubs, toy-houses, competence-developing motivational trainings, “Everyday techniques” for mothers living in disadvantaged families, “Yard Workshop” sessions for men and “Eco -and It is so natural” clubs to promote environmentally conscious behaviour and lifestyle. Our foundation participates in the organizations of Children's Day, Spa Day, End of the Summer event, Advent Fair and Village Christmas in every year.

We believe that our foundation's work, filled with belief and built on social participation makes the village of Alsómcsolád, and the Baranya ridge more liveable places.

The Norwegian system of elderly care

According to a world-wide research, Norway is the best place to grow old. Elderly care is very well-organized in this country. There is a tradition of public care, and intense campaigns are launched in the social media to inform people in every social strata about the importance of this issue.

Norway has a population of 5,300,000 with growing tendency. The birth rate is over 0.012 since 2001, and it reached 0.0126 in 2010, while the mortality rate has fallen under 0.009 since 2004 and in 2010 this rate was 0.0085.

The ageing of the population is a typical demographic trend. 15 percent of the population is above the age of 65. Its rate is relatively stable at present, though further growth can be expected. The tax-based health system of Norway is divided into the state- and local-level. While the central government mainly plays a role in financing and legislative powers, health services are the responsibility of the regional authorities and local governments.

The primary health care falls within the jurisdiction of the local governments, including caring for disabled people and the elderly as well. The Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development supervise the primary health care management of the local governments.

Local governments have a significant role in elderly care. The aging society requires that the policies concerning the elderly adapt to the demands and needs of the seniors.

The institutions, such as residential care institutions and special apartment houses, can be found both in the Norwegian system of elderly care and in ours, similarly to the daytime care and the signalling system.

Compared to the Hungarian systems, a major difference is that the prevention is emphasised significantly in Norway, thereby helping elderly people preserve their active lifestyle.

Due to this, the number of seniors living at home is increasing in Norway. It is also worth noting that several new techniques, technologies are used in the field of elderly care.

According to the records, approximately forty thousand people live in residential care homes or special apartment houses in Norway. This number is not increasing, because the number of seniors living at home is steadily rising. The finances of nursing homes are covered by the normative support system, within the limits of the competent local government's budget. The health service is free for the elderly, but the residents of nursing homes must pay for their attendance according to their income, which payment cannot exceed 75% of their income.

The seniors do not have to pay a so-called entrance-fee when moving into the residential institutions or the apartment houses designed for that purpose, and it is possible for them to move into the nursing homes or apartment houses only for a shorter, specific period. In this case, daily payment is also possible.

Residential institutions are suitable for those who need constant care; the special apartments are occupied by elderly people who are able to care for themselves.

Home assistance services are partly free, but cleaning and shopping has fees.

The essence of preventive care is increasing activity in the case of functional deterioration in the seniors' activity; and its aim is to enhance and preserve the quality of their lives. Preventive work or rehabilitation is carried out by trainers who have been prepared for these tasks, as well as by voluntary therapists, focusing on the targets marked by the patients.

These goals are all associated with regular daily activities that are becoming more and more difficult for the elderly to carry out alone.

The most effective way of prevention is exercise. During the group trainings - two or three times a week - trainers help the seniors achieve an appropriate fitness level, and later make sure that this level is maintained. The experience is very positive. The training does not only improve stamina but also helps in building relationships. The most significant aim is for elderly people to stay at home as long as possible, and for them to be able to care for themselves and carry out their daily activities independently and autonomously.

Constantly developing techniques and technologies also play a role in elderly care; for example, establishing a GPS system for patients suffering from dementia and providing logistics services. Night-time care and direct communication are also included among these new practices.

In her study entitled „Alternatives of long term care: Technology and environment”⁶, an interesting international viewpoint is formulated by Zsuzsa Széman. It presents excellent examples of technical and environmental solutions in elderly care applied in several countries,

⁶ http://www.esely.org/kiadvanyok/2015_1/2015-1_2-1_szeman_tartos_idosgondozas.pdf (2016.08.07.)

such as the Facebook Light program used in Norway. Zsuzsa Széman summarizes her experience as follows:

„Target group: elderly people suffering from dementia. In Norwegian society, where the chance of suffering from dementia is increased due to longevity, an interdisciplinary research team summarised the social exclusion of patients in the following question: ‘Why do people suffering from dementia have to be excluded from mass communication and new types of Internet-based communication, thereby intensifying their social exclusion?’ In response, the engineers of the SINTEF (The Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research) constantly develop the Internet-based program used for helping elderly people suffering from dementia in their everyday life and communication. According to the tests carried out so far: a) effortless communication increased the safety of elderly people; b) shortened the duration of care; c) strengthened the relation between people suffering from dementia and their family, outside world; d) it had a positive effect on their mood, their medical conditions have improved; e) which helped both the formal and informal caretakers’ work.”

An important element of our ‘Pilot Project for Quality Ageing’ is to search for and find solutions that can provide aid in the everyday life of elderly people and their caretakers; and which can be disseminated as great, helpful methods.

The system of Hungarian elderly care

According to the local study completed in 2013 for the National Assembly: “Ageing is not in itself problematic, but in the aspect that neither the economy nor the social service systems are prepared for a comprehensive reform for the sake of the sustainability of the service systems.”

In our country, the life expectancy at birth – based on the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office – is 70,50 years for men and 78,11 years for women. Life expectancy at the age of 60 is 16,79 years for men and 21,56 years for women.

In Hungary, the proportion of the population aged 65 or older is 16.7%. According to the population projections, the proportion of older age groups will be 29.4% by 2050 and 31,9% by 2060, similarly to the EU average (data of the HCSO).

Under the Fundamental Law of Hungary, special protection is provided to the elderly by the Hungarian State. In accordance with Section (4) of Article XIX/19. of the Fundamental Law, “Hungary shall contribute to ensuring the livelihood for the elderly by maintaining a general state pension system based on social solidarity and by allowing for the operation of voluntarily established social institutions.”

The National Assembly adopted the National Ageing Strategy in 2009 by its 81/2009 (X.2.) NA decision, then it also adopted the Action Plan related to the strategy by the 1087/2010. (IV. 9.) NA decision.

The objectives of the national ageing policy are long-term, focusing on the present and the future. Its main goals are: promoting the increase of life expectancy at birth, increasing the number of years spent in good health, maintaining active life, creating old-age income security, strengthening social integration, coordinating several services taking into account the interests and needs of aging and old people.

Demographic changes and individualisation processes also mean that the families are less and less able to fill the role of a natural safety net and to fulfil care functions; thus the proportion and importance of institutional care is increasing.

A change of attitude towards old age is required. The basis of the National Ageing Strategy's (NAS) social model is that all appropriate age groups should have a chance for a complete and active life, and for a humane completion of the last phase of life⁷.

In Hungary, Act III of 1993 determines the available services for elderly. One of the basic functions of the act is to determine the responsibility of the state, and to define what kind of services and assistance must be granted. It is also necessary that the state expands its potential range of service providers with private institutions as well as institutions maintained by church in addition to the local government institutions. The state is primarily present as a provider of funds; while local governments are present in the system either as service-organizers or as service providers, but under this act, the service obligation ultimately belongs to the local governments.

Different types of support can be provided for the elderly in Hungary, on a means-tested basis determined by law. These can be financial benefits and benefits in kind, or social services for seniors.

Financial benefits

The district office may allocate an old age allowance, employment replacement support, health damage and public health-care services, and a nursing allowance for or in consideration of the elderly.

The city council representing the local government allocates a municipal benefit in accordance with the criteria specified in law and in the local government's decree.

In case of an allowance falling within the jurisdiction of the city council, the application must be submitted to the official body determined in the decree of the competent – depending on the applicant's address - local government. In case of an allowance falling within the jurisdiction of the district office of the capital and county government office, the application must be submitted to the competent - depending on the applicant's address - district office.

Social benefits in kind

The district office may declare a subjective right to public health care services, to normative public health care services, and an entitlement to medical services as social benefits in kind.

In case of the decease of an elderly person, the competent city council of the local government -depending on the place of bereavement - arranges the funeral of the deceased person on public expense - within 21 days of becoming aware of the bereavement - if the person(s) obliged to arrange the funeral cannot be found or if there is no such person, or if the person(s) obliged will not arrange the funeral.

Social services

The state as well as the local governments ensure personal attendance for the socially disadvantaged. Personal attendance includes basic social services and specialised assistance.

Basic social services

- village- and farm-caretaker service
- catering
- domestic assistance

⁷ Elderly Care Standards – Regional Expert Group, Residential Elderly Care – National Family and Social Policy Institute TÁMOP 5.4.

- domestic assistance with a signalling system

Specialised assistance within the scope of personal care

- - institutions providing nursing and assistance (nursing homes)

By arranging these basic services, the state and the local government provide aid to the socially disadvantaged in their own homes and neighbourhoods so as to help them maintain an independent life; and to assist them in solving their problems arising from their state of health, mental condition or from other reasons.

Village- and farm-caretaker service

The goal of the village- and farm-caretaker service is to alleviate the disadvantages arising from the lack of institutions in the small villages, peripheries and other inlands as well as inhabited farmlands. The service aims to ensure access to public services, and to services aiding in catering for basic needs; and it also helps to fulfil necessities on the personal and on the community level.

Catering

In the framework of catering, those socially disadvantaged people who due to their age cannot provide for themselves and for their dependants, either permanently or temporarily, must be provided with warm meals at least once a day. The detailed rules for eligibility criteria are determined by the local government in a decree.

Domestic assistance

In the framework of domestic assistance, the assistance required to maintain an independent life must be given in the living environment of the beneficiary person. The applicant receives social assistance or personal care to help maintain domestic hygiene, and is aided in domestic activities, in preventing emergencies and in solving actual emergency situations.

Domestic assistance with a signalling system

Domestic assistance with a signalling system is a service that aims to avert any incidental crisis which may occur while still maintaining an independent life; it is provided for elderly people living in their own homes who require this option because of their state of health and social circumstances but are capable of operating the emergency device properly.

In case of an emergency call, the domestic assistance with a signalling system ensures the caregiver on duty arriving immediately on the scene of the emergency, taking the necessary measures straight away to solve the problem having caused the emergency call, and if necessary initiating further medical or social attendance.

Institutions providing long-term residence, nursing and assistance

If the people in need of assistance due to their age cannot be properly looked after within the framework of the basic social services, they must be placed in institutions or nursing homes where they will receive the treatment and care that their state requires. The nursing homes may be maintained by the local government or by other, e.g. religious organisations, foundations.

The nursing homes are for those elderly people who are unable to look after themselves or are in constant need of help in doing so; these people are provided with three meals per day, with clothes, if necessary, as well as with textiles, with mental and medical care. Their residence is ensured, they receive assistance and are tended to - provided that attending to them cannot be managed otherwise.

Those people may be admitted to nursing homes who require the daily four hours of attendance but are not in need of any regular in-patient hospital treatment, and who have completed the normative retirement age. When applying for attendance, together with the person having completed the retirement age may be admitted that person's spouse, life partner, sibling or disabled close relative - even if that person is not in need of attendance -, provided that those persons have been living together for at least a year, and that the other person is willing to pay a fee which is the same amount as the service cost price.

There are also some institutions providing residential care that the elderly may resort to on a market basis instead of a social one. These are institutions which provide an advanced level of care; or apartments run by companies specialising in this area.

The role of prevention in Hungarian elderly care is increasing as well; in the National Ageing Strategy, the members of today's older generation are a primary target group. However, the strategy also points out that the essence of an active elderly life actually lies in a close and direct relationship between the generations as well as in a mutual support - as neither the middle-aged nor the younger generations are indifferent to the activity and life-quality of the elderly, and to the opportunities of their own, future elderly years.

Several plans have been worked out to promote a healthy lifestyle and exercise:

Both in the **Semmelweis Plan** and in the **National Public Health Programme**, initiatives have been laid down to improve the life quality of the elderly population, whose number is constantly increasing. These include urging a change of attitude to the elderly years, regarding old age as a valuable, active stage of life and thus paying exceptional attention to it, making the health care system more elderly-friendly, involving the elderly to a greater extent in the lives of the local communities, as well as establishing various forms of health improvement.

„Ten Thousand Steps” Programme

The “Ten Thousand Steps” Programme was announced in the framework of the programmes concerned with healthy lifestyle and health-consciousness - the aim of the programme is that the participating organisations should plan at least 20 walking events for their members per year; thus encouraging them to exercise regularly. A lifestyle-counselling for elderly people is also connected to the programme.

National Nordic Walking Programme

The National Nordic Walking Programme was first announced by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2008, then in 2009 it was launched arm-in-arm with the Hungarian Association for Recreational Sports and with the Hungarian Rambler's Association “Friends of Nature”. The programme's effect was tens of thousands Hungarian citizens getting actively acquainted with the Finnish “northern walking” - about 70% of the participants is over the age of 50.

And last but not least, learn about a great, helpful method in elderly care practice, widespread in our country:

In her study, entitled “Alternatives of long term care: Technology and environment”⁸, Zsuzsa Széman presents a well-functioning Hungarian programme as well: the focus of the “Web-nurse” programme is aimed at the caretakers of the elderly and the family members of those in need of attendance.

⁸ http://www.esely.org/kiadvanyok/2015_1/2015-1_2-1_szeman_tartos_idosgondozas.pdf (downloaded: 2016.08.07.)

Its target group: the informal workers; the family members caring for, nursing their elderly relative. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta (with the support of the European Union's Central Europe programme) developed a freely accessible website by the beginning of 2014 within the framework of the HELPS-project - the site offers to teach skills through educational videos for those family members with no expertise in care for the elderly. The site also features a so-called service map, which provides information about the services necessary for attendance which are located in the proximity of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it also supplies the informal worker with emotional, dietetic, legal and caretaking advice.

In Alsómcsolád, all of the above-mentioned social services are provided by the local government. The goal of the "Pilot Programme for Quality Ageing" is to further improve these services, and to ensure that more and more people lead a quality life in the elderly years by working out and introducing preventive methods.

The experiences of the local government of Alsómcsolád in caring for the elderly

At the very time of its formation, our local government established it as its goal to invoke and exploit its citizens' patriotism, creativity, collaboration, and to try and give a new meaning to the "small-village life" by making it more bearable, and a lot more lively.

At the 1st of January in 1991, we established an independent mayor's office, so that by this too we could get closer to the inhabitants of our town. We have imagined - and realised - a "provider" office, which does not only oversee the usual administrative tasks but is also at the disposal of the local population with other services.

Our work was greatly helped by the inhabitants of the town from the very beginning. We could also count on the help and enthusiasm of the elder population in any matter.

One third of the town's population is retired - many live alone and are in need of occasional or permanent assistance.

Our local government offers innumerable forms of aid to the elderly. There are certain forms which may be requested e.g. various forms of domestic assistance, providing meals, participation in organised travels, help in managing official matters. There are also some which may be chosen, e.g. participation at events, lectures, trainings; and then there are those to which all elderly persons are entitled without asking: constant attention, keeping their assets and valuables safe.

The Local Government of Alsómcsolád developed a concept in 2009 on the matter of "The possibilities of improving the life quality of the elderly of Alsómcsolád". The aim of developing this concept was, on the one hand, to organize those forms of support for the benefit of the elderly which have already been developed by then; on the other hand, to outline the tasks of the next ten years.

As nearly one third of the population of Alsómcsolád is retired, in 1991 - almost simultaneously with its formation - the local government assessed the needs and requirements of all inhabitants of the town. The assessment of needs - summarising the answers given on the part of the elderly - reflected the following:

Those entering their elderly years have fewer and fewer children, grandchildren; they themselves are also from families with different numbers of children, and they have fewer siblings and cousins the same age as themselves.

Thus, the extensive family support system is limited to fewer and fewer people; and the increasing mobility further divides the smaller family unit geographically. It follows that the breakdown of relationships brings about the decrease of support provided on a subjective, informal, emotional basis, which cannot be replaced merely by financial means.

Therefore, we attempted to introduce forms of support other than financial: when holidays were celebrated in the town, we invited the elderly; we helped them in running their errands and settling their matters; we paid attention to them. We also established the “Bring Life into Your Years” retirement club, and launched the village caretaker service. The local government slowly became a part of the everyday life of the elderly - and so it happened vice versa.

We often asked for the opinion of the elderly before taking important decisions; we included them in defining our tasks; and we discussed the past and the present with them - as a result of all these, they gradually let us into their lives.

During the times that we spent together talking and sharing in mutual experiences, it has become more and more clear that caring for the elderly is a very complicated task which demands complex skills and knowledge. Hence, we began to involve various experts in our work: teachers, priests, doctors, dieticians, movement therapists. We accepted anyone who felt they can do something for the sake of the cause, no matter what qualification they had as long as they wanted to help.

We also recorded any problems or requests that came up, at any opportunity we had: during events or personal meetings.

From 1995, we have begun to deal consistently with the issue of the situation of the town’s elderly people, thinking in complex ways about the potential means of improving their life quality. We followed with attention and studied the measures of the local government, and made every effort to act its policy out in practise.

By 2001, the Senior Citizens Council prepared the proclamation of the system of conditions which determines the essential life quality of the elderly: the so-called Charta on Ageing, which puts down the most important aspects in four chapters.

In 2006, we again conducted a survey among the town’s elderly, taking the aspects of the Charta on Ageing into consideration. Several experts have collaborated in assembling the questions; and we also conducted the survey among the inhabitants of the Autumn Light Nursing Home.

As a result of the survey regarding the life quality of the elderly, our conclusions are the following:

- With the progress of the years, elderly persons become more and more unlike each other - there is no single, unified “model of ageing”
- One of the greatest problems of old age is chronic diseases
- It is most of all chronic diseases that cause the deterioration of the elderly’s self-dependence, activity, system of relationships, ability to take care of themselves, and last but not least mental health
- The normal changes of life that come with old age, the diseases, and the social transformations of civilisation all contribute significantly to the elderly developing an old-age “loneliness”

- The loneliness primarily emerges as a psychological disorder; it is common in the case those elderly persons who cannot fulfil their desires of belonging to someone, something and somewhere
- The resulting frustrated tension breaks the homeostasis of physical, mental and social health, and may result in so-called “loneliness-diseases” (depression, psychosomatic damage and complications they may entail) besides the normal changes of life that come with old age

After summarising and analysing the data, the following needs have incurred:

- Needs for medical care and nursing
- Needs for attendance
- Emotional needs
- The need of belonging somewhere
- Financial needs
- Need for a diet of adequate energy content

The needs of the town’s elderly listed above are partly catered for by the services provided by the institutions maintained by the local government, and partly by the local programmes.

Institutional background:

Following its formation, The Local Government of Alsómocsolád - given the fact that the town had no building suitable for community events - strived to establish a system of institutions which would suit absolutely every need of the inhabitants.

The first in line was the Town Hall, formally opened in the 7th of June 2004. The building gives place to the Mayor’s Office, the Telehouse and the Post Office as well; but the “Bring Life into Your Years” retirement club, where the elderly may join together, has also received an office. The hall of the building is suitable to host events with up to 80-100 guests. The town library is also located in the Town Hall.

The Guest House and Conference Centre was formally opened in the 26th of August 2006, and serves as a venue for local and regional trainings, conferences. The building gives place to the monthly meetings of the local elderly; most of their events are also hosted here. The “Szintér” Community Centre is also located in this institution; its events are frequented by the elderly. The seniors of the town may use the building - for any purpose - free of charge.

The Autumn Light Nursing Home, which is home to 42 elderly residents, was opened on the same day as the Conference Centre. Until 2008, day-care services for the elderly were available in the Home; in that year the Service Centre was built, and the day-care services were moved into and are still available in its community space ever since.

The doctor’s office is located in the Health Centre, finished in 2008, which also awaits the elderly with a well-equipped gym-room.

The Forest Exercise Field, finished in 2005, is a wonderful place to relax. The visitors may try the sports equipment, and enjoy the promenade which is with boards presenting the rich flora and fauna of the forest park. In the centre, by the creek, an open fireplace awaits the guests. In case of rain, a pavilion suitable to hold at least 20 people provides shelter. Toilets are also available for the convenience of the guests.

In the town, an outdoor fitness-court provides an opportunity for regular exercise.

Financial and human resources for fulfilling the needs of the community:

The local government provides adequate resources - specified in the current year's budget - for the social attendance of the elderly on a sufficient level, as well as for the uninterrupted operation of the system of institutions described above on a satisfactory level. In every year, the local government designates a separate, so-called civilian fund, which, among other things, serves to support the elderly. The government also covers the cost of waste removal, and part of the costs of sewage disposal. It ensures that the bus services of the village caretaker service and that of the nursing home operates constantly.

He local government complements its own resources with tender resources; thus making it possible for the elderly to enjoy the predominant part of the services free of charge.

The local government has also created the human resources which possess the skills and qualifications necessary to perform the services ensured for the benefit of the elderly.

The elderly are cared for and looked after by 8 qualified nurses, one mental health worker, one movement therapist, and one activity organiser. Their meals are provided by a five-person kitchen staff; the quality of the food is monitored by a qualified dietician. The seniors may choose from two menus, but the kitchen is also able to prepare any meals prescribed by the doctor. The village caretaker looks after the meals being delivered and the official matters of the elderly being taken care of as requested. Programmes for the elderly are organised and assisted by the manager of the Telehouse.

Our programmes

„Customised attention”

The aim of this programme is to gain information about the requirements of each individual elderly person, and to organise the attendance programme according to their personal needs. We prepare a personal plan of attendance for every senior, based on the information obtained from them. We ensure that each and every elderly person receives care-taking according to their personal needs, and that every one of them is assisted by specialists corresponding to their way of life.

„It is never too late to learn”

We consider preserving mental acuity of great importance. In order to help retain it we organise courses to help the elderly acquire the ways of employing modern techniques - e.g. mobile phones, Internet -; and we also organise interactive lecture series on an annual basis, on topics of interest chosen by them.

„Guardian”

There are many elderly people living on their own. We will have established a system so that every solitary elderly person may be looked after beyond the regular civil guard members. By this we can, on the one hand, augment the elderly's sense of security, as they will always be aware of someone paying attention to them - and the guardian will notice if something had happened -; on the other hand, more serious problems can be prevented as the guardian will indicate if there is a problem.

„Generational bridge”

The programme aims to establish a connection between the local youth and the elderly - even if there are no family relations between them - by having them planting flowers across the

town or acting together in preserving the cleanliness of the town; but also by encouraging them to spend part of their free time together as well. To participate in holiday and other events together, to organise shared programmes. We believe it is of great importance that younger people learn useful skills of daily life, forms of behaviour, dignity from the elderly; and that they come to know the customs of earlier times, or the history of the town through the accounts and stories of the older generations.

Of course, this is not to say that the elderly cannot learn from the youthful generation: younger people may teach new, different perspectives to the elderly, as well as the usage of the assets of modern technology - mobile phones, computers, the Internet. Younger people frequent the nursing home to converse with the residents. A new initiative of this year is “Adopt a Grandparent”: by this programme, an even stronger bond may form between youths and the residents of the nursing home.

The result of this programme is that the elderly may feel themselves more important, more useful.

Our local government has a ten-year experience in caring for the elderly. The employees of the Autumn Light Integrated Social Institution perform their work with outstanding quality. The elderly come to the home with pleasure. Due to its excellent reputation, we even have residents originally from the Southern Great Plain Region.

The local government continues to pay emphasised attention to developing the institution providing caring for the elderly. In the framework of the Pilot Project for Quality Ageing significant improvements are taking place in the Autumn Light Nursing Home.

Through the course of the last 25 years, the local government has received numerous awards and honours in recognition of its various activities. One of the most appreciated of these is the “Elderly-friendly Local Government” award, distributed by the Ministry of Local Government, Social Affairs and Labour.”

According to Albert Camus, “Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower”. We strive to make sure that our “leaves” all turn into colourful flowers through the course of the next years.

Acknowledgements of the last 25 years

The Local Government of Alsómcsolád has not only achieved significant results in the area of caring for the elderly.

In the last 25 years, our town has gone through a “century” of progress, due to not only the local government but the citizens as well, who are active participants of every process, from idea to realisation.

Our citizens always do what they ought to - they deliver their opinions, they work, raise children, cherish their relationships with their friends, and if there is an opportunity, spend time together with pleasure. If necessary, they clean the streets, line up sandbags, protect their values in danger and help those in distress.

It is our citizens who must be thanked for the fact that we have achieved such extraordinary successes in the area of town development. In 2010, we competed with 30 European - Austrian, Swiss, German, French, Slovakian, Polish - towns and villages in the framework of the competition announced by the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal, held on a biannual basis for winning the European Village Renewal Award.

Alsómocsolád had remained in competition for the award until the last round; but in the end, the Austrian village Langenegg-Voralberg won the award. Alsómocsolád received the second prize, entitled the European Village Renewal Award for a “high-quality, sustainable and complex village development”.

Yet we continue to work on other areas as well, we willing to accept and try anything new, if it may be useful to us in any way.

A non-exhaustive list of the most significant awards in the last eight years

- 2009 Hungarian Village Renewal Award – Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development
- 2009 Elderly-friendly Local Government – Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
- 2009 Youth-friendly Local Government – South-Transdanubian Regional Youth Council
- 2010 European Village Renewal Award - II. place
- 2010 Best Local Government Practices in the category of Community Collaboration for the Local Development under the LEADER programme – I. place – National Association of Local Governments
- 2013 Won II. place in the framework of Best Exemplary Practices Programme in the Local Equal Opportunities Programme based on the methodology of the European Council introduced by the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ).
- 2013 Won the Hungarian Territoria Innovation Award in the framework of Best Exemplary Practices Programme under the 2013 tender call on the basis of its tender based on the methodology of the European Council introduced by the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ).
- 2014 Youth-friendly Local Government of the Year” – National Institution of Agricultural-Consultancy Training and Rural Development
- 2015 Greenovation Grand Prix Award in the category of Tourism hotel and catering - Professional Publishing Ltd.
- 2015 Bicycle-friendly town – Ministry of National Development
- 2015 Klímasztár – Hungarian Climate Protection Alliance
- 2015 Vigilant town – Ministry of Interior National Vigilance Association
- 2015 Family-friendly Local Government - National Association of Large Families
- 2015 Youth service point of the Year – Tett-Hely Youth Network
- 2015 National Award of the “Quality Innovation of the Year 2015”
- 2015 European Grand Prize of the “Quality Innovation of the Year 2015”

Alsómocsolád, similarly to hundreds of Hungarian small towns, was one of the “villages without role” until the regime change. The hard work of the past twenty-five years gives us the right to believe that our village and other small communities have a future. This future does not depend on the number of the inhabitants but on their ability to act. Our future depends on the fact that we can recognise and appreciate our own values, and whether we are able to deliver all of the results desired. It depends on whether we are able and will be able to accept everything that is useful for us, and what the human spirit may create anywhere in our days.