

THE IMPACT OF CLUB ACTIVITY ON THE FAMILY LIFE OF SENIORS

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Abstract

The article characterizes seniors as a social group and age group. It points to organizations that defend the interests of seniors and their families in the Slovak Republic. It pays more attention to military seniors (military retirees) in Slovakia and especially to the activities of the Liptov Military Pensioners' Club, which operates in Liptovský Mikuláš – also in the direction of active activity of seniors and their family members.

Keywords

Seniors, age group, social position, support groups, club activities, military pensioner, Military Pensioners Club of Liptov, individual activities

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is currently a serious social problem in basically all industrialized countries of the world (Marcoen, Coleman, O'Hanlon, 2007) – as evidenced by all available statistics. In the submitted contribution, we start from a brief view of the aging of the population in the conditions of Slovakia and follow it up with an outline of the understanding of the category of seniors, their family situation and, above all, the need for club activities of seniors to ensure the satisfaction of their interests and needs. A substantial part of the contribution is devoted to the functioning of the civic association of the Military Pensioners Club of Liptov (MPCL), processed in the form of a case study (taking into account the possibilities within the scope of this article).

Aging in Slovakia

Slovakia is aging dynamically! This is evidenced by the National Program of Active Aging for the years 2014–2020, where it is stated that while in the European Union due

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to population aging, 15% of the workforce will be missing in 2050, in Slovakia it will probably be up to 21%. Slovakia will thus not only be older, but since it is less numerous, it is assumed that it will also be ethnically poorer. If the current birth rate is maintained, there is even a forecast that in the second half of the 21st century we will form one of the oldest European populations (Bleha, Šprocha, Vaňo, 2013).

From this point of view, the year 2018 is a breakthrough in monitoring the aging of the population, because the number and share of seniors exceeded the number and share of children for the first time in history in Slovakia. Children under the age of 14 made up a total of 15.7% of the Slovak population. Seniors aged 65 and over already make up 16% of the population (858,000 children, 874,000 seniors). The aging index thus exceeded the threshold value of 100 for the first time. In Slovakia, there were 102 seniors for every 100 children. The development of other indicators also confirmed the aging of Slovakia. The average age of a resident of Slovakia reached 40.8 years and increased again by several months year-on-year. In other words, the average age in Slovakia was 40 years, 9 months and 18 days. The average age has been above 40 years since 2015. The median age has also increased, reaching 40.6 years. It means that half of the population is older than 40 years (www.slovak.statistics.sk).

As of March 31, 2022, the aging index in Slovakia is 108.27% (men 85%, women 132.7%). The share of people of post-productive age was 17.4% (men 14.3%, women 20.36%). On the other hand, the number of people of pre-productive age was 16.06% (men 16.8%, women 15.34%). The median age reached 41.8 years (men 40.4, women 43.3) and the average age of the population was 41.4 years (men 39.8, women 42.9) (www.statdat.statistics.sk).

Both optimistic (positive) and pessimistic (negative) opinions appear when assessing population aging and evaluating its consequences (Mládek, Káčerová, Stankovičová, 2018). The positive assessment is based on the constant growth of the population's quality of life, expressed mainly by the growing average life expectancy. The selected indicators mainly reflect economic development, care for public health, improvement of the nutrition of the population, increasing the educational and cultural maturity of the society.

More often, however, population aging is perceived pessimistically, as a significant economic and social threat to future development, which is what we want to point out above all. It is mainly associated with the problems of economic development (aging workforce), health care and especially the financial sustainability of the pension system. Other specific needs of the population of older age categories (a broad cohort of seniors) also deserve greater attention, namely enormously high demands for health care (increasing and increasing fees in medical offices, payments for medical devices, increasing prices of medicines, disruption of clinics in some regions and the necessity to travel to distant health centres, etc.), requirements for the size and technical equipment of housing, special dietary requirements, requirements for cultural and sports programs, etc. These needs are also associated with increased requirements for their material, personnel and financial security.

Even on the basis of the above, it is clear that aging and old age are becoming an increasingly urgent social problem in Slovakia in connection with the increase in the age of the population and a problem that cannot be turned a blind eye to. It can be looked at from two points of view (Farkašová, 2014): firstly from the point of view of the segment of the population that it directly affects, secondly from the point of view of the whole society, because the increase of old people has serious consequences for its structure and its functioning. This means paying a higher level of attention to seniors, both from the state and its institutions responsible for the life situation of seniors, and from seniors' organizations themselves, which should activate seniors to satisfy their multifaceted needs, interests, hobbies, etc.

Seniors – their social position and club activities

According to E. Shanas, et al. (2009) represents senior age is a universal phenomenon, while D. Sýkorová (2007) states that the social marker of old age is the retirement age. Many authors agree with this, according to which this calendar age oscillates around the 65th year of a person's life (f.e. Kalvach a kol., 2004) (it is different in the case of military pensioners). They do this not only to conform to various stereotypes, but also because around midlife there are evident physical and psychological changes (Stuart-Hamilton, 1999).

It can therefore be agreed that the social position of a senior changes more significantly at the moment of his retirement – his active employment ends, which until now determined both his decisive social status (and prestige), as well as the work roles that resulted from it. The new (centre of gravity) social position of the senior is primarily determined by the family position and the resulting parental and family roles (also within the extended family and relatives). It is also determined by the social position, status and roles in a group of friends, former colleagues, in a sports or cultural club, in groups of residents in the place of residence, etc. With the loss of work status, there is also a change in the social prestige of the senior citizen, which is now tied to non-work social positions and roles.

To this can be added certain problems associated with widowhood, with the phenomenon of the so-called of an empty nest – after the children leave the family, further with the phenomenon of loneliness, isolation from the social environment, pauperization – a decline in the standard of living in old age and the threat of poverty, the phenomenon of the so-called veterans, when the senior falls out of the system of interpersonal relations. Seniors in our country often find that even the experience they gained in life may not be helpful in adapting to old age, because technologies and procedures have changed significantly in almost all areas of society's functioning, especially (but not only) in information and communication technologies. The structure of their needs changes significantly in retirement, while their centre of gravity is transferred to other incentives, interests and values compared to those of work (Vágnerová, 2000) – the already mentioned family and leisure.

According to research findings, the majority of the elderly population ranks good family relationships second in their value system (Mustagrudič, 2012). Along with health, the value of family is one of the highest values in their lives for most seniors. This is understandable, because a harmonious family provides the senior with a sense of security, safety and belonging. Every person needs to feel that he belongs to someone or somewhere in order to live a satisfied life (Smékal, 2005). In old age, even in Slovakia, many people tend to withdraw into the family and private world rather than become active in public and social life.

The presence of a partner also plays an important role for a quality life and lifestyle in old age. If the species dies, this new experience significantly disrupts adaptation in older age and at the same time the quality of life of each individual. Such a person is more affected by the feeling of loneliness and may find himself in an isolation that he did not know until then (Rabušic, Vohralíková, 2004).

Seniors (not only the lonely ones) can be greatly helped in satisfying their needs, values, interests (hobbies) by various club activities. It can be stated that this form represents the most common form of association of senior citizens in our country (as well as in other countries). They work under different names, such as „active aging clubs“, „senior clubs“, „early born clubs“, „pensioner clubs“ and others. They offer various talks, trips, excursions, outings, cultural events, sports programs, handicrafts, board games, as well as educational programs and other activities for members and participants. They are characterized by a greater effect on the development of personal interests of members education is present here in the form of a one-time event, while cyclical forms of education are rather exceptional. The founders are mainly local government bodies, homes for the elderly, charitable organizations, etc. (Šerák, 2009; Špatenková, Smékalová, 2015).

Even in the post-productive age, this club activity still plays an important role and helps people's less conflicted adaptation to senior age (Balogová, 2005). It is an organized activity that emphasizes the irreplaceable social position of senior clubs in terms of their participation in the socio-political, cultural, educational, sports and social life of society. This fact is also considered by psychologists (e.g. Hegyi, 2009) as an important manifestation of their social integration, socialization, and maintenance of adaptability and social (and group) inclusion of individuals. On the one hand, they help to increase the share of seniors in society-wide and community activities, on the other hand, their activities are usually aimed at improving the specific social situation and at the same time maintaining the health status (mental and physical condition) of older people (Hrozenská, 2008).

At the same time, the clubs play an important supporting function – members of the senior clubs function as „support groups,“ which develop mutual contacts and help (in the field of training and information), such as legislative, medical, educational, security and other forms. It is only natural that the success of the functioning of clubs depends on the expressed interest of each member in carrying out his activities based on his physical, psychological, social and interest aspects in such a way that they bring him joy, fun, satisfaction, pleasure and satisfaction (Janiš, Skopalová, 2016).

The case of a professional senior club – Military Pensioners Club of Liptov

Who is a military pensioner? A „military pensioner“ is considered to be a person who, according to the laws currently in force after 1989: a) ended his military career and retired from the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic within the specified age limit according to work (service) categories (at 56, 57, 58 years of age); b) who left the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic after serving 20 years – the so-called long-service pensioners; c) those who have recently completed their military career. Another part of military pensioners are „military veterans“ who also performed military service in foreign military missions (together with other soldiers of the armies of member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO).

The main mission and activity of the club. The main and irreplaceable mission of the activity of this club, in accordance with the adopted statutes, is to support and develop the activities of its members in the cultural, social, recreational, sports and social fields, by creating conditions for their active participation and involvement in social life as part of the club's activities. as well as in public (MPCL Statutes). The club celebrated its 30th anniversary last year. During this time, it went through various organizational changes, when it was first part of the Union of Professional Soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army, then the Union of Soldiers of the Army of the Slovak Republic and finally the Union of Soldiers of the Slovak Republic. It separated from the last-named union (currently bringing together 25 clubs – www.zvazvojakov.sk) in 2017 and since 1 January 2018 it has been operating as an independent entity under the current name Military Pensioners Club of the Liptov.

Legislative anchoring – membership limits. The club unites recipients of long-service insurance benefits, professional soldiers, war and military veterans, retired soldiers, as well as their family members and citizens of Slovakia, who agree with the goals and activities of the club, with its program focus and statutes. With its focus, it is also profiled as an organization with a professional relationship with the armed forces of the Slovak Republic. The club is a legal entity that can enter into a relationship with self-government bodies and organizations on the territory of the Slovak Republic (MPCL Statutes) in the form of a civil association.

Club membership. In 1991, 83 military pensioners started in the club. As of April 30, 2010, the club had 204 members. As of February 3, 2016, the club consisted of 198 military pensioners and 211 other members – a total of 409 members. As of 31/12/2020, 193 military pensioners and 225 others (family members and sympathizers) were members of the club. There were 418 members in total. The average age of military pensioners reached 70 years, other members 62 years. The overall average age was approximately 66 years. As of November 8, 2022, the club had 356 members, of which 176 were military pensioners (including 4 women) and 180 other members (including 135 women). The decrease was mainly caused by the death of club members – in both older and younger age groups.

Coordination, mentoring and coaching. The club's activities are organized by the club council (14 members) – it is its managing and executive body. Creates and projects outputs of the club's activities – a schedule of tasks and activities. Specifically, he plans the activities of the club, organizes the fulfilment of tasks, convenes member meetings, ensures contact with members keeps membership records, records of club management, minutes of council meetings and member meetings. It is a club body that is elected at the annual membership meeting. It is headed by the chairman of the club, who represents it and represents it in negotiations with other organizations in the place of operation of the club and outside it. They regularly participate in the so-called Council of Elders convened by the mayor of the city Liptovský Mikuláš. The club is financed by the members of the club, when military pensioners up to the age of 85 contribute 10 Euros per year, sympathizers 6 Euros per year; members over 85 (we have 17 of them) and severely disabled (currently there are 4) are exempt from payments.

In the form of a part of the Military Pensioners Club, the **Club of Seniors 3** (municipality) within the city of Liptovský Mikuláš, which does not have legal personality, also develops its activities. These activities are similarly focused (in accordance with the club's statute) on organizing club, social, cognitive and educational events, as well as events of a recreational nature, or joint participation in such events, organized by other entities. It participates in the creation of conditions for the active activity of club members in various circles of interest, as well as in the improvement and maintenance of day centres and their surroundings in the form of minor maintenance work, based on the voluntariness and willingness of club members. What we consider important to emphasize is that senior clubs use the premises of day centres for their activities, established in accordance with § 56 of Act NR SR no. 448/2008 Coll. on social services, as amended and on amendments to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on trade entrepreneurship (Trade Act) as amended. Their founder and operator is the city of Liptovský Mikuláš. Such an option is not legislatively provided to the Military Pensioners Club.

Only those members of our Military Pensioners' Club who have reached retirement age, have permanent residence in the city of Liptovský Mikuláš and cannot be members of two senior citizens' clubs in the city can be members of Senior Citizens Club 3. The opening of the activity and operation of our club took place on February 23, 2016. Gradually, the allocated spaces were improved and furnished with furniture and other equipment. Meetings of the club's board, a competition in mariachi, in table tennis, rehearsals for various competitions, meetings with celebrants, discussions, meetings of the section of members of the railway army are held here, events of a diverse nature are held for club members according to the work plan for the calendar year.

Club coordination and cooperation within the Slovak Republic. In addition to the Military Pensioners Club, the **Basic Organization of the Pensioners' Union of Slovakia 3** (BO PUS 3) also operates. Its membership currently consists of 158 members – it is the strongest organization of seniors in the Liptovský Mikuláš district. It carries out its activities mainly from the Work Plan of MPC of Liptov. It also focuses its activities on public presentations and representations. Among its most popular events is the arrangement of discounts for

visits to Aquapark Tatralandia and Water World in Bešeňová. He successfully organizes a entertainment in Liptovský Ján, and weekly spa vouchers with a special state subsidy for seniors are also very popular (in 2021 there were 27 of them) (Report on the activities of BO PUS 3, 5 April 2022). Since 2020, the basic organization has its own financial management. Members financially support the activities of the club in the amount of 2 Euros per year.

The Section of the Railway Troops has been working within the Military Pensioners Club for a long time. Agile members of the mentioned semi-professional section organize regular annual meetings of former members and employees of the railway troops from Slovakia and the Czech Republic and their family members (sometimes up to 150 people). They take place alternately: one year in the Czech Republic and the second year in the Slovak Republic. These meetings have already been held, for example, in Liptovský Mikuláš, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Spišská Nová Ves and elsewhere. The members of the Club of military pensioners are currently 15 former members of the Railway army.

In addition to the above organizations, members of the club are also involved in the activities of the Slovak Gardeners' Union in the territory of the city of Liptovský Mikuláš (more than 60 people), they are members of the Slovak Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters – SZPB (19 people), they work in the Spišská Catholic Charity at the Church of St. Nicholas in Liptovský Mikuláš, they are also members of the Czech Association in Liptovský Mikuláš (31 people), they are active in the Slovak Red Cross, they work in the Society Parkinson Slovakia, they are members of the Committee of Matica slovenská in Liptovský Mikuláš and in other organizations.

Individual activities of MPCL (edited from MPCL Newsletters 2010–2022)

Cultural activities – first of all, they are *receptive activities*, connected to the life of the entire society, in which not only members of the club, but also their family members and sympathizers of the club participate. It is primarily associated with the celebration of important anniversaries and events in the life of our country, region, the armed forces of the Slovak Republic, the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik and other social organizations.

In a brief overview, we will point out the most important of them. It is primarily about the annual participation of club members and their family members in *the anniversary of the liberation of Slovakia*, the city of Liptovský Mikuláš and its districts. The 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps in the Soviet Union was deployed here for the first time in heavy fighting. Its fallen members, as well as soldiers of the rebel army and partisans, are buried on a hill near the city – Háji Nicovô, in the number of 1369 people. For the members of the club, this is an important value that is linked to the performance of their previous military profession.

With the participation of the members of the Military Pensioners Club, the Club of seniors 3 and the BO PUS 3 in the celebrations of *May 1 and the simultaneous entry of the Slovak Republic into the European Union (EU) (2004)*, we annually commemorate

the International Workers' Day. The participation of club members is also accompanied by family members of seniors – children, grandchildren and relatives. It also forms an organic part of raising children based on progressive traditions.

On the *Day of Victory over Fascism and the End of the Second World War in Europe* (May 9, 1945), club members and their family members take part in commemorative events by laying wreaths and lighting candles at monuments in the city of Liptovský Mikuláš, on Háj Nicovô hill and in the city's surroundings. They are preceded by the participation of club members in the preparation of grave sites – in cooperation with the city authorities, with primary and secondary schools, with the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik and other organizations of seniors.

Members of clubs and BO PUS honor the memory of the *Slovak National Uprising* by laying wreaths at various memorials in the city and its surroundings, as well as by participating in commemorative events of other organizations, especially the Slovak Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters. Currently, it is not a matter of pompous celebrations – on the contrary, the representatives of power in the state recognize this holiday, many even ignore it, both at the national and regional level.

Members of the clubs, as well as their family members and sympathizers, commemorate the memory of the *Carpathian-Duklian operation* every year by laying a bouquet and memorial at the sacred place Háj Nicovô, as well as by participating in the laying of wreaths at the Dukla Memorial and in Svidník with members of the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters, members of the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik and other clubs of the Union of Slovak Soldiers.

Members of the club, who are also members of the Czech Association (but not only), commemorate the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic every year (October 28) by meeting at the „Truth wins“ monument in the Arboretum in Liptovský Hrádok.

On November 11, at 11:00 and 11:00, we commemorate the end of the First World War. This date was also declared the Day of War Veterans. The clubs, together with the ZO SZPB, submitted a proposal to the mayor of the city to make a memorial plaque with the names of the victims in the First World War and place it next to the „Mother“ Memorial (2015). The city implemented this proposal and ensured its construction from the city's funds. A memorial plaque with the names of 215 victims is located on the south wall of the Evangelical church „Zbierka“ on Vrbicka street in Liptovský Mikuláš. It was ceremonially unveiled on 4/4/2017. Based on the latest historical research another 42 names will be added to them.

Perceptive activities from this point of view include the club's long-term cooperation with the basic organization of the SZPB and the Regional Committee of the SZPB in Liptovský Mikuláš, which resulted in the signing of the „Agreement on mutual support and cooperation“ (23 June 2015). On its basis, members of the club's council and volunteers participate in the renovation of the monument and the grave of three partisans who fell in valley Demänovská dolina – Jasná Lúčky. Flowers are also placed at the memorial board for the victims of the war, which is located by the road above the Cave of Freedom and at the Holocaust memorial in Lúčky.

Active activities and hobbies – in this direction, the activity of the *chess club*, which started its regular activities in 1999, occupies an important place in the club's activities. Twenty members of the club participated in its activities for several years. In addition to the club premises, the members also used the Vrbica restaurant facility. Another is the circle of *Maria players* – it meets once a week in the club premises from 1994. More than 30 players took turns in its ranks. In addition to home meetings, the club regularly meets twice a year with members of the Maria players' club of the Žilina Slovak Republic Soldiers' Union. Next is the *music-singing club*, which has been operating in the club since 2008. Its core consists of six male and female singers, who take part in creating a good mood at the club's social events and regularly participates in the „Sami sebe“ (to ourselves) event of the Pensioners' Union of Slovakia. Their common denominator is that they contribute to the development of independence and creativity of seniors, to the improvement of their cognitive abilities, memory, and at the same time enable the self-realization of each individual. An unmistakable aspect of their functioning is the development of positive interpersonal relationships.

The members of the club show quite a lot of interest in part-time work. Regularly – several times a year, the club council organizes cleaning of the club premises and its surroundings. In addition to the members of the club's council, other members of the club and their family members also participate in this brigade. Another activity, which is organized by the club council every year, is the preparation of grave sites at Háj Nicovô. This brigade meets with relatively high interest from club members as well as their family members. On important anniversaries, it is also coordinated by the Municipal Office in Liptovský Mikuláš, which, in addition to pensioners' clubs, also addresses primary and secondary school students.

Movement and sports activities – among which we can include the *pétanque ring* – it was created as one of the first rings within the club in 2005. Since its inception, competitions have been regularly organized – outdoors and, in case of bad weather, also indoors. It is also about *shooting competitions* that started taking place at the Military Academy Slovak National Uprising of shooting range and at the shooting range in the village of Lazisko on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising. Teams from the clubs of military pensioners in Košice and Žilina gradually took part in this competition. Shooting competitions were regularly held every year with the participation of competition teams from the clubs of the Dolný Kubín, Kežmarok, Poprad and Spišská Nová Ves clubs. In recent years, 24 members have taken turns in the *table tennis club*, who met regularly and meet twice a week in the club premises. In addition to training, tournaments are regularly organized usually New Year's and Easter singles and doubles tournaments. Members of the club successfully represent the club at District Senior Sports Games, as well as at Regional and All-Slovak Senior Sports Games organized by the Slovak Pensioners' Union.

Hiking is one of the essential activities of seniors. At the end of August, the International Military Ascent to Kriváň Hill takes place, organized by the Union of Soldiers of the Slovak Republic together with the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic and the General

Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. Members of our club have participated in the ascent and its security several times. Every year in September, we take part in a tourist march to the Žiarska Valley to the Symbolic Cemetery near the Žiarska cottage. Together with the members of the Czech Association, we honor the memory of the victims of the Western Tatras – it is a tourist march on the route: Lake Štrbské pleso – Lake Popradské pleso – Symbolic Cemetery under Ostrva. We organize a tourist trip to Levoča and castle Spišský hrad, then to the Skanzen in Zuberec and Roháče. A popular tourist trip is to Hrebienok in the High Tatras, to Reiner's cottage and to the Studenovodské waterfalls, etc.

We also have a member in the club who represents us and Slovakia both at the national and international level at competitions in rocket modelling (Mr. Vasil Pavljuk). He won 1st place in the S3A category at the Slovak Championship; at the European Championships, 1st place in the S9A category; at the World Cup, he won 1st place in the S7 category.

Educational and informational activities. A direct educational activity of club members is a visit to a university of the third age. The first year of this progressive form of lifelong learning was opened at the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš in the academic year 2005/2006. Among the first graduates in 2008 were 8 members of the club. Other members of the club – military pensioners, their family members and sympathizers, some of them repeatedly – graduated from this course in the following years and in the various subjects of study offered. By 2020, 33 members of the club had graduated. In the academic year 2021/2022, 16 of our members continue their studies in the mentioned form – in the subjects of computer science, English language and healthy lifestyle.

The club board organizes a whole range of informational activities for club members – discussions and lectures, of which we will mention only a few: a discussion with the former Minister of Defense of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic general of army Ing. M. Vacek; health lecture on „Prevention of cardiovascular diseases“; discussions with a participant in several climbing expeditions to the Himalayas, a member of our club Mr. Ján Matlák (he also perished in the Himalayas); talk on the topic: „Banks and their products for the citizen“; lectures and discussions on amendments to the Road Traffic Act; discussion on issues of life insurance, apartment and household insurance; discussion on issues of social and health insurance for recipients of long-service benefits; discussions with a member of the City Police Liptovský Mikuláš about the activities of members of the city police and prevention of criminal activity against seniors; a discussion with the first Czechoslovak cosmonaut Vladimír Remek; discussion with a member of the Slovak Red Cross „Principles of providing first aid“ and many others.

Information about the activities of the clubs and the basic organization of the JDS is also conveyed to the members through the periodical „Spravodajca“, which is published by the club board twice a year. In addition to a brief evaluation of the activities in the given half-year, tasks and activities in the following period, club jubilees, a list of those who have left us (died), information on the possibilities of spa treatment and recreation, short advice for seniors, results of sports activities and others are listed. It is delivered to club members in both electronic and printed form.

Travel and recreational activities. We include various tours organized by the club board. From a large number of domestic tours (about twice a year) for club members and their family members, we choose tours to: the air base of the Slovak Armed Forces in Sliač; Nitra – visit to the garrison training ground Koliňanský vrch and the garrison; Gabčíkovo with a seat in Croatian Grob; Košice and Dukla; Čierny Balog – visit to the Forestry Museum in Vydrovo and the Forest Railway Museum; Banská Štiavnica and to St. Antol – tour of the Forestry Museum; Piešťany – aviation museum and city tour; Komárno – Military fortress and tour of the Square of Europe; Vychylovka – headland railway and tour of the Museum of the Kysucká Village; Stará Ľubovňa – visit to the open-air museum in nature and the castle; Open-air museum of the Orava village in Zuberec and the Orava castle; SNU Museum in Banská Bystrica; High Tatras to Lake Popradské pleso, the Symbolic Cemetery of Victims under Ostrva and Lake Štrbské pleso and many others.

The club council organizes – usually once a year – foreign trips – for club members and their family members. These were, for example, trips to: Gradac in Croatia, Vodice in Croatia, Sutomore in Montenegro, Baška Voda in Croatia, the resort of St. Filip i Jakov in Croatia, the concentration camp in Oswiecim and to Krakow, the Salt Mines in Wieliczka, Zakopane and Tatranská Javorina, to the Shëngjin resort in Albania and other destinations.

Social activities and activities with family. The KVDL Council also organizes regular meetings with the jubilees of the club, who have lived to see a *significant life anniversary* in a given year (once every six months). This event is also attended by officials of the military garrison, the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik and the city of Liptovský Mikuláš (usually the mayor of the city). Every year, a traditional meeting of our members and their wives takes place on the occasion of celebrating *International Women's Day*. A pleasant social environment with refreshments, dancing and prize draws is being prepared for the participants. The women present are given flowers with congratulations on their holiday – also in the presence of representatives of the city of Liptovský Mikuláš. For club members and their family members, an annual *goulash gathering* is organized for Peter and Paul – mainly in the Čierny orol (Black Eagle) restaurant, which is run by a member of our club. The club's music-singing circle takes care of the good mood of the participants, and a disc jockey joins the dance. A favorite event among seniors is the meeting of the crew officials with military retirees and their wives *at the end of the year*. The event features singing, dancing and a raffle. An average of 90 participants take part in it every year.

On the occasion of round and semi-round birthdays of MCPL members, visits to the severely disabled (ZŤP) of club members and the oldest members (over 85 years) are made. These are dozens of people who are visited by members of the club's council, their friends and acquaintances. On this occasion, they are given a congratulatory letter from the club, a bouquet of flowers and a commemorative gift. All the visitors positively evaluated the attention paid to them by the club's board, as well as the opportunity to view the club's chronicle, familiarize themselves with the club's activities and its individual events.

Since 1998, the Mutual Cooperation Agreement with the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M.R. Štefánik and with the military liaison unit in Ružomberok (DCISB – Deployable Communication and Information Systems Base). Cooperation includes all areas of the club's activities, including material and technical assistance.

CONCLUSION

As part of club activities and actions, opportunities are created for the self-realization of each club member, for the saturation of his needs and hobbies, interest activities, for the development of positive interpersonal relations, as well as for the creation of opportunities for the involvement of family members in club activities. This fact is significant for the club, because more than fifty percent of the club's members are family members of military pensioners and other sympathizers. The participation of family members in club activities is mutually beneficial, as it enables the reduction of the intergenerational gap (between parents and children), strengthens family relationships, and at the same time creates prerequisites for wider support of the local community.

We are of the opinion that the social position that older people will occupy in the future will depend to a large extent on the active self-organization of seniors within their own generation. These will be, for example, self-help communities, senior clubs, universities of the third age and others. Together with this, the importance of their participation in social activities in the interest of the whole society will increase – especially from the point of view of the education of the young generation, as well as voluntary help, the functioning of groups for intergenerational work, councils of seniors in regional administration and self-government, etc.

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