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**'OLD AGE' AND 'ACTIVE AGEING' CONCEPTS
WITHIN BELARUSIAN DISCOURSES**

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GLOSSARY

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, formerly known as critical linguistics (CL), Wodak, 2002), is a ‘problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda’ (Fairclough *et al.* 2011, p. 357). CDA considers language as ‘social practice’ (Wodak, 2001), and understands the context of language as crucial for the analysis of social practices (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Discourses ‘are semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social, or mental) which can be generally identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors’ (Fairclough 2009, p. 164).

Discursive Institutionalism is an umbrella concept for approaches that concern themselves with the substantive content of ideas and the interactive processes of discourse in an institutional context (Schmidt 2015, p. 1). ‘Of key significance in this regard is the relationship between two spheres - that of coordinative policy construction and that of communicative policy legitimation - since what is at stake in this connection is the relationship between elites and the general public. Overall, discursive institutionalism is an approach to understanding in context the interplay of policy-relevant ideas, discourse, and institutions’ (Schmidt 2015, p. 2).

Economic Old-Age Dependency Ratio (economic OADR): ‘Effective number of consumers aged 65 or over relative to the effective number of workers of all ages’ (UN, 2019, p. 15).

Healthy Life Expectancy (HALE) at birth: ‘Average number of years that a person can expect to live in “full health” by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury’ (WHO, n.d.).

Induced discourses are ‘discourses, produced within the framework of research, are more often the fundamental material which sociologists work with when conducting analyses’ (Ruiz Ruiz 2015, p. 2). Induced discourses = intentionally provoked discourses.

Life Expectancy at Birth ‘reflects the overall mortality level of a population. It summarizes the mortality pattern that prevails across all age groups in a given year – children and adolescents, adults and the elderly’ (WHO, n.d.).

Life Expectancy at 60: ‘The average number of years that a person of 60 years old could expect to live, if he or she were to pass through life exposed to the sex- and

age-specific death rates prevailing at the time of his or her 60 years, for a specific year, in a given country, territory, or geographic area' (WHO, n.d.).

Old-Age Dependency Ratio (OADR): 'Number of persons aged 65 or over per 100 persons of working age 20-64 years' (UN, 2019, p. 11).

Pay-as-You-Go or PAYGO System (Unfunded pension plans): pension plans that are financed directly from contributions of the plan sponsor or provider (OECD, 2006).

Prospective Old-Age Dependency Ratio (POADR): 'Number of persons above the age at which the remaining life expectancy is 15 years relative to the number of persons between age 20 years and the age at which the remaining life expectancy is 15 years.' (UN, 2019, p. 13).

Retirement Age: age from which the individuals are eligible for pension benefits (OECD, 2006).

Social Policy (from a narrow standpoint) 'refers to policies and practices created to address the needs of individuals, *i.e.*, to provide welfare. From a broader standpoint, social policy can be used to motivate individual behaviour; is inherently related to the creation of social inequalities across class, gender, race, and sexualities; and is closely tied to capital. Social policy encompasses a wide range of policies, including activation, care, education, families, health care, pensions/ageing, poverty/social assistance, and unemployment. Social policy practice refers to the administration of social policies and service delivery' (Yerkes, 2019).

Social Practices are material practices embedded in social institutions (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 261), one form of which is discourse (Wodak, 2001). 'Social practices networked in a particular way constitute a social order' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 206).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AiF – weekly newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* based in Moscow and having a regional issue in Belarus

BELTA – The Belarusian Telegraph Agency, state-controlled news agency

KP – Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* having a regional issue in Belarus

Onliner.by – Belarusian independent news, media and service internet portal

Belarus Segodnya – state-controlled daily newspaper and publishing house
SB. Belarus Segodnya

TUT.BY – Belarusian independent news, media, and service internet portal

SPF – The Social Protection Fund

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

*To the memory of my grandparents who raised me,
gave me a sense of home and unconditional love*

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century challenged the perception of the natural stages of life, ending in old age, which is normatively determined in connection with weakness and death. Modern demographic shift to population ageing and economic challenges to individuals, their families and states dictate the need to revise what are considered as the norms of age and to reinterpret the concepts of 'old age' and 'ageing'. Since the category of old age is not strictly biological, it is directly dependent on the meanings attached to this concept by society, while demographic, economic, political and other factors influence the public discourses and the very essence of ageing. At a time of astounding demographic change, social research and in particular discourse analysis are increasingly important in uncovering profound understanding of social processes and problem areas.

Researchers note that the structure of the global population has never changed so quickly in the history of mankind, especially in developed countries (Harper, 2014; Bloom, Mitgang, & Osher, 2016). Significant quality changes in the life of a modern person allow them to retire full of energy and having financial opportunities to continue their life path and engage in their desired activities. These changes made it possible to identify a special concept for this reinterpreted period of life: the 'third age' (Laslett, 1989, p. 3) and even 'fourth age' (Higgs & Gillear, 2021). An optimistic view on the changed realities and mature age encourages many initiatives at the international and regional level to activate older people and ensure their full social inclusion. Furthermore, the 'activation' of older people is on the agenda of national and regional authorities, along with the task of studying the needs of the older population and possible barriers to social inclusion (Johnson & Falkingham, 1992; Lloyd-Sherlock, 2010; Stirling, 2010; WHO, 2010).

The needs and demands, as well as the problems and challenges of older people have become the object of rethinking for researchers and policy-makers of prosperous countries (WHO, 1982; UN, 2002, 2020); however, the increasing burden on the economies of states pushes politicians to consider this issue through the lens of the needs of a society in general and state budgets in particular. This is especially true in countries where demographic trends keep up with those of developed countries, but economic and political development is noticeably lagging behind (Martin & Kinsella, 1994; Mason, 2005; Mason & Lee, 2006). Policy incentives are adapted to extending working lives and to decrease early withdrawal from the

labour market by offering additional bonuses for deferred pensions or even by raising the retirement age. Such changes are accompanied by rhetoric of usefulness for society and the individual: 'Active ageing is about helping older people to stay in work and share their experience. It is about them continuing to play an active role in society and living as healthy, independent and fulfilling lives as possible' (Eurofond, 2012). However, global Covid-19 pandemic showed the highest rate of death has been reported among old age people, and by this it highlights peculiar vulnerability of older citizens, their special needs and the relevance of discussions about old age as a category: 'later life has become a more actively constructed social space' (Higgs & Gillear, 2021).

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, critical opinions about the concept of 'active ageing' were widening in sociological science; this did not prevent policymakers from continuing to actively promote and popularise it, shaping local social policies towards older people and causing changes in the perception of old age people and old age in society. Since the borrowing of such concepts by politicians and economists often occurs without attention to critical discourse and academic discussion, local discourse tends to neglect the variability of interpretations and considers only a part of the spectrum, setting the tone and securing a convenient interpretation. The very verbalization of problems and contradictions is the first step towards their further research with the help of large-scale quantitative sociological studies, as well as to the search for the solutions. Therefore, it seems extremely important in the current Belarusian socio-political situation the idea of studying discourse to discover crucial current and potential social issues.

The concept of 'active ageing' was developed in Europe before the very first World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982, nevertheless the spread of 'active ageing'¹

¹ The WHO defines active ageing as 'the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO, 2002). However, in the Belarusian official discourse, the term 'active ageing' was translated as 'active longevity'. For example, at the Republican conference 'Society for all ages: active longevity', the Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic, the Chair of the Belarusian Women's Union Marianna Shchetkina emphasised the growing importance of the topic of active longevity in the country and the need to implement the 'active ageing' approach. The official used the original term in English along with the Belarusian equivalent, quoting the WHO (BELTA, October 1, 2018, 'Marianna Shchetkina: the topic of active longevity is becoming increasingly important in Belarus'). The identity of the terms is evidenced by the statements of officials; however, they do not provide explanations for such an adaptation. In other words, we can say that the concept of 'active longevity' used in Russian-language discourse is an adaptation of the WHO's 'active ageing' in a more euphonious version, which has positive connotations for the Russian-speaking and Belarusian-speaking population.

discourse in modern Belarusian realities is not accidental: negative economic and demographic trends (a decrease in the share of the working-age population and in revenues to the pension fund with a simultaneous decrease in GDP and an increase in inflation) in the region are becoming increasingly challenging for the state. The share of older people in the Belarusian population is growing, and the problem of the nation's ageing is becoming more and more obvious. Current UN forecasts (UN, 2019) suggest that while the population of Belarus will decrease, the old-age dependency ratio (the number of people over 65 per 100 working-age people) will almost double from 43 in 2015 to 82 in 2050 (Lisenkova & Bornukova, 2017).

Striving to maintain its economy, Belarus is currently reforming the pension system. It was during this period that officials introduced and popularised the concept of 'active ageing', whose exact definition, however, has not yet been proposed. It was stated that the concept had to be developed by the end of 2019 along with 'The National Strategy for Senior Citizens' (its original name was 'The National Strategy for Active Longevity'). However, the concept of 'active ageing' is used in discussions about the need to rethink the concept of 'old age' in modern Belarusian discourse. The justification was based on economic factors, but no large-scale sociological research or analysis of public opinion had been conducted prior to the reform, neither had a broad public discussion been organised on this topic.

Despite the popularity of the ageing issue and the diversity of approaches to the study of social processes of ageing, the Belarusian field of ageing discourse remains insufficiently studied. Given the decline in the working-age population and the increase in the retirement age, the lack of reliable statistical data and large-scale sociological research necessitates the search for alternative methodological ways to identify contradictions and issues that require the attention of politicians and the public. That is why the need to conduct research that would fill this gap in knowledge and, through raising awareness, would contribute to making informed decisions in social policies and the process of pension system reform. The value of this research is based on the fact that not only is the social status of older people formed under the influence of discourse, but also social institutions and social policies. Discourse is the engine of social change; it feeds it and at the same time is influenced by it (Fairclough, 1992).

Thus, **the research problem** of this work is the ambiguity, uncertainty and inconsistency of understanding the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian discourse in the context of reforming old-age social policies. The research question is: what issues/conflicts/contradictions (actual or potential) can be identified by analysing the interpretation of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in modern Belarusian discourses (2017-2019) in the context of changing old age social policies?

Data from pan-European statistical resources, as well as national sociological studies, are available and widely used by researchers. Unfortunately, Belarus does not have the access to these large scale data sets, and its own sociological statistics are criticised by international organizations (for example, UNECE, 2012-2013) and researchers (Yeliseyev, 2012, 2015) either because of methodological issues, or manipulations with data by the state. As for today, no large-scale sociological research or analysis of public opinion had been conducted, neither had a profound discourse analysis been intended in Belarus on this topic.

Despite the attempts of sociologists to oust the concept of 'norms' from the discourse of old age, insisting on the loss by normativism of its positions and the dominance of pluralism and diversity (Jones & Higgs, 2010, 1515), each society translates its traditional norms or transforms them, borrowing or producing new ones. By transplanting the concept of 'active ageing', local discourses change not only the patterns of normative ageing and the initial life strategies of individuals, but also the very perception of old age subsequently changing social policies and institutions themselves. The object of research in this thesis is the interpretation of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian discourses that existed in 2017-2019 during the state reforms of old age social policies. The author has analysed the discourses of the current concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing', as well as their interpretations used by various social and political actors in addition to the study of the socio-political context of these discourses.

The aim of this work is to identify inconsistencies and contradictions in the definitions of 'old age' and 'active ageing' by social actors in modern (2017-2019) Belarusian discourses as a reflection of existing social problems and potential issues in the implementation and reform of social policies regarding older people in Belarus.

To achieve the aim set in this study, the main **objectives** were identified:

1. To outline a theoretical framework for creating a specific methodological model for the empirical analysis of socio-political problems by studying the discourse of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the specific Belarusian context.
2. To elaborate the methodological model of the study: the approaches and tools that are the best for this study, taking into account its aim and specific objectives.
3. To identify the features of Belarusian socio-cultural, institutional, economic, demographic, and political context that are necessary for the understanding of the research object, as well as for a thorough study of discourses;
4. To analyse the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the framework of:

- 4.1. Official media discourse;
- 4.2. Independent media discourse;
- 4.3. Induced individual discourse (created in the course of interaction with research participants of different ages).
5. To uncover socio-political issues, revealed by analysis of contradictions and discrepancies of the interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the discourses in specific Belarusian context.
6. To discuss the obtained results in the light of the existing theoretical background, the empirical findings presented in the scholarly literature, and consider prospects for further research.

The novelty of the research lies in the fact that a multi-level analysis of the Belarusian discourses of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in their relationship with the specific Belarusian context of pension reform was carried out within the framework of the theoretical direction of discursive institutionalism for the first time (Schmidt, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010; Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004) using a methodological model of analysis created for a specific context. This methodological framework ensures the integration of context research with discourses analysis, allowing to enrich the latter and identify the problems associated with the use of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the specific Belarusian context.

In Belarus, the setting up of the concept of 'active ageing' is not accompanied by broad academic or public discussions, although (as this study has proved) the intensity of its popularization by media discourses is increasing. The practical significance of the study is determined by the significance of the analysis of discrepancies in modern Belarusian discourse, which reflect the contradictions and problems of social reality. The local interpretations and peculiarities of modern Belarus, which borrow the 'active ageing' concept from countries with a higher level of well-being, should be taken into account when adopting regulatory documents that set the tone for the interpretation of the ageing phenomenon itself. Identifying problems and contradictions is necessary for further large-scale quantitative sociological studies, as well as for formulation of precise solutions. Moreover, this research proposes a justified methodological instruments (using discourse analysis together with descriptive context analysis) to identify problems of social reality.

Since the research was built within the constructivist paradigm, it does not assume the existence of a single truth or a single social reality, but asserts that the social world and knowledge are bound by time and culture (Merton, 2017) and attempts to interpret social realities, constructed and inhabited by society. The author's empirical research consists of an exploration of the institutional context using the descriptive method, as well as quantitative content analysis and qualitative

analysis of media discourses (official and alternative, presented by the materials of the most influential/popular media for the period from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019; the total number of texts is 751), as well as qualitative analysis of intentionally provoked spoken and written discourses that arose owing to the author's interviews (27), online surveys (52), and materials from youth focus debates (Figure 4. on p. 53 for the outline of the study design). Thus, in this study, four data collection methods (semi-structured interview, online survey, focus discussion, textual secondary data analysis) and three methods of data analysis (descriptive method, quantitative content-analysis and qualitative discourse analysis) were used.

The reliability of the research results and the validity of the conclusions are determined by the complex use of theoretically tested quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as the consistency and accuracy of working with them, combined with competence and a correct attitude to ethical principles. Without claiming to generalise and predict future changes, the conducted sociological reflection justifies the need to conduct a large-scale quantitative study of public opinion in order to adjust the planned implementation of the National strategy in the interests of older people and the future pension system reform.

Dissertation structure: the research contains five chapters and also the Introduction, Conclusions, and Recommendations. The introduction provides the justification for the study and describes the main aim of this work with the presentation of its structure (in accordance with the formulated objectives). The first chapter examines theoretical approaches to the interpretation of 'old age' and 'active ageing', as well as variations in the understanding of the mutual influence of theory, practice, and actors on the emergence and development of social policies in relation to old age and ageing. This chapter introduces a specific theoretical model for the empirical analysis of the socio-political discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the specific Belarusian context.

The second chapter provides a methodological basis for studying the discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing'. Critical consideration of various theoretical approaches justifies the choice of research tools and specifies the focus of attention. Paying attention to the methodological developments made by her predecessors, the researcher reveals a complete idea of the possible ways to achieve the aim, as well as their advantages and disadvantages; the justification for the methodological decision is also presented. This part of the study contains deliberations on the limitations perceived as probable or inherent to this study, and ways to overcome them, as well as reflections on the subjectivity of the researcher and influence on the findings. This section also focuses on ethical issues that the author considers while conducting this research.

The third chapter uses secondary descriptive data analysis to analyse the historical, political, economic, demographic, and socio-cultural context, as well as the legal basis of the institutional structure of the pension system in the Republic of Belarus. The author studies specific features of the context that directly affect the Belarusian discourse, as well as the choice of research data and methods of their analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the empirical research. This chapter reveals the results of a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative analysis of the discourse of the most influential state and independent media publications from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019, as well as the results of the study on the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the discourses verbalised by the study participants (induced or intentionally provoked discourse), which allow the range of existing interpretations of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian society to be expanded. The author discusses the results of the study of qualitative semi-structured interviews and an online survey involving people of different age groups and youth focus debates. This chapter also uncovers the issues and problems of ageing in contemporary Belarusian social reality revealed by analysis of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian discourse in 2017-2019 taking into account the specific context and the ongoing social policies developments.

The fifth chapter concludes with final reflection on the progress of the study, the obtained results in the light of the existing theoretical provisions and sociological works, as well as on gaps and prospects for further research.

Thesis statements submitted for defence are the following:

1. Both discursive institutionalism and the CDA method for identifying social and political contradictions and problems through the analysis of discourse have proved successful, as they have provided an accessible and valuable alternative in the specific Belarusian social and political context with its lack of reliable statistics.
2. The old-age concept is problematised on an individual and macro-level in each of the discourses analysed. A universal and precise definition of 'old age' and 'active ageing' is absent. The attempts to define and interpret these concepts are based on: a) various theoretical and ideological paradigms - traditional, modern, and postmodern approaches; b) different knowledge systems - religion and philosophy. However, at the level of political decisions, the ideas of postmodern sociology remain marginal, non-widespread, and their impact on contemporary Belarusian media discourse and policy-makers remains insignificant.

3. The official media discourse of 'active ageing' in the context of Belarus's economic and demographic challenges becomes a tool of 'soft power', legitimising the country's pension reform and the need to rethink the established norms and stereotypes about old age.
4. The interpretations of 'active ageing' within Belarusian official discourse demonstrates a tendency towards reductionism, namely it is one-sided in two ways: a) it is oriented towards a mandatory and unified extension of older people's participation in the labour market while ignoring their diverse levels of vulnerability; b) it omits the importance of older adults' other activities (social relationships, volunteering, cultural, political *etc.*).
5. The interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' proposed by the official discourse reinforce the marginalisation of older people as a social group by concealing their problems and presenting the economic hardships of older people as an outcome of their indiscretion and carelessness. This discourse broadcasts and strengthens the concepts of 'social dependence' and 'burden' regarding the older citizens.
6. The ideas of neoliberalism and individual responsibility of one's life and old age are popularised by the discourse of both the official Belarus media sources and alternative media outlets. The neo-traditionalist rhetoric of emphasising the role of the family in caring for older citizens is also gaining popularity (without addressing the gender issue).
7. Ageist attitudes towards old age and older people in modern Belarusian discourses are revealed in each of the discourses and discussed in two ways: a) ageism is acknowledged as a real, disturbing social reality; b) in the words of the discussants, age discrimination does not exist in the country, but at the same time their attitude confirms the opposite. In addition, the official Belarusian media discourse is distinguished by the stigmatisation of old age, first of all, a person's passivity in old age.

CHAPTER 1. Theoretical approaches to the study of 'old age', 'active ageing' and discourses

The modern era has seen changes not only in technologies but also in social structures. Innovations in the field of medicine and changes in the nature of morbidity due to the development of vaccines against a number of acute infectious diseases have affected the demographic structure of society. Old age and ageing appear in the problematic field of modern social changes. Older people not only receive the attention of gerontologists but also of sociologists, cultural scientists, demographers, economists, and politicians. A variety of disciplines have maintained interest in older people over the past decades. The modern issues and challenges that societies are facing provoke academic and public discussions on the reinterpretation of the concepts of 'old age' and 'ageing'.

This chapter will provide an insight into the sociological approaches to understanding old age (1.1.); it will also suggest approaches to understanding how both the definition of old age and the concept of 'active ageing' that have been popularised in modern discourses of old age affect social policies, while simultaneously being conditioned by socio-political, economic, and cultural processes (1.2.). The last subsection (1.3.) covers theoretical approaches to the study of discourses.

1.1. The theoretical background of studying old age and the phenomena of ageing

A general analysis of the existing variability of directions and the latest approaches is necessary; first of all, to summarise the arguments of the choice of methodology, and secondly, taking into account the research data analysed in the work.

Old age as a phenomenon and part of the human life cycle was conceptualised even before the formation of most scientific disciplines. The focus of medicine and philosophy was on the individual and old age as a phenomenon concerning everyone but experienced individually. The heteronomous model offered an immanent (understanding a person as a microcosm that reproduces the structure of the cosmos and nature) and a transcendent (understanding a person as God's creation, similar to the Creator) interpretations of human essence, and considered age based on ideas about this essence. Meditations about this essence and about the obstacles to its realisation in different periods of a person's life triggered reflection on old age and its temporary localisation.

Ancient works of philosophers raise questions about the wisdom of an older individual who has walked a long path of life, their honour and morality. In addition

to the attempts to define the role of this life period, to formulate its meaning for a person, and to describe the processes that take place in the body and mental activity, philosophers also devote themselves to making recommendations for young and older people. They consider the socio-psychological aspects of individual ageing, and definitions of old age include/combine chronological age and physiological functionality (Parkin & Parkin, 2003, p. 17; Bois, 1996, p. 23).

The individual perspective also dominates in the Middle Ages; the comprehension of a person is inseparable from a comparison with the Creator. The belief in medieval times was that a person who has lost their immortality due to the doctrine of the Fall needs healing as a restoration of their original integrity. However, it is not maturity and fullness of physical and spiritual strength that a Christian seeks, but liberation from the weight of sin and union with the perfect son of God. It is Christ who is the measure for evaluating a person. Ordinary people are still evaluated in terms of the perfect person, but this ideal is different.

Old age is not only temporally closer to death and therefore to God, but it is also marked by the weakening of carnal passions, temptations, and vain thoughts. This is what makes an older person wise, and such wisdom does not depend on the level of intelligence or experience. In old age, a person learns humility and grace, while poverty and illness are perceived as a test and God' mercy. Freedom from passions and purity put childhood and old age in a privileged position. Old age, as the age of approaching the eternal, does not need healing, but rather acceptance and humility (Rybakova, 2006, p. 145).

Consequently, from an individual perspective until the end of the 16th century, philosophers and healers interpreted old age as a period of physical decline and, although attempts were made to define it in the fields of medicine, theology, and philosophy, no universal approach was developed (Bois, 1996). From the point of view of ontology, this perspective could be characterised as a permanent search for true knowledge about old age and ageing as a process.

It is only with the emergence of social science that the emergence of new perspectives of old age and ageing theorising are associated. These new approaches link individual processes and ideas with social attitudes. With the destruction of the traditional society and religious consciousness, the world ceased to be seen as a visible whole, as an unchangeable and harmonious system; consequently, a person no longer appeared as an unchangeable entity. The connection of the transcendent with the immanent became problematic; the whole gave way to the connection of many individual phenomena, and the existence of Truth became questionable. This perspective emphasises the presence of two types of age: absolute (chronological) and conditional, determined not only by individual self-perceptions but also by the social context of its existence. It is this approach to the study of age that made it

possible to notice the role of the public discourse constructed around the ageing process in the formulation of the definition of old age and age norms. The study of age from the point of view of society actualises the development of criteria for age normativity, and age is fixed as one of the foundations of social stratification (Riley *et al.*, 1972).

Although old age and the ageing process were initially considered in the plane of physiological and personal development of a person, in the New Modern era it moved to a new stage of theoretical discussion, incorporating definitions developed through the problematisation of old age as an individual, social, and economic problem. The contemporary postmodern period positions old age as a global problem: the ageing of entire communities, social participation and employment of older people, the life quality of older people, communication and interaction of generations (Schindler, 1999; Phillips, 2002; Polivka, 2011; Chagrak, 2015; Katz, 2019). Figure 1 reflects this expansion of the perspective of theoretical interpretations of old age and ageing in the modern era compared to the previous ones:

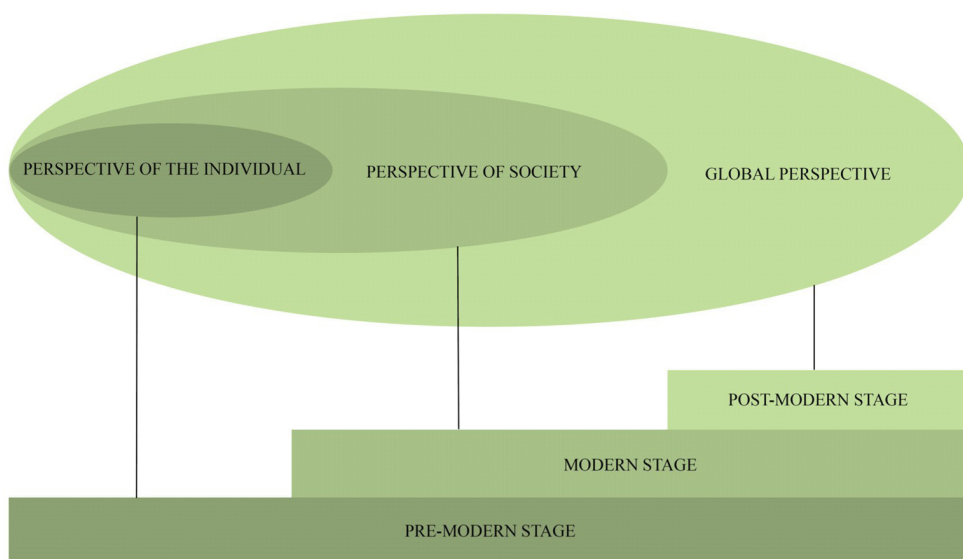


Figure 1. The perspectives of researching old age and ageing diachronically.
Source: the author.

The humanistic crisis of the postmodern era led to the rejection of the search for wholeness and completeness of being. The search for differences, as well as the descriptions and interpretations of the modes and situations in which a person finds

themselves came to the fore. Fundamentally, new theories, using the methodological tools of the sciences and humanities, form a new metaparadigm. G. Ritzer & D. Goodman (2001) suggest perceiving 'the postmodern as the excrement of modernity' (p. 151), and J. Baudrillard does not consider these new theories sociological ones (in Ritzer, 1997, p. 70). Indeed, it is no longer multidisciplinary, but interdisciplinarity and borrowing tools from other disciplines that characterise research that studies the problems of a desocialising society. The categories that modern gerontological sociology operates with, such as 'social group', 'position', 'status', 'sex' or 'education', are considered to be a manifestation of oppression by postmodern paradigm theorists. Outdated concepts are no longer suitable for studying new realities, and the perspective of consideration should also change. A. Giddens (2001) records the transition from objectively existing scientific facts to double hermeneutics (pp. 219-228), the actual end of theory.

When some researchers talk about the 'end of geography' and the impossibility of preserving the unique identity of peoples (O'Brien, 1992), the processes of the internationalisation of sociology are also occurring. In the context of society's non-linear development, 'the sociological science itself becomes a factor in the reflexivity of society – having entered the public discourse, it can set one or another direction of its development' (Kravchenko, 2008, p. 7). The 'elasticity' of geographical borders is complemented by the blurring of the borders of the third age. Moreover, A. Motel-Klingebiel and S. Arber (2006) argue that the problem of ageing is relevant not only for the European population but also for social structures, social practices, and standards of quality of life and behaviour, as well as norms and values.

A global perspective of theorising arranges the dichotomous development of social gerontology as the dominating one (Gans, Puenty, Bengtson, & Silverstein, 2009, pp. 723-738). The main opposition builds up between the theories of development and regression, between the understanding of old age as a disease (model issue) and positive old age. Approaches to understanding activeness in old age are also juxtaposed: activeness caused by external motivators and activeness motivated by internal intentions (symbolic interactionism). The dichotomy is also noticeable in approaches: large narratives are again complemented by medium-coverage theories and micro-narratives that seek to explain one selected aspect of ageing (Gans *et al.*, 2009, pp. 723-738). And while for some people the prospect of creating a large integral theory in social gerontology covering many theoretical and methodological approaches is obvious (Bass, 2009, pp. 347-374), for critical theorists, such ideas seem utopian and unviable (Cole, 1993; Moody, 1993).

One can notice the desire of some theorists to develop a general research approach to understanding such complex phenomena as old age and ageing and to combine different theoretical and methodological approaches (Victor, Westerhof, & Bond,

2007, p. 85). Nevertheless, the theoretical and methodological anarchy and the desire to find new points of view on reality, to use new methods without abandoning the old ones, is illustrated by the concept of 'anything goes' (Feyerabend, 1996). There is no longer a single, more correct or appropriate approach; instead, each of the theories is on an equal footing (Grobler, 2008, p. 276). Moreover, since the very structure of knowledge is hierarchical and legitimises social hierarchy, knowledge should no longer create and maintain the power myths and traditions, rules, and norms that controlled the community in order for it to function effectively (Lyotard, 1997). Therefore, instead of providing objective truth, science has offered knowledge that has served economic growth (Steuerman, 2003); hence, the concept of old age can and should be revised.

Significant in the context of this research is the attempt of J.F. Gubrium (1993) to understand the concept of ageing in postmodern gerontology (Gubrium, 1993; Gubrium & Sankar, 1996). Based on a study of Alzheimer's patients, he distinguished between normal ageing and pathological ageing. He presented old age as a mask that hides the real (young) essence of an individual (Gubrium, 1987).

Giddens (1973) emphasises the importance of personal activeness in the modern world. His model of ageing is directly related to the Activity Theory, which some researchers consider to be the theory of adaptation to old age (Muszynski, 2016, p. 19). According to Giddens (1973), an individual has the ability to act reflexively, that is, to maintain a theoretical understanding of their activities, awareness of the institutionality of this action, which also entails the possibility of changing institutions. Giddens (1991) writes about the expansion of opportunities in a post-traditional society for reflexive subjects who can actively change the trajectories of their lives (p. 14). Older people also create and constantly change the narrative of their lives by reflecting on their biographies, and 'the lifespan becomes more and more freed from externalities associated with pre-established ties to other individuals and groups' (Giddens, 1991, p. 147). By thinking about their future and assessing risks, a person can achieve the models of healthy or successful ageing.

From the perspective of postmodern society, the problem of ageing is associated not only with demographic processes in many regions of the planet but also with social aspects. The forecasts of various researchers are disappointing, but the problems of citizens who have reached old age today already require attention here and now. Even so, a single clear-cut approach to the definition of old age has not been worked out so far. This is not only due to differences in disciplinary approaches, but also due to the social essence of this concept, its cultural (among other) conditions. Macro-generalisations and attempts to create universal approaches are replaced with mini-narratives and definitions based on local contexts, which increases the relevance of research similar to this that has been carried out on the Belarusian context.

Political decisions to change the retirement age or to establish the age of receiving certain benefits or payments are primarily based on economic indicators with an appeal to the biological parameters and properties of the human body. However, these indicators are constantly changing as well. This feature complicates the already confusing situation with the definition of the conceptual apparatus, without which it is impossible to begin researching in any of the disciplinary areas. According to P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann (1966), despite the fact that the ageing process is caused by biology, it is the social definition that determines whom society considers old.

From the perspective of medicine, the fight against death and the increase in life expectancy are the unconditional priority and goal, whereas the social sciences and philosophy try not only to realise the consequences of these changes in society as a whole and its individuals (especially the old and working young people), while also trying to solve social and economic problems, as well as predict and prevent the emergence of new ones. In the words of P. Baudrillard (2000), society is trying to give the 'third age' a meaning, without which a whole third of society is in a constant state of economic parasitism and segregation (p. 290). In general, old age is a problem which burdens modernity. And as death is increasingly pushed back, age periodisation requires refinement, and old approaches become outdated and lose their predictive potential. Even medicine does not give a precise answer to the question of the physiological norm and the chronology in the ageing process (Hrisanfova, 1999, 53). Moreover, researchers accentuate its cultural or economic, rather than physiological conditionality (Smolkin, 2006). The Handbook of Theories of ageing outlines the changes in theories of ageing, and it also portrays/presents distinct theoretical paradigms and patterns (Silverstein *et al.*, 2008).

The dominance of naturalistic ideas about old age and age psychology in general prevailed until the 1920s when anthropological studies questioned the physical-biological nature of age-related changes, initiating a study of the influence of the cultural context on the seemingly 'natural' manifestations of human nature (Levy-Bruhl, 1966; Mead, 1930/2001; Benedict, 1931; Boas, 1940 *etc.*). Since then, although the phenomenon of old age still remains complicated to encompass/describe in one definition, it has not lost the attention of researchers; in fact, the phenomenon is gaining attention. In the contemporary post-modern and global world, social problems acquire new meanings and, at the same time, new approaches for consideration. The emergence of the separate discipline of social gerontology is testament to the increased importance of such research, which not only examines the demographic and socioeconomic problems of ageing but also the psychological features, accompanying the transition of a person to the 'old' group.

Nevertheless, in addition to examining the psychological aspects of individuals' ageing, modern sociologists also turn their attention to the problems of physicality and the body. One researcher in particular (Giddens, 1991) has focussed on this theme, reflecting on bodily regimes and sensuality, life planning, and making important life choices. In contrast to macro-approaches to the interpretation of old age, postmodernism offers a *cultural* analysis of ageing, studying their relationship to their body (Gilleard & Higgs, 2011). The body becomes part of a reflexive project of self-identification, so its importance increases more and more (Giddens, 1991).

Body problematics, along with ageing identity issues, is actualised by the theory of the 'old age mask' (Foucault, 1988). M. Foucault (1988) suggests that as a person ages, their body, thoughts, soul, and their behaviour are all affected, achieving subjectivity and a certain perfection or happiness (p. 3). Old age becomes a positive stage of wisdom and separation from the outer physical form, with more identification with the inner Self. However, this internal self-concept does not coincide with the cultural representation of ageing or the ensuing marginalisation of older people by society. The stigmatisation of older people and the discrimination related to it have been studied by G. Falk (2001). G. Rapolienė (2015), following E. Goffman, believes that stigma 'is a deviation that does not occur due to the violation of behavioral norms but rather arises due to personal features that (shamefully) do not conform to public norms (primarily, those of appearance), standards or stereotypes' (p. 7).

Narratives on ageing identity suggest paying close attention to the impact of race, social class, sexual orientation, or gender on the identity of older or ageing people. Researchers try to understand the ageing body and its relationship to consumer culture (Featherstone & Wernick, 1995). The global consumption of images and consumption flows are symptomatic in late modern times (Giddens, 1991). The study of physicality and identity within the framework of understanding old age is associated with ageism research. To date, various forms of ageism as pervasive negative attitudes to the old (including stereotypes and judgments) are widely spread and have even become the norm in most cultures (Boduroglu, Yoon, Luo, & Park, 2006; Levy, 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2012; Gendron, Welleford, Inker, & White, 2016; NCAOP, 2005; Lyons, 2009; Kuhta & Martinyuk, 2018).

However, postmodernist theories cannot be used to explain the phenomena/ realities of the post-Soviet context of Belarusian society. The digital revolution, information explosions spreading across the globe (and this can include scientific knowledge), consumer culture and media culture, uncertainty and modern risks, as well as the waves of immigration are relevant for people in different parts of the world (Ferraro & Wilmoth, 2013, p. 251). However, they are relevant to a different extent. Entering the global era owing to the development of

technology, institutionally, contextually and culturally, society is still closely connected with the modern epoch, and some groups even with the pre-modern or pre-industrial one.

A study of relevant literature and a close examination of existing sociological and interdisciplinary theories about old age leads to the conclusion that there is no universal approach to understanding the processes of ageing and the social group of older people. It is also difficult to classify and systematise existing theories since there is no common criterion for all of them according to which such a classification could be created.

However, trying to create for oneself a well-structured system of the whole range of theories related to the research of 'old age' and 'ageing', one can see that these theories, having gone through the stage of research exclusively from individual perspective in pre-sociological era, moved into the modern era of research from the perspective of society, *i.e.*, the macro-perspective, and postmodern era not only brought the study of 'old age' and 'ageing' to a new, global level, but also again focused on individual perspective. While research from a societal perspective treats old age as a controlled or partially controlled phenomenon, research on old age from the perspective of individuals can define this phenomenon either as partially or completely controlled, or totally uncontrollable by an individual. Attempts to determine old age through correlation with specific age frames (the chronological approach) may be based on conventional social attitudes, but may also rely on bio-medical indicators characterising the individuals of the species of homo sapiens. One can also notice a relative departure of postmodern theorists from attempts to determine old age using chronological parameters.

Modern Belarusian discourse has been examined to find a reflection of the theoretical approaches of each of the three conceptual perspectives (those of individuals, societies and global perspectives, or pre-sociological, modern sociological and postmodern sociological). Based on these findings, as well as the combination of elements belonging to each of them, a division of theoretical approaches of 'old age' interpretation into three main groups has been created and will be displayed below in Figure 2.

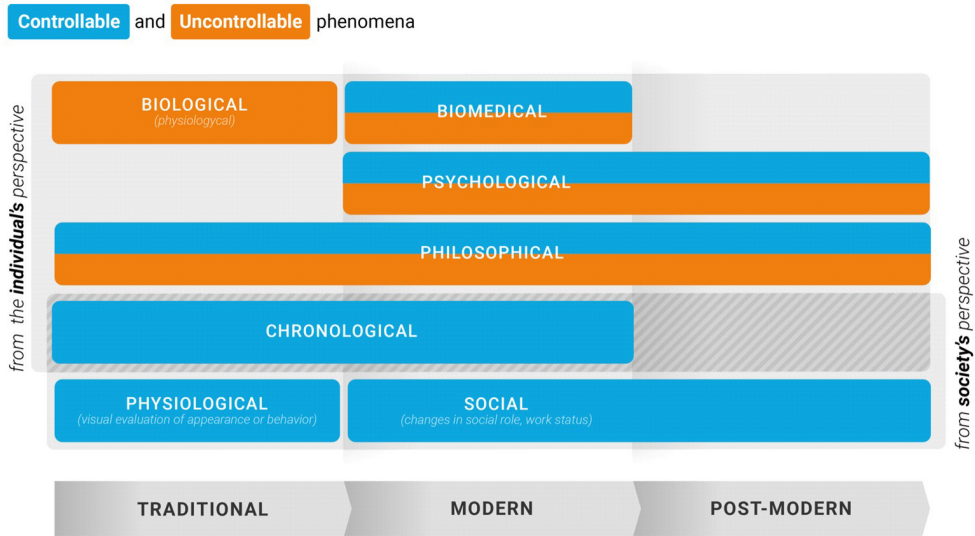


Figure 2. The approaches to the definition of old age.
 Source: the author.

This scheme reflects an attempt to classify approaches to understanding old age diachronically (horizontal division into three epochs: pre-modern, modern and post-modern), as well as from the perspective of attention to the phenomenon: individual and social perspectives (two areas that intersect in attempts to define old age through chronological parameters: individual, biological, or social). The dotted line also indicates the division of approaches to old age as an uncontrolled phenomenon and approaches that define old age as a fully or partially controllable phenomenon.

It is impossible to say what the theory of ageing will look like in the future, but changes are already noticeable, for example, regarding one of the central concepts of gerontology, *i.e.*, activeness. Quantitative characteristics of its external manifestations are replaced by an analysis of qualitative activeness and its internal dimension (Muszyński, 2016, p. 2).

1.2. Understanding the role of the concepts 'old age' and 'active ageing' on social policies

Industrialisation and urbanisation as phenomena of the new modern age have problematised ageing and determined the relevance of the research related to ageing. Gerontologists have identified the most important reasons, naming such factors as the change in the nature of labour during the transition from an agricultural

society to an industrial one, demographic shifts, and general depreciation of old age due to the need for young and physically strong workers. According to some scientists, such explanations are quite simplified, and the problems of old age and ageing should be studied in the broader context of fundamental 'ruptures' in a life cycle (Krasnova & Lidars, 2003, p. 47). 'Ruptures' or shifts occurred in three areas of individual life: localisation in historical time, labour efficiency, and social functions of a family.

Pre-industrial society is not characterised by a clear differentiation of age groups in demographic, social, or cultural regard. For example, a child perceived as an adult in miniature was included in the labour activity at an early stage. Since labour and child-rearing were an integral part of a person's whole life (here, of course, we should make a reservation concerning the nobility or elite layers of society, whose life cycle was determined by other realities), the economic independence of children came only when the head of the family died. Older men had authority and social prestige until they were very old, and they could also count on the care of economically dependent household members. On the other hand, a later achievement of economic independence by young generations made the transition period from childhood to adolescence less significant and noticeable (Krasnova & Lidars, 2003, p. 48). The act of increasing the age specialisation of labour that is characteristic of industrial production, as well as distinguishing the age of a 'child' through the regulation of child labour and the introduction of compulsory education determined the separation of this social group.

The Polish researcher I. Młóźniak (2016) argues that initially old age was not perceived as a process (as ageing), but as an 'inevitable stage in life' (p. 52). Up until the 16th century, old age, identified with poverty and the inability to earn a living due to one's age, was an individual problem. The emergence of special institutions to care for older people shows that old age in modern societies begins to be perceived as a social problem. Młóźniak (2016) suggests that in the 19th century, old age ceased to be poverty, perceived almost mystically, synonymous with complete infirmity, but became a definition for a particular social group and stage in an individual's life. This perception of old age is typical for the broad social masses, excluding the representatives of the upper social classes.

The industrial development of society has led to the emergence of strict age standards of fitness for specialised work. It was specialisation, rather than chronological age, that determined fitness or unfitness for work: while a person over 60 years of age could continue physical labour in agriculture, a factory worker could be considered unfit for work by the age of 40-45. Workers dismissed for health reasons or for insufficient productivity were forced to seek odd jobs or took up the simplest and less paid types of work. The erosion of the traditional family

and the transition to maintaining a common household by nuclear-type families no longer guaranteed security to the individuals who lost a stable source of income. Social insecurity and the growing proportion of the population living exclusively from charitable donations below the poverty line required radical changes and institutionalisation of social security. The creation of the pension system was also essential for the processes of defining the concept of old age and the theoretical understanding of this phenomenon (Krasnova & Lidars, 2003).

In 1889, the first social insurance programme was established in Germany, it aimed to reduce the level of poverty and economic dependence on the family of the older people. At the time of programme introduction, the retirement age was set at 70. In other words, a chronological parameter was used to determine this social group. With the development of the system of social insurance, the retirement age changed significantly over time in Germany and other countries that adopted the German innovation in various guises. The institutionalisation of social care for older people in Germany has become an additional factor (ideological/political) for those countries where there was need for such measures as they had not been implemented yet. At the beginning of the 20th century, the example of Germany was followed by the Netherlands (in 1901), Great Britain (in 1908), France (in 1910), Sweden (in 1913), Italy and Spain (in 1919). Researchers believe that the significance of these innovations was definitively important for the development not only of these countries but also for the development of welfare regimes in general (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Walker, 1980, 1981; Walker & Aspalter, 2008).

It should be mentioned here that some researchers perceive the institutionalisation of care and relegating the older population to the status of people in need as the root of negative consequences — it forms a stereotypical perception of older people as a social group of the weak, infirm, and in need of care (Townsend, 1981, 1986; Walker, 1980). This dependence could be considered if, before the institutionalisation of social care for older people, the perception of this social group, whose large proportion was and remains below the poverty line, was not closely related to its vulnerable economic situation. However, the allocation of public funds to reduce the poverty level of older people (especially in the countries of the PAYGO pension plan) creates a certain tension between working citizens who make payments and pensioners who receive them. This tension becomes noticeable due to the influence of the factors such as demography, eligibility, and levels of benefits. And while during the 'golden age' of the welfare state old age was considered a social problem, in the 1980s, it was already defined as an economic one (Walker, 1999). Thus, the influence of the economic factor on the very concept of old age and ageing is manifested.

Changing household structures and the demographic ageing of the population (changes in the dependency ratio), and subsequent shift from industrial society to service society, post-industrial pressure on the budgets of welfare states – these are the characteristics of the status quo and the basis for new negotiations and attempts at theoretical rethinking of social security systems and understanding of old age as a construct (Philipson, 2006).

One of the main manifestations of the adaptation of communities (states) to demographic changes associated with population ageing is the increase in the age of retirement. Proposals to raise the retirement age are becoming an important issue in the political space of individual countries, as they face great resistance from the public. Individual pension systems developed in the second half of the 19th century took into account completely different demographic and economic realities, and yet they remain the basis for attempts to scientifically legitimise changes in social policies. The generational equity discourse is an attempt to influence public support for social security (Marshall, Cook, & Marshall, 1993). Discourses of a similar nature related to the current and future costs of an ageing population, as well as the discourse about the potential ‘burden’ of an ageing population create a negative field of ideas, focusing on costs, not revenues. Researchers see the role of international governmental organisations (IGOs), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in this ideological shift (Philipson, 2006; Walker & Deakon, 2003).

If the modern period was marked by the appearance of such a major structure as a welfare state, the postmodern period contrasts modern challenges and ‘metanarratives’ with loose, fragmentary, flexible, and heterogeneous understandings and poststructuralist approach to social life (Harvey, 1989). The state expects an increase in individual responsibility and the role of the family in protecting older people from risks that have become unpredictable and incalculable in this era (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1994). The expansion of neoliberal ideas about the role of the state and the primacy of the market (Phillipson, 2006) have set a global agenda for pre-funded pensions.

Rethinking the concepts of old age and ageing in these new socio-economic realities repeatedly provokes a rethinking of social policies, which in turn also have an impact on the perception of old age and ageing. Further changes provoked by the development of medicine and an increase in overall life expectancy, changes in the birth rate and family structure, as well as changes in the level of socio-cultural norms lead to new theoretical developments, and then new social policies. However, a single approach, a single universal theory explaining these processes, has not been developed yet.

The functioning of older people in the community is determined by a variety of factors that affect both the individual and macro-level. Iwański (2016) highlights the following conditions:

- macro-social conditions and perception of the processes of ageing and old age through the perspective of the civilisational and cultural circle,
- macroeconomic conditions – state of public financing, pension system, rules for social redistribution of benefits,
- cultural, ethnic and religious conditions,
- conditions attributed to the local community or determined by the place of residence (a city – a village),
- individual conditions: sex, age, education, wealth, health status, etc.,
- the conditions of family and friends (p. 22).

Each of the factors (conditions) identified by different disciplines can influence both the functioning of individual older people and the definition of old age and older people as a social category. Many of these factors (such as biological indicators) are highly individual, so different communities use different combinations of factors to determine the unemployable age and the age of retirement. Today, there are several systems with their own features and nuances. Legal norms that determine the retirement age are usually conditional, although they depend on real demographic indicators. Thus, social old age is associated with the population's age structure, while the social retirement age in the country is assigned considering the average life expectancy in the country on the one hand, and the median age on the other.

Conversely, the retirement age is a factor in determining old age in many developed and developing countries (WHO, 2008). It is this aspect which reflects economic and political realities and determines the social structure of society in many countries. Changes in economic and social policies therefore directly affect the definition of old age and its sub-categories (the 'young-old' and the 'old-old' by Neugarten, 1974, or the 'third age' and the 'fourth age' by Powell & Wahidin, 2007). Some difficulties are related to the regions where there is no such thing as the retirement age, since the legislation does not provide for pension payments (WHO, 2008). In other countries, there are opportunities for individual determination of the retirement age for many categories of professions/occupations, as well as various types of early retirement. This is another reason why this criterion cannot be universal.

As noted above, the chronological factor – *i.e.*, reaching a certain age – can serve as the basis for assigning a person to the social group of the older people and terminating the period of employment (Laz, 1998). According to a 2007 study conducted under the auspices of the UN, in demographic research, people tend to

attribute individuals who have reached the age of 60 to the group of older people (The World Economic and Social Survey, UN, 2007). P. Thane (2000) writes about the long-standing historical tradition of correlating the age of 60 with the transition to the category of older people, also noting that this figure varied diachronically and synchronically. For example, rich men were classified as older at a later age than men who made a living by manual labour. The latter were perceived as older people as early as age 50 (Thane, 2000). Differences were and still are relevant for gender groups as well, and today they are associated with fixed differences in the retirement age for different gender groups in individual countries (Giddens, 1998).

An additional criterion for defining a person as an older one may be their individual physical deterioration or the age of general deterioration that is suggested by medical data. The researcher C. Greasley-Adams (2012) points out a paradox: in the British state contemporary to her, the intentions of social policy-makers to increase the age of retirement are combined with the classification of the population over 50 as a group of older people in a key policy document published by the Scottish Executive entitled 'All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an ageing Population' (p. 6). In addition to possible physical deterioration, the reason for a probable classification of a person as an older individual may be a number of life circumstances (such as the age of their children, the need to take care of older relatives, etc.).

Thus, a modern and universal definition of old age in relation to each of the listed criteria is conditional and has its drawbacks. Old age as a social construct, being associated with biological, physiological, cultural, or economic factors, is also determined historically (Vincent, 2003). Local characteristics can influence the definition of old age through owning economic resources (Wilson, 2000) or having grandchildren (Hockey & James, 1993). Furthermore, since age is a social construct that reflects the cultural and historical characteristics of society in a certain period of time, operating universal terminology requires a detailed study of contexts, while the creation of universal concepts itself is laborious and unrewarding.

In contrast to demographic theories, which try to find out the causes of ageing in humans and other living beings and understand what factors accelerate or slow down ageing, sociological and multidisciplinary approaches also address the questions of meaning: both of ageing and of life in general. In particular, researchers are interested in what practical steps are needed to solve specific social and individual problems related to current global challenges, as well as local problems. For interdisciplinary research, 'how?' is an important question, and most often the objective is not to find out general reasons for the existence of ageing as a phenomenon, but rather to search for factors and ways to improve the life quality of a person at any age and, as a result, create favorable conditions for them.

The original chronological framework of old age, established at the end of the 19th century based on economic, demographic and biological indicators, is subject to criticism due to the need for revision taking into account technological and civilisational progress. Proponents of raising the age limit note that 'the effectiveness of today's 60-year-olds is incomparably higher than a hundred years ago' (Iwański, 2017, p. 122). This is especially relevant in developed countries, where the share of people employed in agriculture, heavy industry, and professions that involve heavy physical labour and risks is comparatively low.

However, despite the development of medicine and general civilisational and technological progress, the risk of diseases and disability persists, and the number of older people who require 24-hour long-term care increases (Iwański, 2017, p. 124). So the entire system of social work and health care requires not only increased funding, but also serious work to ensure that older people have access to care (both formal and informal).

Since the concept of old age and the scenarios of living through it have become the objects of reinterpretation, one of the concepts proposed to modern people and widely popularised by policy-makers has become the concept of 'active ageing'. It is this concept that is popularised by Belarusian policy-makers and implemented in state social policies regarding old age and older people. For this reason, the study of changes in the interpretations of old age offered to the Belarusian society and in social policies requires attention to the concept of 'active ageing'.

The functionalist understanding of the existence of society and the need to balance the interconnections of its parts gave rise to the creation of optimal, socially acceptable scenarios of ageing. Theorists presented variants of the normative functioning of society and its older citizens in the socio-gerontological social activity theory. The activeness of individuals was considered a positive quality, a norm, an indicator of efficiency and success, and the lack of activeness became a deficiency. For the first time these ideas were described in the book *Personal adjustment in old age* (Cavan, *et al.*, 1949). Since ageing is combined with a gradual change in human social interactions, 'adjustment' involves not just adapting to changing living conditions, but also those specific actions performed in order to update their habitual interactions, adjustments that an individual must consciously introduce to their lifestyle. The loss of social connections is inevitable, but even after retirement, a person can and should acquire new roles and connections, new activities and hobbies. Otherwise, an older person does not adapt and becomes inept (the book calls this state 'maladjustment') (Cavan, *et al.*, 1949).

This social focus on an active life position of an older person and individual responsibility for adaptation to new social conditions may arise due to the cultural and economic context of the emergence of this approach. If in the first half of the

20th century, the advantage in the labour market was given to young physically strong workers who were able to provide greater productivity, then in the post-war period, the demand for labour changed qualitatively and quantitatively. The need for workers in Western Europe and North America grew, so the idea of attracting older workers and making extensive use of their experience was logical (Phillipson, 1982). Attracting older people to the labour market could not be combined with the concept of old age as a time of natural and necessary withdrawal from social interaction. On the contrary, old age is increasingly referred to as the 'golden age' instead of the fading period, and the development of the pension system provokes the growth of the market for goods and services for older people who have become active and successful members of society. The development of consumer culture among older residents of the US were described by M. Minkler in 'Gold in gray: Reflections on business' discovery of the old market' (1989, pp. 17-23).

Works like *Older people* by R. Havighurst, R.E. Albrecht (1953) ideologically fuelled this new trend in social gerontology and refocused public opinion. Ageing begins to be perceived as an important and positive phenomenon. It was this optimistic, enthusiastic view of ageing that led to the emergence of numerous concepts of successful ageing in the future. A particular variant of this approach is the concept of productive ageing (Butler, 1997; Butler & Gleason, 1985; Aquino, *et al.*, 1996; Achenbaum, 2001; Morrow-Howell, *et al.*, 2001; McNamara & Gonzalez, 2011), which implies the longest possible paid employment.

Initially, the concept of successful ageing was developed by Havighurst (1961). In the eponymous article 'Successful ageing', the author expressed the opinion that a person ages successfully if life and its content satisfy them. In the 1980s and 90s, this idea was developed by the American gerontologists J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn (1987), although initially it was based on the medical model of maintaining full functioning for as long as possible until the very end of life. Considering old age as a period of physical infirmity and decline was contrasted with the understanding of old age as an age that opens up new prospects and gives opportunities for a change in one's activities. The authors emphasise the active and responsible role of older people themselves: their physical and social activeness determines their health and emotional state (Rowe & Kahn, 1987).

One of the variants of this theoretical approach is the interdisciplinary theoretical SOC model (selection-optimisation-compensation). In the article 'Savoir vivre in old age', P. Baltes and M. Baltes (1998) argue that old age provides all the opportunities for successful ageing. Obstacles to personal fulfilment arise only in the so-called 'fourth' age, but even after the age of 80, one can maintain activeness and social success by using selection – focusing on the most important goals, optimisation – developing skills and improving techniques for achieving goals, compensation – using new ways and means instead of inaccessible ones. An illustrative example is

the way a pianist, Arthur Rubinstein (1888-1982), adapted to age changes: he began to perform less often (selection), rehearsed more often (optimisation), and as he was losing the ability to play the piano at high speed, he changed the tempo more often, giving the impression of the full speed (compensation) (Baltes & Baltes, 1998, pp. 13-18).

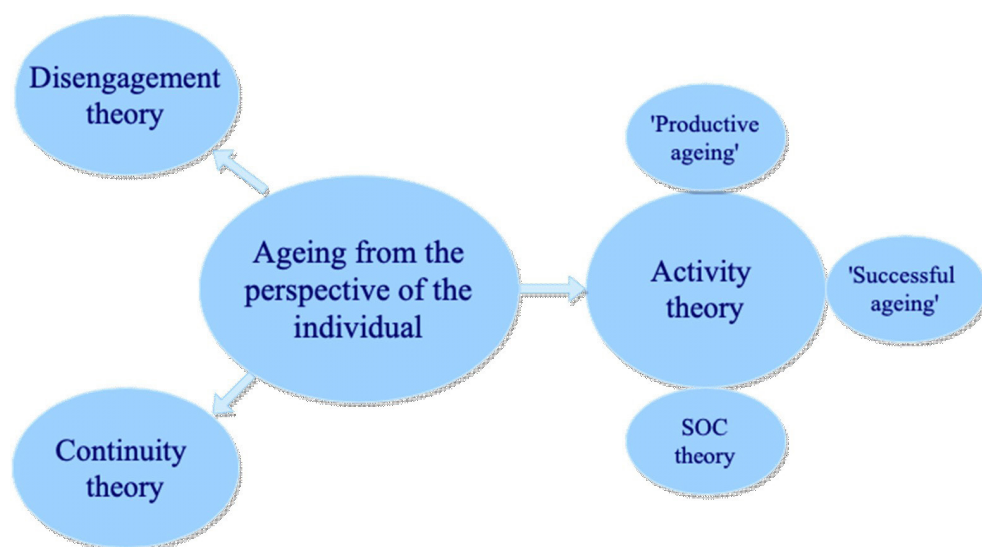


Figure 3. The social theories of ageing from the perspective of the individual.
Source: the author

Different approaches to the interpretation of ageing from the perspective of an individual are reflected in Figure 3, which illustrates the similarity of activity theory (with the later theories of successful, productive ageing), and the SOC theoretical model, as well as their meaningful opposition to continuity theory and disengagement theory.

Variations of activity theory are found in the policy documents of the UN and its agencies. The WHO has developed a set of ‘active ageing’ programmes, one of which is called ‘Add life to the years’ (WHO, 1982), referring to the work of Havighurst (1961) and his ideas.

A positive perception of old age and the demythologisation of the discourse of gerontology in society are at the heart of the UN policy documents. The efforts of international experts and employees of various specialised organisations are aimed at debunking negative myths about ageing and older people. The fight against ageing happens not only at the biotechnological level, but also at the level of

improving the life quality of older people and countering stereotypical attitudes in society ('A good age' Comfort, 1976). A policy document by the WHO, 'Exploding the myths: Ageing' (1999), aims to overcome outdated ideas about ageing and older people and highlights obsolete stereotypical images of older people. They are no longer weak, passive, unhealthy, unable to work, and should not be perceived as a 'burden' for society. Owing to this enthusiasm and optimism, N. Bobbio (1996) called modern gerontologists 'happy gerontologists'.

A positive view of old age and rejecting the ideas of decline and social disengagement do not, however, free these theories from criticism. First of all, their antagonists are adherents of the disengagement theory of ageing, whose sombreness is partly caused by changes in the demographic situation after the 1960s when competition for jobs began to return. Already in the 1970s, with the growing interval between retirement and death, the formula 'too old to work, too young to die' (Surkin, 1976) appeared, emphasising the negative perception of older workers. The second part of this formula is significant because it points to the reason for the development of the old age leisure industry and the understanding of older people's right to rest and entertainment.

Nevertheless, at the turn of 1990-2000, the disengagement theory received a new round of popularity with the publication of a Swedish gerontologist L. Tornstam (1999, 2011). He showed that there is some rationale in the criticised approach, but it is impossible to deny the presence of a special state of older people whose interest in the world of things is weakening, who give up what was once important to them, focus on what is most important to them and limit their social circle. Most often, the material is replaced by the spiritual; earning money is replaced by self-development and creativity. This is no longer disengagement, but a gerotranscendence, a transition to a different state of life, which is a conscious and desirable choice (Tornstam, 1999). Therefore, the theory of active ageing was again criticised, especially for its prescriptive, normative approach.

Political economists C. L. Estes (1983) and M. Minkler (1984) have criticised proponents of activity theory for their lack of attention to larger structural issues and problems arising from belonging to different social classes, racial and gender groups, which narrows the focus of research (Katz, 2000, p. 138). S. Katz (2013) consistently considers 'the master-concept 'activity' in gerontology as a theoretical model, a cultural ideal, an empirical instrument, a healthcare regime, a political rationality and a discursive resource' (p. 33). The author also points out the connection between the models of activeness and productivity offered to the older people and consumer ideologies, as well as the ideology of neoliberalism. The author criticises the simplified binary of positive activity and negative forces of dependence, illness, and loneliness. Uncritical propaganda of positive activity which promotes medical and

cultural images of positive old age blames inaction and offers activeness as a panacea for all the political problems of the welfare state and for modern risks (Katz, 2013).

The imagined infinity of opportunities for entrepreneurship, career growth, and simply employment pushes a person to self-discipline and concentration on the performance and efficiency of their body, on time investments in the body, which creates a new type of body, 'the body of exercise' (Foucault, 1979, p. 155.) Foucault criticises positive economics and activity theory as part of it, which presents old age as knowable and manageable, while production and celebration of an active body turns out to be a disciplinary strategy. Older people who increasingly value internal activity are considered to be problematic.

The concept of successful ageing dispels the disengagement theory of ageing: it is the assumed inevitable withdrawal from society as one ages (Victor, 2004). Rather, C. Victor (2004) suggests that activity theory is a prescriptive view of ageing that states that activities and commitments offer a path to successful ageing. Activity theory postulates that quality of life is positively associated with social integration and engagement in social networks, and is negatively affected by lost social roles that can occur with events such as widowhood and retirement (Victor, 2004). Some authors suggest that continuity throughout life is important for the successful adaptation and elimination of such harms to social roles (see, for example, Alford-Cooper, 1998), while others suggest that as people age, they will seek internal continuity (for example, in ideas, preferences, and skills) and external consistency (for example, with physical and social environments) (see Tanner & Harris, 2007).

The normative nature of such concepts as 'active ageing' or 'successful ageing' may take the one-dimensional interpretation of 'good ageing' in socio-political discourses; however, such meta-narratives are no longer relevant for postmodern or late modern society (Rose, 2001, 2007; Schermer & Pinxten, 2014, p. 143). The need for individual creation and reflection of their own identities, including in old age and without normative models is studied by A. Giddens (1991), Z. Bauman (2001), and U. Beck (2002). N. Rose (2001) insists that we can abandon attempts to formulate 'normal' ageing and allow individuals to create their own autobiographical myths (p. 16).

1.3. Theoretical approaches to the study of discourses, and benefits for the analysis of social issues

Following the modern research on the phenomenon of old age mentioned in Subsections 1.1. and 1.2., this work focuses on the importance of language for studying objectively existing reality, as well as on the role of discourses in the development of social institutions and social policies in relation to old age and older people.

The attention to language on the part of sociological science is associated with two key problems: language has ceased to be understood as an exclusively descriptive tool, and in addition it (and its practical use) is not only socially determined but also affects society and power structures itself. Language can construct our social world, so it falls into the focus of social science.

Many researchers turn to the study of language in social life: from its descriptive function to language as a social action. Furthermore, social interactions have become the subject of analysis. It was in linguistics where the very concept of 'discourse' appeared to define the individual speech of a speaker (Benveniste, 1974, p. 139); however, today this concept is much more versatile, although it has not lost its original connection with linguistics.

Discourse can be considered identical to conversation or text (naturalism). These are texts that arise naturally without the intention or intervention of a researcher. Discourse can be seen as the collection and creation of such texts and conversations. Another approach considers discourse as a shared way of creating texts (code) (Hart & Lukeš, 2009). In other words, discourse can be considered as a social phenomenon that manifests itself in certain texts, conversations and codes, in different people and different contexts, and implying this sense we use the plural form – discourses. This wide range of meanings gives rise to many attempts by theorists to define discourse (O'Halloran, 2003).

The very concept of 'discourse' comes from the Latin *discurrere* – 'discussion', 'negotiations', and it denotes a speech situation of exchange of statements between interlocutors. In everyday language, or in a broad sense, discourse is synonymous with 'conversation', 'dialogue', or 'interlocution' (Kasavin, 2007, p. 97). From a linguistic point of view, discourse can be understood as a 'language above the sentence or above the clause' (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1), any aspect of language use (Fasold 1990, p. 65) or 'discourse as utterances' (Davis, Brewer, & Brewer, 1997, p. 105).

Sociologists analyse discourse primarily as 'any practice by which individuals imbue reality with meaning' (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009); and in this case, discourse can be understood as a whole range of social practices, not only textual/verbal, but also visual, audio, etc. Discourse is a 'multidimensional social phenomenon' (van Dijk, 2009, p. 67), which contains a wide range of concepts that can be defined differently within individual disciplines. This multidisciplinary of discourse also allows studying its properties that have direct or indirect relevance to the research. From the point of view of sociology, there is spontaneous discourse, which occurs without the intervention of a researcher analysing it, and induced discourse, which is created within the framework of sociological research using special methods (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). In other words, it is discourse intentionally provoked by a researcher.

Although T. van Dijk (1989) finds the origins of interdisciplinary discourse analysis in ancient treatises on rhetoric and poetics (p. 113-114), modern research on discourse begins in the 1960s. Various versions of discourse analysis are used by linguists, psychologists, philosophers, and sociologists. Even within individual disciplines, separate schools are distinguished. In this thesis, the author did not set an objective to analyse in detail their features and characteristics, so the attention will be given only to some of the approaches that were important for building a methodological basis and choosing tools for this study.

Critical discourse analysis is one of the theoretical approaches, one of the schools. It is a 'problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda' (Fairclough *et al.*, 2011, p. 357). It focuses on the analysis of linguistic manifestations of implicit and explicit structural relations of power and control, dominance and discrimination, *i.e.* the resources that are available to people due to their social position. It reveals the manifestation of social inequality in the discourse. What is especially important for this research is the critical discourse analysis that includes not only texts but also social processes and structures that are the context for the appearance of oral or written texts (Fairclough, 1993).

Furthermore, this context of the existence of discourse is of exceptional importance, since their mutual influence is obvious to researchers: 'since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect' (Hall, 1992, p. 291). Thus, discourse is present everywhere and in everything, and it is through discourse that we can give meaning to the world and understand it. At different points in history, these meanings and significations will be different.

Foucault (1977) believed that all social practices should be understood by discursive construction. Discourse actually constructs the object or event itself, the discourse itself allows and limits the possibility of understanding it, it simplifies and imposes a framework, limits what can be said, where and by whom. An example would be the concept of a 'kulak' in the Soviet discourse or a 'social parasite', which is also relevant for the modern Belarusian socio-political discourse. We can agree with Foucault (1977) that the discourse in this case defines allows and limits (p. 138), it is precisely with this that the exclusive attention of the researcher to the discourses of the concepts 'old age' and 'active ageing' in modern Belarus is connected.

Despite criticising Foucault for not having a concept of agency and giving subjectness to 'discursive practices' (Newton, 1998), Foucault only shifts the focus from agency to move away from ontological dualism and the realist epistemology of the self. He is not limited by the existing oppositions of 'an individual – society' or 'agency – structure', but shifts the focus to the possibilities of agency and change.

Decentred agency is theorised using four components: discourse, power/knowledge, embodiment and self-reflexivity (Caldwell, 2007).

Foucault (1972) defines discourse as 'practices which form the objects of which they speak' (p. 49), that is why discourse subsumes the subject. The subjective self not only accepts the discursive practices and ideas that it carries, but an individual must also position themselves on this conceptual map, comprehend themselves in terms offered by a given discourse. And in the process of adapting these subject positions, our identities or selves are created. For example, we begin to affiliate ourselves to the idea of 'social parasitism' or 'social burden'.

It seems important that the central element of Foucault's (2000) understanding of discourse is power/knowledge. Knowledge is used in discursive practices to regulate people's behaviour. For example, legal terms are created and used in discourse for legislative control, and, in turn, medical terms about sexuality lead to medical control. Moreover, one should realise how power/knowledge serve authorities and help to allow or limit certain social practices. (Similarly, medical terms regarding age and ageing, demographic terms, economic 'burdens', etc. define and limit the self-determination of an individual in relation to age).

Foucault rejects the idea that the power just restricts, that power means only controlling, preventing, repressing, censoring or concealing. For Foucault (1977), power also produces reality, it 'produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (p. 194). One special way in which this reality is created is through dominant discourses. In the modern world, media discourses have become a kind of mouthpiece of political forces, as well as channels for the transmission of ideas and knowledge. Some versions of social reality are in a more privileged position, and they legitimise existing power relations and social structures. They are so common that they are understood as 'common sense', so it is difficult to see how they could be challenged. Using the words of Foucault himself (1981), discourse is 'a violence we do to things' (p. 67).

Alternatives for such discourses are counter-discourses. People have a sense of history, they are aware of the temporary nature of phenomena, and therefore they are aware that the discourses which involve them are temporary. They can trace the genealogy and processes of transformations in certain discourses or their disappearance. Some discourse may dominate at some point in time, and it may become marginal or disappear at another point.

Foucault, besides attention to discourses, proposes to consider another important aspect related to discourses – the institutions where they are embedded. This is not just an abstract domination, it is a direct influence on real activity. Although it was carefully developed, Foucault's (1972, 1977, 1981, 2000) theoretical approach is quite abstracted from specific methodological steps and tools, this 'localisation' and

connection with the real context seems to the author of this dissertation a serious step in Foucault's theoretical approach to its practical use in research.

An even more significant role for the institutional context in the analysis of discourse in close connection with social and political structures is offered by N. Fairclough (1992, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2013). As for the theoretical basis for analysing Fairclough's discourse, it contains key concepts whose meanings differ in the author's early and later works. Fairclough's understanding of discourse as not only creative but also as created is extremely important. The researcher focuses on the ability of discourse not only to represent knowledge, identities, and social relationships, but also to change them, including power relations. And it is in the form of discourse that other social practices and structures exist as well. Therefore, discourse has dialectical relations with these structures.

Fairclough (1992) believes that social structure consists of discursive and non-discursive elements (p. 64). An example of a discursive practice is journalism and public relations, while a non-discursive one is the physical practice of bridge construction. In addition to presenting already existing discursive structures, by stating that discursive practice challenges them by using words to define phenomena outside the structure of discourse, Fairclough (1992) approaches the post-structuralist position (p. 66). However, unlike poststructuralists, he emphasises the importance of systematic analysis of speech and the creation of a theoretical model for the study of discourse in everyday interaction.

It is important to note that Fairclough's (1992) approach combines three traditions of discourse analysis: detailed linguistic analysis of text, Foucault's macro-sociological analysis of social practices, which ignored the methodology of text analysis, and micro-sociological interpretation (including ethnomethodological and conversational types of analysis), which analyses the actions of people who follow common 'logical' rules and procedures (p. 72).

Furthermore, Fairclough (1992) consistently criticises an exclusively linguistic analysis of texts. He sees the need to delve into the deep discursive processes that take place in texts and illustrate the relationship between text and society, between social and cultural processes and structures. The combination of textual and social analysis provides the necessary interdisciplinarity and sufficiency of analysis (Fairclough, 1992).

According to Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis, each speech event (communicative event) consists of three dimensions: text (verbal, visual, or a combination of them); discursive practice of text production and perception; and social practice. Such a model can be used not only to study communication methods, but also to analyse society as a whole. From this model, a three-dimensional analysis is derived, it includes: the study of linguistic features of

text; processes related to the creation and perception of text (discursive practice); as well as social practice and communicative events as its parts (1992, p. 73). According to Fairclough, linguistic analysis and discursive practices analysis are separated analytically because they represent different dimensions.

While text analysis focuses on linguistic features: semantics, grammar, syntax, in other words on the realisations of discourses and genres. The analysis of discursive practices focuses on the use of texts and genres in creating new texts, as well as on the influence of existing discourses and genres in the process of perception and interpretation. For example, liberal discourse can permeate news discourse, and awareness of news texts that ordinary people have can influence their statements in communicating with their colleagues.

Thus, discursive practice is a link between texts and social practice. Therefore, by analysing texts and discursive practices, Fairclough suggests finding an answer to the question of whether discursive practice reproduces the actual order of discourse or transforms it, as well as how this affects social practices. However, the range of social practices requires not only discourse analysis per se, but also an analysis of non-discursive elements of practices. Each communicative event functions as a form of social practice in the process of reproducing or refuting the order of discourse. In other words, each communicative act determines a broader social practice and is itself conditioned by it.

This work relates to L. Chouliaraki and N. Fairclough's understanding (1999) of the need to analyse proper discursive and other mechanisms (economic, physical, biological, and psychological) that work together to create social practices. However, it is difficult to clearly distinguish them taking into account their dialectical relationship.

Attention should be drawn to the assumption of Fairclough (1992), according to which the property of discourses is their interdiscursivity, *i.e.* simultaneous articulation of several discourses in one communicative event. This phenomenon is related to intertextuality, since it is a form of the latter. Each event relies on events that have already occurred, applies phrases and words that have already been used, or even quotes them explicitly (Fairclough, 1992, p. 117). In this work, when analysing media texts, as well as texts created in the course of the research (interviews, statements), the author remains aware of intertextuality and multi-layered, multi-component text containing elements of previously existing texts. According to Fairclough (1992), intertextuality is reflected in both the influence of a story on a text and the influence of a text on a story. Although it is impossible to identify all possible allusions, borrowings, and primary sources, it is important to keep in mind their potential presence, as well as the context. Thus, discourses

reflect the relationship between social groups and structures in the process of social struggle (Fairclough, 1995, p. 56).

Fairclough (1992) understands ideology as meaningful constructs that contribute to the creation, reproduction, and development of power relations (p. 87). In other words, instead of a Marxist abstract value system that cements people and social order connections, ideology becomes a part of discursive practice. Additionally, people are perceived as active subjects who participate in creating and recreating the meanings of texts in the process of interpretation, acting creatively whether they are aware of it or not. At the same time, the presence of power and ideological consequences of discursive practice allows M.W. Jørgensen and L.J. Phillips (2002) to see political origins in all forms of social interactions; therefore, they define any research as political. However, the idea of the politicisation of reality and the presence of political traces in any subject was already expressed by R. Barth (1989, p. 112). Politics becomes a discursive phenomenon, and social organisation becomes the result of political processes that are set by discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Taking everything into account, for this research, the ideas and research of van Dijk (1989, 2008, 2011) are very important – especially those which, in addition to solving theoretical problems, focus on the analysis of biases (primarily ethnic) and media language (van Dijk, 1989a). His attention to the realisation of ideologically biased opinions through language is an example of studying social norms and models through discourse analysis.

It is a contextually situated phenomenon which van Dijk (2011) calls one of the most important features of discourse. Thus, learning about context is critical to learning how it is produced, comprehended, and reproduced. J. P. Gee (2004) also writes about this contextual dependence of discourse, he also speaks of discourse as an ‘on site’ language that forms certain social activities and identities. This context conditioning is key to understanding certain concepts and notions, that is why in this thesis particular attention is paid to the analysis of context.

Like other CDA representatives, van Dijk (2008) also focuses on the study of inequality and dominance in discourses, as well as on power as a social phenomenon. Dominance is understood to mean a form of abuse of social power that provokes inequality in access to public discourse and communication. The book *Discourse and Power* (van Dijk, 2008) examines the theory of the relationship between discourse, society and cognition, it also provides empirical research on racism. The author insists that critical study of discourses involves: 1) focusing on social and political issues; 2) interdisciplinary critical discourse analysis; 3) discursive structures should be explained in terms of social interaction and social structure; 4) identifying discursive ways of implementing, legitimising, reproducing and criticising power relations in society (van Dijk, 2008).

Following van Dijk, the author of the research is inclined to believe that the research of news materials as one of the most common types of written discourse is an important task of the CDA. Van Dijk (2008) notes that white journalists write primarily about members of their own group, while members of an ethnic minority do not have strong institutions and much influence, which contributes to the development of stereotypes and prejudices. Is it possible to draw a parallel with the age group of older people? It is obvious that most journalists (as employed people) are not older people. Does this mean that journalistic discourse about older people will contain stereotypes and prejudices about this age group? After all, according to van Dijk's (2008) reasoning, older people as a social group are also excluded from public communication and are portrayed in a negative light. That is why it is important to pay attention to the peculiarities of vocabulary, syntax, rhetorical devices, and narratives.

Within this framework, van Dijk (2008) suggests using such research methods as grammatical analysis, rhetorical analysis, stylistic analysis, pragmatic analysis of speech and communication acts, conversational analysis, semiotic analysis, as well as ethnographic methods and experiments.

Unfortunately, today there is no single approach of discursive analysis (Wetherell, 1998) and no universal theory that systematises all perspectives to use them together in one research. Some of them focus on practice (Discursive psychology) and others — on resources (Foucauldian DA); therefore, combining them could be useful. Indeed, discourse analysis requires the researcher to have a clear understanding of the theoretical and methodological positions that they follow and those that they reject, as well as a firm position, responsibility and willingness to defend and explain their beliefs.

According to R. Wodak and M. Meyer (2009), CDA studies differ in that they advocate for certain social groups that face discrimination, whatever feature it may target (race, gender, class, religion, or any other, such as age). However, the author believes that this position may not be initially stated when analysing discourses, since a researcher cannot be sure before conducting an analysis that discriminatory discourses take place and especially dominate a particular society. Pre-existing confidence or the presence of a tested hypothesis could be justified in a quantitative research of discourse, while this research initially assumed the possibility of identifying discriminatory or stereotyping social attitudes; however, the author was open to different conclusions that followed the analysis of discourses. That is why the author would like to avoid making a clear distinction between descriptive and critical discourse studies (as does Gee, 2004), and note that in one research at different stages (during different cycles), both of these types may occur. That is, starting

research with attempts to analyse the discourse for the sake of understanding it, a researcher may begin to want to act upon it and understand the need to do so.

It is important to note that a researcher perceives certain practices or norms as discriminatory based on the values and perceptions of a particular time and a particular scientific community that formulated the researcher's discourse. That is, in this particular case, a researcher represents and takes into account both the discourses that are the subject of their research (and whose part they themselves are), and external discourses, especially scientific discourse.

While back in the 1970s, S. de Beauvoir (2011) wrote about the 'conspiracy of silence' in regard to old age (p. 5), today the list of scientific and popular literature on this topic is so extensive that we can talk about the popularity of old age problematics and such scientific disciplines as gerontology, geriatrics, and the psychology of old age and ageing. The improvement in the financial situation of older people from developed countries has also contributed to this change. This social group has become an important segment of the service market and a consumer of various goods. However, not only economists and demographers, but also politicians take into account both demographic forecasts and the sentiments of older people.

Problems of old age interpretation can be considered by different disciplines, but attention to social aspects has been provoked by the development of a separate field of research – social gerontology. During each of the development periods of old age theories (traditional/pre-modern/pre-sociological, modern and post-modern), researchers offered different approaches to the definition of this phenomenon. Modern researchers analyse the influence of social and socio-cultural conditions on the perception of old age and on the ageing process. Such research can focus on suggesting optimal scenarios for ageing and creating theories of the way older people function in society.

The concept of 'active ageing' is used by many official organisations and policy-makers, for whom active and socially effective ageing is one of the solutions to global and local economic problems. Global demographic problems and trends influence the popularisation of the active ageing model, which entails a potential reduction in government spending on social support for older people. However, despite a large number of proponents among policy-makers and the support of theorists, the concepts of active ageing are criticised and problematised. Post-industrial societies offer older people a wide range of significant social roles and scenarios for living in old age outside of normative models (for example, a grandparent, a citizen, a worker, a consumer, an owner, a teacher, and a student).

This chapter outlines a number of theoretical approaches to the study of the problems of the emergence, development and transformation of social policies, while

acknowledging that each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, each of them was useful for creating a theoretical model of this empirical research that is presented in the next section. The theories of the mentioned researchers and theorists of discourse analysis directly influenced the choice of specific methods for this study and the following analysis of a wide range of meanings of 'old age' and 'active ageing' within Belarusian discourses.

CHAPTER 2. Research methodology and design

The first section of the research presented contemporary sociological and interdisciplinary theories of old age and ageing. It also outlined approaches to understanding how the definition of old age and the concept of 'active ageing' that has been popularised in modern discourses of old age affect social policies, while at the same time being determined by socio-political, economic and cultural processes. These theoretical investigations confirm the importance of studies focusing on the analysis of the content of 'old age', as well as the concept of 'active ageing' that defines and reformulates the very concept of old age.

In addition to confirming the relevance and significance, such a general presentation of the theoretical framework is necessary to create a specific methodological model of empirical analysis, which will take into account the peculiarities of local discourses and the specific context of their existence. This section will provide detailed information on the methodological approaches that are relevant for this research, taking into account its purpose and specific objectives. The motivation for choosing tools for data collection and analysis will also be explained, with reflection on the process of recruiting participants and conducting interviews. Attention will also be paid to possible limitations imposed on the research by imperfections in research tools, and reflections on ethical issues will be outlined.

2.1. Methodological basis and the structure of the study

This work has been created by taking into account that the existence of an adequate description of reality is debatable and that there is criticism of the superiority of scientific knowledge. The author is aware that the reality studied by scientists is, to a certain extent, conditioned by both the theoretical paradigm and their tools; however, in the absence of a universal theoretical paradigm and universal tools, the author relies on a balanced choice founded in the research aim.

The research was built within the constructivist paradigm, which does not assume the existence of a single truth or a single social reality, but which asserts that knowledge and reality are the mutual creation of the researcher and subject. In other words, the social world and knowledge are bound by time and culture (Friedler, 2011, p. 26). The aim of this type of research is to interpret social realities, constructed and inhabited by society (Hall, 2019, p. 59).

This research was developed within the framework of moderate constructionism (as in Fairclough), which allows for the social to be conditioned by both discursive and non-discursive practices (Morina, 2015, p. 136). It consists of following an aim

and repeatedly returning to previous levels of analysis in order to cover as many semantic levels and intertextual connections as possible. As D. DeVaus (2001) argued: 'The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible' (p. 9). However, during the research process, the initially selected design was constantly verified, cyclically returning to the research design stage and receiving improvements.

Since the category of old age is not strictly biological, it is directly dependent on the meanings attached to this concept by society. On the other hand, demographic, economic, political and other factors influence the perception of these complex socio-cultural concepts. The role of ideas in the emergence and development of social institutions and social policies has been studied by many researchers (Hall, 1993; Beland & Hacker, 2004; Beland, 2005; Beland & Cox, 2011; Jacobs, 2009; Blyth, 2011). J.A. Hall (1993) suggests the notion of a policy paradigm as 'a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing' (p. 279). It is the ideas (born within a community or borrowed) that are the basis for creating institutional structures in general, as well as for determining the directions for their development. These are the ideas that inspire social actors who promote and implement specific solutions and institutionalise changes that will in turn change the collective understanding of the welfare state (Beland & Cox, 2011).

At the same time, other aspects of socio-political reality (as institutions or agency) are named as significant and meaningful by other theories (Path Dependency and Increasing Return: Pierson, 2001; Myles & Pierson, 2001; Power Resources Theory: Myles & Pierson, 2001; The Political Economy of Ageing: Estes, 1979; Phillipson, 1998; Guillemard, 1980; Myles, 1984; Walker, 1978, 1981; The Theory of Power Resources: Korpi, 2006; Pierson & Castles eds.; Veto Player Theory: Tsebelis, 1995, 2000, 2002; Immergut, 1998; and Generalisations of Welfare Regimes Theory: Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996, 1999; Fenger, 2007; Deacon, 2000; Aidukaite, 2009). All the theories mentioned above are based on a specific aspect of socio-political reality, which is emphasised in the analysis of changes in social policies. In addition to their obvious advantages, each theory has its own weaknesses that limit its application in specific contexts (Beland, 2005, p. 4; Beland & Hacker, 2004, p. 42). Beland (2005) notes that historical institutional analysis ignores the political ideas that transform the content of politics and, in turn, institutions. In other words, a theory is needed to explain the relationship between institutions, ideas, and the policy-making process (Beland, 2005, p. 6).

It is the search for a universal approach that has attracted attention to the research of discourse and its impact on the processes of policy making and policy adjustment.

The research focuses not only on institutions but also on relations between social actors and ideas that are inextricably linked to the context. Thus, a theory known either as the new, fourth institutionalism, or discursive institutionalism has emerged (Schmidt, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010; Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004). This conceptual approach summarises the achievements of previous theories, complementing the research of institutions with an analysis of discourse as the vehicle of ideas (Schmidt, 2008, p. 309).

This approach involves the use of discourse analysis to identify the ways in which ideas are transmitted from subject to subject in the development of social policies in a specific institutional context. Formal and informal rules, laws, social and political norms that are the context for the emergence and manifestation of ideas are taken into account (Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004, p. 197; Schmidt, 2010, p. 1). For the current Belarusian socio-political situation, the idea of studying the political discourse used by the government to confirm its legitimacy and reach consensus in the process of transforming social policies is relevant. It is discursive institutionalism that focuses on the previously neglected 'role of ideas in constitutional political action, the power of persuasion in political debate, the centrality of deliberation for democratic legitimation, the construction and reconstruction of political interests and values, and the dynamics of change in history and culture' (Schmidt, 2008, p. 305). Thus, the framework of the analysis includes both linguistic social practices and non-linguistic ones (economic, social, political, and cultural factors). This approach overcomes the limitations of other theoretical approaches by expanding the coverage of various aspects that potentially affect the emergence, development, and transformation of social policies.

Despite the fact that the object of this research is the modern Belarusian discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing', the focus of the research is not only on ideas and interpretations, but, following the representatives of discursive institutionalism, the object is studied together with the context of its existence (the context in this case is not limited to institutions, but is considered a combination of institutional structure and actors operating in it). Furthermore, since discourse is interdependent with context, empirical research includes two interpenetrating layers (or focuses) of analysis: context analysis (political, economic, demographic, social, and cultural) and discourse analysis (media discourses, and the analysis of the discourse of intentionally provoked actors).

These multiple layers require different methodological tools (methods) that work together to achieve the main aim of the research. Despite the fact that the work uses the elements of quantitative analysis in the sections that study media discourses, the main aim of the work was not to obtain general patterns or formulate universal or the most common meanings. Even the conclusions made on the basis of quantitative

research do not serve as a complete generalisation, but serve to determine the significant semantic fields that are characteristic of Belarusian discourses and that still need to be investigated. Following S. Larsson (2009), the emphasis was not on deriving laws but rules and similarities.

Critical discourse analysis is primarily intended to identify unfair conditions or inequality in society (van Dijk, 2008). The research, initially aimed only at a descriptive analysis of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian discourses, was an attempt to identify the existing problem in society and its formulation in order to create an opportunity (space) to take the next steps. People's perceptions may not correspond to the real state of affairs, and ideological attitudes may distort reality instead of its adequate representation, so careful analysis is necessary to identify problems that people are not aware of. The results themselves (the study showed that older people are discriminated against in society) make the analysis critical of the studied manifestations of inequality and injustice in Belarusian discourses. However, conclusions are drawn not about the facts of Belarusian reality but about the discourse of Belarusian reality that reflects and creates it (according to the understanding of generalisation in qualitative research in Mayring, 2007).

The aim of this research is to identify inconsistencies and contradictions in the definition of 'old age' and 'active ageing' by social actors in modern (2017-2019) Belarusian discourse as a reflection of existing social problems and potential issues in the implementation and reform of social policies regarding old age and older people in Belarus; therefore, the structuring theoretical approach of the work is Discursive Institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008, 2010), adapted to the specific context and objectives of the research. The created model of analysis involves Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combined with a descriptive institutional context analysis. A quantitative approach provides a reliable, objective, result-oriented generalised analysis of discourse, while a qualitative approach assumes subjectivity of results, validity, and a wide range of descriptive characteristics (Lazaraton, 2002, Quantitative and qualitative approaches to discourse analysis).

The very dialectical interdependence of dialectical practices with other social practices requires the researcher (according to Fairclough) to start with non-linguistic social practices and study the social area of interest, the context. Thus, discursive analysis is based on the analysis of the structures where a linguistic discourse is formed. Through the exploration of discursive practices, a researcher also analyses changes in a social and cultural dimension.

Research design is mainly a qualitative case study (including quantitative content analysis of media discourses conducted to identify main thematic categories that require elucidation when creating intentionally provoked discourses) based on the

broad Belarusian context and contemporary discourses from 1.1.2017 to 1.8.2019. It includes three main stages of empirical research:

- 2.1.1. Analysis of Belarusian institutional, economical, political, and sociocultural context;
- 2.1.2. Analysis of media documents;
- 2.1.3. Analysis of induced/intentionally provoked discourses;
 - 2.1.3.1. Implementation and analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews;
 - 2.1.3.2. Implementation and analysis of online survey;
 - 2.1.3.3. Analysis of provoked focus discussion.

Thus, this research includes several stages of data collection and analysis, each of these stages has its own particular characteristics and is conditioned by the previous stage, and the entire research process involves a cyclical return to the previous stages, as well as their verification and constant refinement. It leads to analysis of contradictions and discrepancies of the interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the discourses in the specific Belarusian context that helps to uncover socio-political issues acute for contemporary Belarus.

For example, context analysis showed: the need for a critical approach to the available statistical data; the high value of media space for ideological influence; the ideological bias of official media platforms; the high popularity of independent media; the relevance of the ageing population problem and the actualisation of the 'active ageing' problem by the state. In turn, these factors determined the choice of media sources for collecting texts for analysis, as well as their division into two categories: official discourse and independent media discourse. It was decided to analyse the revealed interpretations of 'old age' and the concept of 'active ageing' broadcast to the audience in terms of their content, as well as their variability.

For clarity, these stages of research are presented in the diagram in their order and interconnection; numbers indicate the stages:

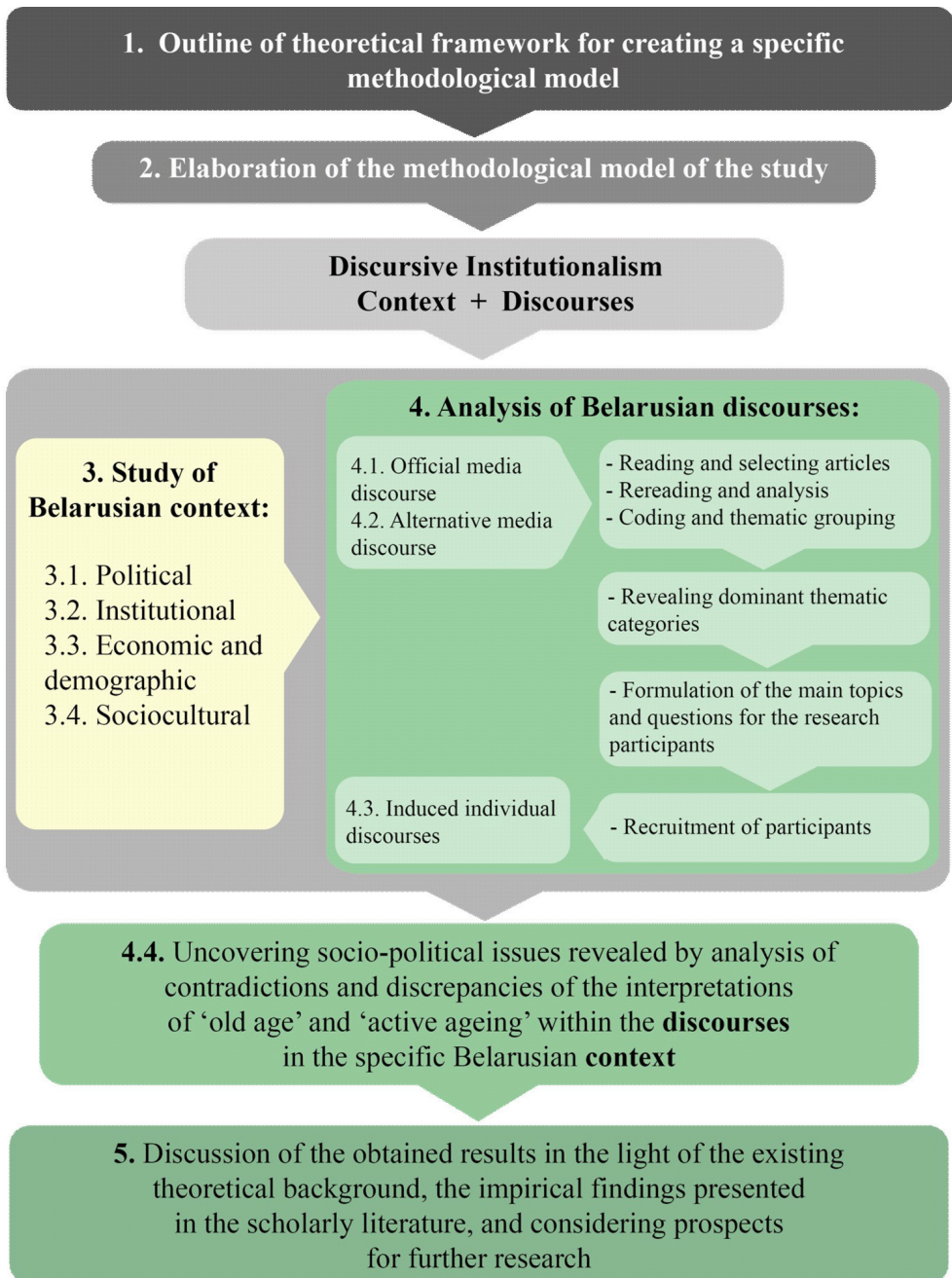


Figure 4. Research design.

Source: the author

Media discourses are an important part of the modern political and social space, so the strategies for delivering the information that is important for the state and society are created and studied (Dudo & Kahlor, 2016, p. 107). Scientists wrote about the vital importance of strategic communications for politics and state security at the beginning of the 20th century, but the modern media potential for transmitting information and meanings, as well as influencing public opinion in the modern digitalised world, has increased exponentially (Mayhew, 1997; Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Bennet & Entman, 2001; Graber & Dunaway, 2017).

Researchers agree that the media, even when presenting real facts, is not limited to informing the audience. Each news programme is made up of facts selected for broadcast and presented to the audience in a certain way. The variability of wording, the appearance of certain emphases, the presentation order of different materials, and the characteristics of stories broadcast significantly affect opinions and form perceptions. Moreover, even belief in this influence on public opinion can also affect media and society: A.C. Gunter and J.D. Storey (2003) argue that there is an impact of 'the influence of presumed influence' on social and political processes in modern society.

Thus, researchers come to understand media as a tool of 'soft power' in the hands of a state actor, which exerts additional (non-violent) influence on other social actors (Nye, 1990). However, not only state actors but also other participants in social and political interaction can use the media as 'soft power' to make certain ideas and concepts more attractive, to change public opinion and persuade opponents (Roselle, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2014).

Modern informational media space is a complex multi-aspect phenomenon that allows the processes of interaction between social structures and agents to be accelerated, creating and broadcasting discourses at a qualitatively new level. Mass communication offers new opportunities for creating, structuring, and sharing ideas and experiences, as well as for transforming reality through discourses.

Since texts are, on the one hand, the result of discursive practice and, on the other hand, its tool, they will be the object of analysis. Following E. Kozhemyakin (2010), the author would like to emphasise that this research is not so much interested in thematic, structural and lexical choices, but in their social (socio-cultural and political) conditionality (p. 16). It is important to understand the social, cultural, and other consequences of this discursive practice.

The quantitative characteristics (the intensity of presence in discourses) of thematic categories related to the concept of 'old age' determined the choice of topics for discussion with the participants of in-depth interviews, online surveys, and focus discussions. The fourth stage of the research contained a semantic analysis of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in their variability and taking into

account the conditions offered to society (context) and discourses (generated by the state and independent media). The intensity of the theme of the relationship between older people and the state, the problematic nature of the pension system and the retirement age influenced the formulation of the main question for the focus debates. The two most prominent thematic categories in media discourses ('old age' and 'active ageing') were re-interpreted by the participants of online and offline research, who became the creators of intentionally provoked discourse. It is this discourse that helps to complete the picture of the meanings and interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' within Belarusian pension reform discourses.

Since discourse is 'a multidimensional social phenomenon' (van Dijk, 2009, p. 67), approaches to its research depend primarily on the aim set for a researcher. In this particular case, the objective was not only to analyse 'spontaneous discourses' that arose and exist without the intervention of the researcher, but also to initiate the emergence of a discourse that represents the reflections of Belarusian society representatives on the given topics. Through induced discourse, the researcher intended to get a variety of ways to understand and interpret the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' by the general public. It is the general public that is the potential audience of the mass media analysed in the work; however, it is fundamentally important to note that the research does not aim to assess or track the influence of media on the views and interpretations shared in society (discourses analysis is not able to show it). However, considering discourse as created by social reality and simultaneously creating it, the discourse of perception becomes a way to identify opinions and interpretations of concepts and phenomena, as well as the form of the announcement of their existence and form of their communication to society itself.

It is extremely important to use different methods to reveal the variability of understanding of analysed concepts in non-dominant discourses, which is why, at the same time, there were several strategies for finding research participants and selecting research methods for creating induced discourse.

For clarity, all analysis methods used in the work and their implementations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The methods of analysis used in the work and their application.

Object of investigation		Type of the data	Methods	
Field of discourses	Discourses induced by author	Texts of 27 interviews, 42 online surveys, Transcript of the youth debates	Qualitative discourse analysis	
	Media Discourses	Independent media	Texts of articles from 1) <i>Argumenty i Fakty/ AiF</i> , 2) <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda/KP</i> , 3) Onliner.by, 4) TUT.BY published during the period from 1.1.2017 to 1.8.2019 (a total of 502 texts)	Quantitative content analysis; Qualitative discourse analysis
		Official media	Texts of articles from 1) BELTA, 2) <i>SB. Belarus Segodnya</i> published during the period from 1.1.2017 to 1.8.2019 (a total of 249 texts)	Quantitative content analysis; Qualitative discourse analysis
Context		1. The results of the research 2. Statistical data 3. Legal acts	Descriptive institutional analysis	

Source: the author

The Table highlights two main research focuses (context and the field of discourses), while separately presenting materials and methods for studying media discourses that objectively exist without the researcher’s intervention, as well as discourses induced by the author that arose due to the researcher’s intention and in the process of her interaction with research participants. Each of the phenomena of social reality (discourses as a linguistically expressed social reality and context as a non-linguistic social reality of discourse existence) requires specific analysis methods; a detailed description of the methods of data collection and analysis used at each stage of the research will be offered below.

2.1.1. The stage of studying the Belarusian context

Exploring the development of social policies, V.A. Schmidt (2008) concludes that it is necessary to rethink the theoretical framework and create an approach called Discursive Institutionalism (p. 304). This conceptual approach seems to be the most relevant to the main aim of the research, since it combines the exploration of the institutional context with discourse analysis, which is the vehicle of ideas (Schmidt, 2008, p. 309).

Insisting on the transformative power of discourse, Schmidt (2008) draws attention to its interdependence with context, which creates ‘a causal influence in political reality and, thereby, engenders institutional change (or continuously)’ (p. 306). In this thesis, special attention is paid to the exploration of the Belarusian context, whose specifics influence the analysed discourses. Taking into account the importance that discursive institutionalism gives to the study of institutional context, but also trying not to be limited to institutions (perceiving context as a combination of institutional structures with its actors), the objective of the research was to create a model of empirical research that would rely on existing theoretical advances, while taking into account the aim of the research, its subject, and the specifics of the Belarusian context.

It is important that the focus is placed on the context of pension reform in the country, so it is possible to rely on research that identifies the factors that influence social policies and their changes (see Subsection 1.3.). A typology of factors that affect evidence based social policies is proposed by Davies (2004). In addition to the evidence, which can be expressed in different forms and produced by different types of research, he lists other factors that affect policy making and policy implementation. First of all, Davies (2004) mentions: experience, expertise, and the judgment of decision makers; followed by resources (economic and demographic factor); values (the author classifies this group of factors as political and ideological); customs and traditions (traditional and cultural factors); lobbyists, pressure groups and consultants (this group of factors combines both an institutionally fixed structure and the alignment of political forces, as well as media); and finally, pragmatics and contingencies (factors determined by legislation and socio-political institutions).

Trying to combine this classification of factors with the theories of the emergence and changes of social policies, which were presented in Subsection 1.3., one can ascertain five main groups of determinants that define the development of social policies: political, economical, cultural, social factors and contemporary discourse. In each of the groups of factors, it is possible to distinguish both institutions and existing or potential actors; however, the media, classified as factors of modern discourses, being both a social institution and an actor, can also be an instrument

of political, economic, or social actors. Each of the groups of factors represents a significant part of the research context, and one of them contains modern discourses as an influence factor, which are the central object of attention in this research and are analysed taking into account the analysis of the other four groups of factors presented in the work as a context. In other words, the analysed discourses are also a part of the Belarusian socio-political context and they reflect its features, being in a state of constant interaction and reciprocal influence.

Using the division of factors that affect socio-political processes, one can clearly and graphically imagine their interaction as research focuses (see Figure 5):

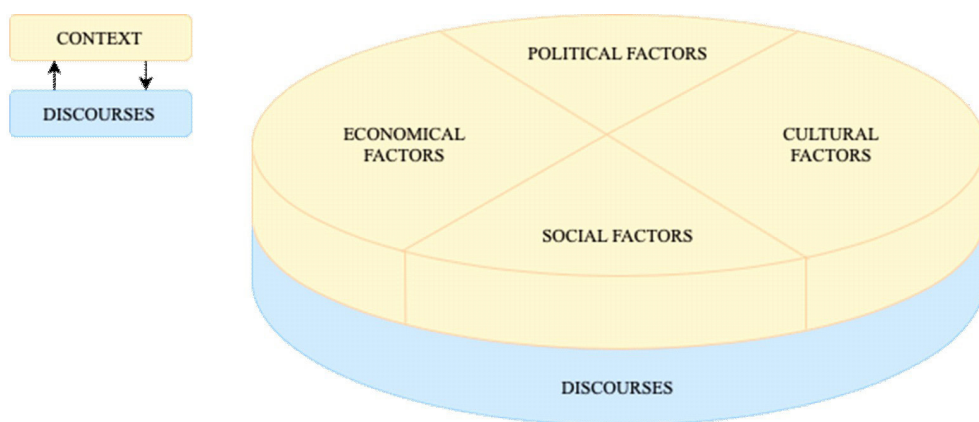


Figure 5. Research focuses and their interconnection.

Source: the author

These four groups of factors are presented in Section 3. The Belarusian context coincides with the definition of four types of social institutions (political, economic, cultural, and kinship institutions, see Oxford Reference, n. d.) accepted in the sociological tradition, as well as with traditional for post-Soviet research division into spheres of public life (political, social, economic, and spiritual) (see Barulin, 1982, 2002). In contrast to the followers of historical materialism, this work does not single out any of the spheres of social life as the main one, and none of the groups of factors is considered as primary or determining others.

It should also be noted that given the theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter 1.3, in particular, the significance of the historical path and the sequence in the development of social policies, the context studied in this work is not limited to the time frame of the discourses studied (2017-2019).

The types of materials used: a) primary statistical data from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus; b) materials and documents published on the official pages of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the documents published on the website of the Government of the Republic of Belarus, on the National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus, Official Website of the Republic of Belarus, Belarusian Telegraph Agency BELTA; c) the reports and analytical notes of governmental and independent research centers and organisations as well as international ones (such as World Bank, Human Rights Watch, Belarusian Association of Journalists, *etc.*); d) the individual research conducted by sociologists, economists, demographers, historians, political scientists and cultural researchers.

The method used in all socio-humanitarian disciplines for collecting and analysing this type of data is the descriptive method. The initial procedure was to formulate the main subject of the description — *i.e.* to mark significant parameters and characteristics of Belarusian social reality that are the focus of observation. Then the data was systematised and categorised according to their characteristics, as well as the relationship between them and subject-defined qualities. The author identified the following parameters and characteristics that reveal the essential features of the Belarusian context and determine its uniqueness: historical and political (the dynamics of political development and the current political regime); economic and demographic (the demographic profile of the population, economic indicators, current challenges and forecasts of researchers); and socio-cultural (development of social institutions and cultural context).

This descriptive analysis of the context does not give definite true results, since the researcher relies on limited data, and, as a result, there is a risk of subjective biases in the perception and interpretation of the analysed objects. In addition, the same data can be interpreted differently by different researchers, but the author tried to overcome this objective limitation using as many different data sources as possible: available statistical databases, qualitative and quantitative research conducted by scientists in different fields, and analytical reports and forecasts. Despite criticism of the descriptive method by specialists outside of Human Sciences, observation, description, and various categorisation of objects or phenomena provide an invaluable basis for analysing a given context. It is descriptive research that becomes a precursor to new research, providing a brief overview of research context and valuable markers as to which characteristics need to be studied and which phenomena to pay attention to.

2.1.2. The analysis of the media discourse stage

To analyse the meanings broadcast by Belarusian media outlets regarding the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing', a data corpus was formed, which was selected according to clear criteria. On the one hand, to study the field of official discourses, the author used the texts of state media channels. Following Foucault (1991), official discourse is seen as defining the priorities of a country's leaders and defined by them, but also as reflecting the values and attitudes shared by a certain part of society. On the other hand, the author analysed the texts of alternative media channels with the widest audience coverage and not associated with state authorities.

The Information and Analytical Centre of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Belarus published the results of the research initiated by Alexander Lukashenka (UDF, 2019). According to its conclusions, the popularity of television is steadily falling, and the role of the Internet is increasing; while in 2010, 24.2% of respondents received the information they required about life in Belarus and abroad via the Internet, while by 2018 this share had increased to 60.4% (UDF, 2019). At the same time, in 2016 4% did not watch TV whatsoever, whereas in 2018 the share of this group had increased to as much as 14.7%, with another 15% reporting that they watched TV occasionally (UDF, 2019).

According to the rating of Internet resources, social networks were the most popular ones (Odnoklassniki, Vkontakte), followed by the information and entertainment portal TUT.BY (30.8% of respondents), with search engines completing the rating (Yandex.by, Google.by, Youtube.com). The most widely read print media in Belarus are *SB. Belarus Segodnya* (17.3%), *Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus* (16.8%), *Argumenty i Fakty in Belarus* (14.6%) (UDF, 2019).

According to the data published by *Nasha Niva* on December 6, 2018, the leading information sites in terms of visits are TUT.BY, Onliner.by, Pressball.by (sports news), kp.by (Belarusian *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper website), and nn.by (*Nasha Niva* newspaper website) (*Nasha Niva*, 2018, Visit ranking of Belarusian information websites).

The corpus of texts of the official Belarusian discourse included materials from the Belarusian Telegraph Agency BELTA and the Belarus Segodnya state publishing house from the period of January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019. Both were selected due to the biggest turnout in the country (official website of the Republic of Belarus, 2019). The Belarusian Telegraph Agency BELTA was given the first right to transmit official documents and messages to the media. The Belarus Segodnya state publishing house is the largest state multi-media holding in Belarus. In addition to the state radio station, it includes five largest state newspapers in the country: *SB. Belarus Segodnya*, *Narodnaya Gazeta*, *Republic*, *Selskaya Gazeta* and *Banner of Youth*.

Within the framework of this research, an exact chronological framework for the search for media materials was set – it was the most appropriate to the aim of the research of ‘modern’ discourse and narrow enough for the most thorough the research data – from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019.

The author analysed 124 articles of the BELTA News Agency, while 122 articles of the Belarus Segodnya publishing house were analysed. The author searched for the following keywords (in Russian and Belarusian languages): *starost* (old age), *stariy/staraya* (old), *pozhiy/pozhiyaya* (older), *prestareliy/prestarelaya* (elderly), *pensioner/pensionerka* (pensioner), *starik/starukha* (old man/old woman), *dedushka/babushka* (grandfather/grandmother), *stareniye* (ageing), *dolgoletiyeye* (longevity), *aktivnoye dolgoletiyeye* (active longevity). Then, the texts were checked for compliance with the chronological framework and subject matter. The analysis excluded texts (mostly news from criminal chronicles) in which the keywords were used only to indicate the age group of participants in the described events and did not carry additional content. For example, initially, keyword search for the period from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019 on the website of the Belarus Segodnya publishing house found 618 articles containing the words *starost* (old age) (and words with the same root or words in different grammatical cases), with the word group *aktivnoye dolgoletiyeye* (active longevity) – 104 articles, with the word *pozhiy* (older) and its forms (singular and plural, in different genders and cases) – 2391 articles, *stariy/staraya* (old) – more than 3000, *pensioner/pensionerka* (pensioner) – 2289 articles, *starik* (old man) – 1024 articles, *starukha* (old woman) – 68 articles, *dedushka* (grandfather) – 1256 articles, *babushka* (grandmother) – 2634 articles, *dolgozhitel* (which loosely translates into English as ‘long-liver’, someone who has lived for a long time) – 148 articles, *prestareliy* (elderly) – 434 articles (a total of 13862 articles). Only 122 articles were selected for further research. Of the original 4504 articles found on the website of the Belarusian Telegraph Agency (BELTA) (including the word *starost* (old age) and its derivatives – 110 articles, *aktivnoye dolgoletiyeye* (active longevity) – 94 articles, *pozhiy/pozhiyaya* (older) – more than 1000 articles, *pensioner/pensionerka* (pensioner) – more than 1000 articles, *starik* (old man) – 170 articles, *starukha* (old woman) – 5 articles, *dedushka* (grandfather) – 237 articles, *babushka* (grandmother) – 568 articles, *dolgozhitel* (‘long-liver’) – 41 articles, *prestareliy* (elderly) – 279 articles, *stariy* (old) – more than 1000), 124 articles were selected for further research (see Table 2).

Table 2. The selection of state media materials by keywords.

Source of data		<i>Belarus Segodnya</i> publishing house	BELTA
The number of articles found by the keywords	<i>starost*</i> (old age)	618	110
	<i>aktivn* dolgolet*</i> (active longevity)	104	94
	<i>pozhil*</i> (older)	2391	min.1000 ²
	<i>pensioner*</i> (pensioner)	2289	min.1000
	<i>starik*</i> (old man)	1024	170
	<i>starukh*</i> (old woman)	68	5
	<i>ded*/dedushk*</i> (grandpa/grandfather)	1256	237
	<i>babushk*</i> (grandmother)	2634	568
	<i>dolgozhit*</i> (long-liver)	148	41
	<i>prestarel*</i> (elderly)	434	279
	<i>star*</i> (old)	min.3000	min.1000
Found in total		13862	4504
Selected		122	124

Source: the author.

Non-state media materials were selected and analysed similarly. Alternative, non-state media are always popular among Belarusian population, especially since access to the Internet provides a field of possibilities for the development of independent Internet-media that already creates serious competition for the governmental ones (Aleksandrov, 2013, p. 2). The choice of texts for analysis in this corpus is also determined by the search for materials on the most influential independent media channels for the period from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019.

Thus, not being able to analyse texts on social networks (where information is distributed among closed subscriber groups or friends), the following resources were selected to search for materials related to the topic of 'old age' and 'active ageing': an information and entertainment portal TUT.BY, Onliner.by, of the

² Search engines limit keyword searches to a maximum of 1,000 (BELTA) and 3,000 publications ("Belarus Segodnya" publishing house).

Belarusian *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper website, and the Belarusian *Argumenty I Fakty* newspaper website. The *Nasha Niva* newspaper website does not have a clear searching system for materials and is among the most visited websites only according to their own statistics. The newspaper *Pressball* was not taken into account because of its narrow sports focus.

The methodological tools of this stage of work include both qualitative analysis and quantitative content analysis of materials from the publications of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (113 articles), *Argumenty I Fakty* (62 articles), TUT.BY (286 articles), Onliner.by (41 articles) – a total of 502 articles. In other newspapers at the top of the popularity ratings in 2017 and 2018 (*Iz ruk v ruki, Pressball* and *Antenna - UDF*, 2019), no material was found that met the search and selection criteria (see Table 3).

Table 3. The selection of non-state media materials by keywords.

Source of data		<i>Komsomol- skaya pravda</i>	<i>Argumenty i Fakty</i>	TUT. BY	Onliner.by
The number of articles found by the key-words	<i>starost*</i> (old age)	176	149	369	118
	<i>aktion* dolgolet*</i> (active longevity)	56	44	6	2
	<i>pozhil*</i> (older)	1157	954	2246	1638
	<i>pensioner*</i> (pensioner)	3405	1239	2561	1330
	<i>starik*</i> (old man)	286	237	421	294
	<i>starukh*</i> (old woman)	79	15	33	16
	<i>ded*/dedushk*</i> (grandpa/grandfather)	1106	662	927	833
	<i>babushk*</i> (grandmother)	2351	739	1255	859
	<i>dolgozhit*</i> (long-liver)	126	56	90	23
	<i>prestarel*</i> (elderly)	224	69	281	56
<i>star*</i> (old)	5925	5902	8381	4980	
Found in total		14891	10066	15570	10149
Selected		113	62	286	41

Source: the author.

The author searched for the following keywords: *starost* (old age), *stariy/staraya* (old), *pozhiloy/pozhilaya* (older), *prestareliy/prestarelaya* (elderly), *pensioner/pensionerka* (pensioner), *starik/starukha* (old man/old woman), *dedushka/babushka* (grandfather/

grandmother), *stareniye* (ageing), *dolgoletiyе* (longevity), *aktivnoye dolgoletiyе* (active longevity). Once the keywords had been identified, each text was checked for compliance with the chronological framework and subject matter. In cases where the keywords were used solely as an indication of the age group of participants in the described events, *e.g.* in chronicles outlining crimes, such texts were from the research.

The representativeness of media materials sample was determined by clear search parameters, as well as the selection of the most influential resources with the widest coverage and a specific clearly defined period. The first stage of the search was based on the following keywords: 'old age', 'old', 'elderly', 'older', 'pensioner', 'old man/old woman', 'grandfather/grandmother', 'ageing', 'longevity', 'active ageing' (in Russian and Belarusian).

As above, the texts were carefully read to identify information related to the subject of the research. Texts where the keywords simply denoted the age group of those involved in the events described rather than containing any additional meanings (mainly news stories from criminal chronicles) were omitted from the analysis.

Van Dijk (2009) insists that discourse analysis is not a method, it is a movement – a general methodological approach, but a researcher can use any kind of method that is relevant for the research, depending on context and the main goal. Van Dijk believes that it is necessary to combine the tools of context analysis and verbal discourse proper.

As noted above, media texts create a certain vision of reality, and the picture they create depends on the intentions of the author (editor). Following K. Burke (1969), one can say that 'wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning', there is 'persuasion' (p. 172-173). This is why rhetorical analysis is considered appropriate for this part of the study.

In this research, an important aspect of the analysis is to identify the theses for audience persuasion and arguments used by the media to create certain images and messages in discourses. Metaphors, metonymies, analogies, and other tropes are common vehicles for media discourses, so the researcher pays attention to their use when analysing texts. Emotional, ethical, and logical appeals to the audience as attempts to earn the approval or consent of the audience are considered primarily from the point of view of their intended (anticipated, expected) impact on social reality; the linguistic component in this analysis is secondary.

The role of ideology in mass communication is especially important in times of crisis, in the period of implementation of reforms and social policy development. The conviction of society is served by ideas and meanings built in a special way that convey a certain political goal, popularise a certain scenario of the development, and

form an attitude towards events and established norms. Since this work in its analysis focuses primarily on the connections of discourses with social norms and issues, with development of social policies towards 'old age', the attribution of ideologies in which the concept of 'old age' and 'ageing' can be interpreted is based on the correspondence of the transmitted rhetorical theses (meanings) with ideological rhetoric of various directions: for example, social liberalism is characterised by its reliance on a market economy and expansion of civil and political rights, what is more, the freedom of the individual harmonises with the common good (De Ruggiero, 1959, p. 155; Bell, 2014). The ideology of neoliberalism is identified with re-tasking the role of the state and increase of individual responsibility (Springer, Kean, & MacLeavy, 2016). Following Vincent (2006), we refer to the manifestations of traditional conservatism theses that emphasise transcendent and traditional moral order, natural laws, authority, and customs, even against practical reason (Andrew, 2009, p. 63).

Under traditional ideology of 'old age' and 'ageing' in this research is understood a set of conventional notions that implements the interpretations of old age, characteristic for the Belarusians of previous generations and reflected in classical literature, folklore, 'mentality' (see Subsection 3.4.). Taking into account the historical path of the country, it should be noted that for some part of Belarusian society, traditional ideology (with the accentuation of customs and authorities) in the local context could be perceived close to the soviet communist ideology, as it represents their habitual norms and ideas. The author's understanding of soviet ideology would be based on the idea of the universal public monopoly of the state that plays a central role in coordinating economic and social policy development.

Following van Dijk (1985), the author focused on the headings of publications, as well as on the overall structural organisation of the text, which plays 'a key role in the definition of what is at stake, as well as in the overall interpretation of an issue' (Carvalho, 2000, p. 21). It was important not only to identify the problem considered in the publication, but also the thesis, the idea that was presented to the audience along with a specific view on the reality constructed in the text. This kind of deconstruction was necessary to understand the role of rhetorical figures in discourse (Carvalho, 2000) and the role of discourse itself.

Language, through text, as the main way of transmitting ideas in the media, is full of signs, symbols, messages, and stories among which researchers distinguish strategic narratives created to formulate, influence, and shape expectations (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2014). Following M. Pollner & J. Stein (1996), the researcher, analysing narratives in this work, placed the focus not on realistic facts descriptions but personal reflections and interpretations of social reality.

The content analysis method seems to be the most optimal tool for achieving

the objectives set by the researcher regarding the analysis of media materials, since it allows semantic patterns in the selected text to be identified and described statistically. According to L. Newman (1998), content analysis can be used to solve three main types of problems: 1) problems involving the study of a sample of large volumes of text (for example, newspaper publications); 2) problems involving the study of objects 'at a distance'; and 3) problems involving the identification of hidden content (for example, stereotypes)(pp. 119-129). By encoding elements that have relative semantic autonomy, the researcher analyses semantic elements, and not only the general semantic message of a text. The quantitative analysis of such semantic elements allows the researcher to identify trends in a discourse. This research was dominated by a thematic (substantive) (Merton, 1968) analysis of texts that reveal the interpretation of the concepts under exploration in their interaction with the phenomena of social and political reality.

The content analysis procedure included 4 stages: 1) setting research tasks according to the aim and subject of the study and developing a system of categories — semantic constructs; 2) trial coding of typical texts to evaluate the categorical system; 3) coding of the text system (potentially there may be bias due to the subjectivity of choice and coding. The encoder's socio-cultural experience may distort the categories recorded; the encoder's fatigue and other factors may have a negative impact. In order to minimise potential errors, repeated verification control encoding of the entire text collection was performed after a time interval of 6 months); and 4) processing and analysis of the results obtained in accordance with quantitative data analysis algorithms (Merton, 1968).

The author fully reviewed the articles of all newspaper issues (the materials of electronic portals) published for the period from January 1, 2017 to August 1, 2019. The publications that corresponded to the research theme were selected and exported to MAXQDA12. The full-text database that had been created was then re-reviewed (each text was re-read). It is important to note that the encoded content was both visible (for example, identified through keywords) and latent, not implying the presence of these obvious indicators. Therefore, the latter categories were identified by careful secondary analysis of the materials. For example, the concept of 'old age' could be named indirectly, defined through the euphemisms like *zolataya pora* (golden age), *pozdniye gody* (late years), *vtoraya molodost* (second youth), etc. (for example: 'After saying goodbye to youth, we continue to talk with the representatives of golden age. In the centre, with the access to a well-deserved rest, a new life began for many of them. Exercises for your joints with yoga elements, classes in drawing, singing, choreography, needlework, intellectual development — we got carried away with what we dreamed of.' (BELTA, 06.01.2019) — this fragment does not contain a single keyword; nevertheless, it concerns old age and older people.

86 semantic units — codes — were identified in the form of text units that express social, political, economic, demographic, psychological, or cultural meanings (a total of 3852 coded segments). Aggregation of these codes based on logical relationships between units allowed us to create seven semantic categories. For example, the category 'Age and work' includes such codes as: *silver economy, motives for continuing labour activity, job search, older people as employable* (see Annexes X, XI, XII, XIII). Then, the author analysed the frequency of occurrence of the selected categories over the specified time period, which revealed the most popular ways of displaying 'old age' and 'active ageing' in official and alternative discourses.

Recognising the multiplicity of interpretation of texts and the fundamental impossibility of an unambiguous evaluation, it should be noted that the author of the research is also a part of the studied community (as a Belarusian) and, as a researcher and resident of another country outside of this discourse (resident in Lithuania), is also a part of the studied discourses both culturally and through the fact that in the process of interpreting texts, she recreates the discourse, reinterpreting and participating in the creation of the social reality depicted in the texts (Belanovsky, 2001, pp. 187-188). The author is aware that the social reality being studied is a reflection of the perception of certain social groups, and the researcher is engaged in deconstruction and identification of internal contradictions and hidden 'residual meanings' (unconscious stereotypes) (Ilyin, 2001, pp. 56-57). Although the author is also a member of the society under scrutiny, her interpretations, in addition to logical and scientific approaches, rely on implicit knowledge shared with other members of her society.

According to van Dijk (2008), the passive voice can provide cover for a person responsible for racist mental models, while metaphors can reinforce negative opinions, and euphemisms can soften a negative self-image. Thus, discursive structures can form discriminatory mental models and be used in racist practices. That is why, when working with texts, the researcher analysed: the hidden relations of power that the text presents; the subject of discourse (whose discourse is presented, who represents power); the ideal object or audience of the text; what is not said and ignored; the use of passive voice or reification; and the use of vivid expressive definitions (which can indicate strong discourse or strong views).

Each of the selected methods of collecting and analysing information has, in addition to the advantages described above, certain disadvantages that limit the researcher. Since there is no universal approach that systematises all theories, the aim and objectives of the research, as well as specific context conditions, influenced the choice of specific methodological approaches.

Among the main disadvantages of discourse analysis one can name: the lack of a universal theoretical and methodological analysis model tested by researchers,

labour intensity and the time consuming data collection and analysis process, the subjectivity of the researcher's position, and the danger of advocating the interests of one of the groups. These disadvantages can be compensated by a clear elaboration of research methodological model and the selection of methodological tools, methodological triangulation, and reflexivity methodology.

The ways to overcome these disadvantages are the following: to use mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), to set clear criteria for the search and selection of materials, to limit the time frame of the research, but above all, to remain reflexive; and this reflection is not limited to one individual, but requires constant awareness of the specifics of social cognition as a whole. Early on, the researcher understands the impossibility of applying the data and conclusions obtained in the process of qualitative research to the entire population, their limitations and the dependence of the obtained knowledge on the social context. It is also important to understand and take into account not only the discourses that are the object of this research, but also external discourses — in particular, scientific discourse.

Among the advantages of content analysis is its 'transparency': the procedures for selecting documents can be clearly formulated and reproduced, and they can also be applied to a wide range of different materials. However, the value of such analysis also depends on the representativeness of the documents selected for analysis, as well as on the encoding, which is subject to the subjectivity of the encoder.

Both qualitative and quantitative content analysis complement and enhance the reliability of each other's results. Although qualitative content analysis is viewed negatively by positivist-oriented researchers, even proponents of quantitative methods include qualitative content analysis to enhance the reliability of conclusions in quantitative research of texts. Back in 1910, at the first meeting of the German Sociological Association, M. Weber recommended using this particular method for analysing newspaper materials (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 13).

2.1.3. Creating and studying induced discourses

2.1.3.1. The interview method

Qualitative and quantitative content analysis of media discourses can give us an idea about the content of various understandings of concepts; it can show, using quantitative indicators, which of the interpretations are dominant, which are promoted, and which are rare. However, in order to understand what interpretations and definitions exist in wider society, additional qualitative research of induced discourses was conducted.

As there is no consensus on conducting a discourse analysis, the researcher primarily relied on the problematics and aim of her work, assessing the adequacy

of the use of certain research tools. Semi-structured interviews are one of the widely used methods in this type of research, as they provide an opportunity to get information directly from individuals. (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke eds., 2004, p. 203)

The research participants (27 in total) were recruited using 'snowball' strategies, as well as among the participants of an Internet survey (for more information, see Subsection 2.1.3.2.). First of all, it was important to maximise diversity in life experience, social status, place of residence, age, profession, and sex, as well as various sources of income (scholarship, salary, pension, and other benefits). It is important to get information 'from within' the community of older people (employed and non-employed), as well as 'from outside', i. e. from the representatives of the working-age population. The representativeness of the sample of interview participants was enhanced not only by achieving saturation of values, but also by theoretical sampling (Stubbs, 1983, p. 230). The author roughly divided potential informants into potentially socially different categories and sought representation for each of them, probing different groups formed according to: age, gender, social attributes, place of residence, education, language of communication, and income level.

The list of interview questions (in either language: Belarusian or Russian, according to the preferences of the participants) was edited after completing the first and second stages of the research (i. e., after studying the context, as well as after formulating the first conclusions of media discourse analysis). The main themes that were discussed together with the concept of 'old age' and 'older people' were the theme of 'active ageing', relations between the state and older people, as well as thematic materials about old age and older people. However, other thematic categories formed during the analysis of media discourses served to formulate questions. All questions were open-ended and required a detailed answer (not just a 'yes' or 'no'). For the list of questions for different groups of participants, see Annexes I, II, III.

Regarding the text transcription, all the recordings of audio interviews and videos were transcribed by using various transcription systems focused on achieving a specific goal. This discourse analysis, aimed at broad thematic content, does not contain the features of accents (which would be interesting to sociolinguists). For sociological research, the lexical scheme, standard punctuation marks, as well as noting down such speech properties as pauses, corrections, and hesitations are sufficient. Intonation, as well as laughter or vivid displays of other emotions that can change the meaning of a verbal text (for example, giving out sarcastic attitude on the subject or using words in a figurative sense) are considered informative (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Since various cognitive processes occur during transcription in the mind of the person producing it, 'the transcriber, considered as a language user, is "often quite

unreliable” (MacWhinney & Snow, 1990, p. 457). In order to reduce the distortion of discourse and incorrect ‘listening’, the transcription was made by the person who conducted the interview (the researcher). At the same time, the author did not seek to create a transcript suitable for different types of research, but discounted the details and features of speech that do not serve the study of the chosen problematics and do not contribute to the achievement of the aim of the research.

The author conducted 27 interviews, each of which was recorded in MP3 format and personally transcribed (with the exception of one that was recorded personally by an informant with a hearing disability. He can lip-read; however, the author chose the most convenient way for the research participant to record his answers to the questions). The interviews were conducted between November 2018 and April 2019. The age of interview participants at the time the interviews were conducted ranged from 19 to 66 years; their places of residence varied from a village or a small town to a city or the capital; the level of education of participants ranged from secondary education to higher education; there were students, employed and unemployed citizens among them (details in Annex IV.).

Interviews with participants were recorded on a voice recorder from the moment they gave verbal permission. In the scientific literature, it is customary to conduct interviews with older people at their own living place and not to force them (Bornat, 1994; Warnick, 1995; Knight, 1996). Taking this into account, it was decided that this approach may be in some way a manifestation of a stereotypical view of older people, so interviews were conducted in places that were convenient for informants, but not only at their homes. Sometimes they expressed a desire to meet ‘on neutral ground’ or even at their workplace (also if an older person continues to work after their retirement).

The interview lengths depended on how much an interlocutor wanted to share; some were happy to comment on the proposed topics and even other ones, while others answered briefly and concisely. Some questions were left without a meaningful answer: ‘I don’t even know’, ‘I don’t know’, ‘I can’t say, I don’t know’ however, no one answered in the affirmative in response to one of the final interview questions: ‘Were there any questions that were inconvenient for you during the interview that you didn’t want to answer?’. One of the informants at the time of the interview was undergoing intensive cancer treatment, and at the rapport building stage, after learning about her illness and experiences, the question ‘Do you have any serious illnesses?’ was not asked during the interview so as not to provoke thoughts that would have been difficult for her.

All research participants were informed about anonymity and the right not to answer questions if they seemed inappropriate or if they had an aversion to answering them. Each of the informants expressed a desire to participate, and also

showed indifference to the use of their first and last names in the text, emphasising that they have nothing to hide, because they will answer truthfully and have their own opinion, which they are not ashamed of. However, it was decided not to leave their names in the text.

Taking into account not only the need for rapport building, but also the importance of life context and lived experience (Creswell, 1998, p. 51), the interviewer asked not only questions about the concept of 'old age' and 'active ageing', but also broader ones. Also, the order of questions suggested for an informant changed depending on the development of an interview: sometimes when answering one question, the interlocutor partially answered another one that had not yet been asked but was also on the list, so the clarifying question was asked immediately after receiving a partial answer to it. Annexes I-III contain the text that started each interview, as well as the lists of questions for individual categories of participants (see Annex I).

It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that some themes, the frequency of which appeared in the official discourse and the discourses of independent media was high, were extremely interesting for the research at this stage; however, their presence in the questions is implicit, hidden intentionally. For example, the theme of risks and problems associated with old age was popular in the analysed discourses, but it was decided to omit a direct question 'What risks or problems are associated with old and older age?' in order not to influence the participants' thoughts and not to artificially problematise the theme of old age. A neutral question was formulated: 'What do you think are the pros and cons of old age?' Another example is the role of family and the lack of attention in official and independent media discourse to issues related to the care for older relatives. It was decided to avoid 'pushing' questions and directing the interlocutors, so the questions were general: 'What support do older people lack? Whose support is missing (from the state, family, self-governing bodies, etc.)?', as well as 'Do you think that the positions of older men and older women are different?', 'Which social group (age, gender, professional, etc.) is the most vulnerable?'

All recorded interviews were transcribed by the interviewer-researcher for the deeper analysis of the text. After transcription was completed, the texts were uploaded to MAXQDA12 and re-read several times to identify important semantic points and encode the materials. Initially, the codes were created based on general themes to which the questions and the answers corresponded. Then the text was re-read, and individual passages were encoded under narrower topics-names, while several codes could correspond to the same passage. Using the program helped in structuring materials and accelerated work with the text.

In accordance with the ethics of the research and in an effort to increase the anonymity of the study, the names of participants, their places of residence are not

indicated, and instead of a specific family composition, the Table shows the number of people living in a household. On the basis of this Table, conditional denotative codes were created, they are used to indicate the author of the quoted passages. For example, the code 'F4' indicates a female participant whose data are placed in the fourth row of the table 'Information about the interviewees' (see Annex IV). Separately, it should be noted that the author informed the research participants that their desire to remain anonymous would be respected, as well as the right to ignore unpleasant questions that bring discomfort. Following Fairclough (2004), the researcher did not try to strictly adhere to the questions from the list in order to minimise the influence of the interviewer and allow the interviewer's narratives to be freely revealed.

The fact that the researcher belongs to the environment of the interviewee makes it possible to increase the probability of the same reading of the language (idioms, terms and concepts); in other words, from a simple 'understanding' from the researcher's own interpretative framework to approach *Verstehen* from 'the interpretative framework of the research population, or from 'insider's perspective' (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 18). At the same time, the author believes that the long period of residence outside of the analysed society allows her to reduce the negative impact of the fact that it is difficult to distinguish aspects of speech communication that are natural for a certain community while being inside a certain social reality. The possibility to detect significant and important details in the discourse of an interlocutor seems to be higher if there is experience of interaction outside the studied discourses.

Reading the meanings put into speech by interlocutors should take into account possible interpretations (Vodak, 1997). However, the interpretation will be incomplete without taking into account non-verbal signals, as well as without verification questions asked by the researcher to avoid misunderstandings in the interpretation of complex points. That is why the researcher conducted all the interviews on her own, noting down gestures and facial expressions that are important for understanding the text.

The author does not consider the informants' awareness of the interview recording to be a significant limitation. Although it is believed that speech becomes more formal when talking to a researcher, M. Stubbs (1983) called the absolute naturalness of communication a 'methodological chimera' (p. 225). In each process of communication, a speaker takes into account the situation and the interacting participants, and this adaptation is relevant for any communicative situation, so the existence of completely free communication is controversial. The absence of informed consent given by a research participant is understood as inconsistent with the ethical standards of the research; therefore, only those materials that were obtained

with the full informed consent of the interlocutors were used for the analysis. An informal conversation preceding the interview served to establish contact with an interlocutor, reduce tension, and create an informal environment (rapport).

Among the advantages of interviews for this research it is possible to:

1. Gain information through a personal perception of it, associated with life stories and emotions, feelings.
2. Identify in-depth information even on sensitive issues. As well as the possibility to feel (notice) the most complex or sensitive aspects of the problem from the live reactions of an interlocutor to specific questions.
3. Take advantage of the possibility to correct questions (to deepen or clarify details) during the interview process if new, unforeseen aspects of perception or connections between phenomena are revealed.

The disadvantages in this particular case are the following:

1. A face-to-face conversation does not involve an outside and objective observer, and the researcher is involved in the dialogue, so her perception is prone to subjectivity.
2. An interviewee may try to anticipate the interviewer's wishes and try to say what they think the researcher wants to hear.
3. In each individual case, one needs the ability to establish a connection, build trust, and respond to an interlocutor.
4. This method of data collection is labour-intensive and time-consuming.
5. In this particular case, the peculiarity of the research theme made it impossible in some cases to conduct really deep interviews. The reasons were either detachment from the topic, which an interlocutor could explain by their age (saying that it is difficult to think about it in one's youth) or negative experiences related to the topic being sensitive (in this case, the interlocutor tried to answer questions briefly and concisely in order to move on to the next ones). In the first case, and especially in the second, the researcher's ethics did not allow insisting on any more detailed answers.

2.1.3.2. The method of a qualitative online survey conducted through a specially created online platform

Since the aim of this work is to obtain the widest possible range of possible interpretations and understandings of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian pension reform discourse, it was decided to increase the coverage of research participants and the variability of interpretations by means of an online

survey. Qualitative online surveys have a form of open questions and produce long-form written answers through various online applications or sites (Jasen, 2010; Braun *et al.*, 2020). This type of qualitative method is aimed to reveal opinions, narratives and perceptions, and is a useful precursor to focus groups or interviews. The choice of online recruitment is due to the growing popularity of the Internet among users (Alexandrov, 2013, p. 3) and the opportunities that it gives the researcher (Braun, Clarke, & Gray, 2017; Seixas, Smith & Mitton, 2018; Braun *et al.*, 2020). There are more than seven advantages that this kind of tool provides.

To begin with, pilot interviews with research participants, as well as numerous refusals to participate due to 'sensitive', 'sad', 'gloomy', 'heavy' topics showed that it is difficult to find the necessary number of participants (to achieve saturation without new values) using common 'offline' recruiting methods. In addition, the Internet makes it possible to speak out on particularly sensitive topics, maintaining complete anonymity even in front of the researcher, and the absence of a real interlocutor in front of one's eyes increases the freedom of expression.

Furthermore, unlike placing an invitation to participate in places where potential interviewees are supposed to live or appear, Internet technologies allow to have not only data on the number of people who agreed to participate and people who saw the invitation, but also the people who did not want to participate, leaving a comment or a personal message explaining the reasons, as well as data on the number of people who saw the invitation (and ignored it for unknown reasons). What is more, this type of recruitment combines the features of both the 'snowball' strategy and placing advertisements, whose audience coverage can be set using the following parameters: age, language, place of residence, etc. In addition, with the help of paid advertisements, the audience coverage can be increased to unlimited sizes (the very fact of using the Internet and social networks becomes a restriction). Advertising on popular Internet sites appears to be a modern equivalent for the strategy of using 'gatekeeping' and informal networks. This combination of recruitment strategies may be a response to their individual imperfections (Hennink *et al.*, 2011, p. 91). Thus, by setting different audience characteristics, it is possible to influence the search for potential respondents in specific communities and subgroups.

An additional advantage is in the fact that the respondents are not time-bound: any time convenient for a participant can be used by them without a discussion with the researcher. This kind of freedom reduces the number of rejections caused by the lack of time and other physical inconveniences. Furthermore, being able to read the questions and have time to think about the answers can be interpreted as an advantage, since it reduces the likelihood of getting 'I didn't think about it' or 'It's difficult to answer' in response because of the interviewees being caught off guard. Given time to think, a research participant shares a thoughtful personal

interpretation. the opportunity to get not only verbal material, but also visual one, i. e. associative photos should also be mentioned.. Last but not least, a final advantage is the anonymity created by the Internet that allows the researcher to hope to reduce the negative impact of the so-called 'observer's paradox' (Labov, 1997 or Labov, 1972, p. 209).

It is important to note that since the main task of this part of the research was to achieve semantic saturation with the maximum possible number of interpretations of the studied concepts in Belarusian society, and as the research was conducted along with in-depth interviews, the online survey:

1. Was reduced to a survey on the most popular topics in the Belarusian official discourse and independent media discourses, *i. e.*, the perception of old age *per se* and the understanding of 'active ageing' and activity in old age.
2. Was perceived as an additional platform for recruiting potential participants for in-depth interviews if the answers to the proposed questions contained a completely new facet of understanding the analysed concepts.

Thus, the target audience included people of employable and unemployable age, citizens residing in the Republic of Belarus permanently or temporarily absent from the country, as well as the residents who are a part of Belarusian community. In other words, Belarusians who left the country but regularly visit Belarusian Internet sites or are members of Belarusian Internet communities could respond to the invitation. Hypothetically, it can be assumed that the invitation could be viewed by Russian-speaking residents of other countries; however, the preamble of the invitation indicated the purpose of the research and its target audience. The languages of the invitation were official Belarusian and Russian.

The created website is linked to three social networks which are most popular among Belarusians and collect information published on them (comments, user data). This technology also allows monitoring the visits and activity of Internet users. The website address: www.ageingbelarus.org (see Annexes V-VIII).

The advertisement was placed on the following social networks: *Facebook*, *Vkontakte*, *Odnoklassniki*, which are the most popular ones in the country (Aleksandrov, 2013, p. 3). As for audience coverage, on *Facebook* the advertisement was seen by 935 people, on *Vkontakte* — 1813 people, on *Odnoklassniki* — 1306 people. A total of 4054 people saw the advertisements on the different platforms. 35 responses were received on the website specially created for the research; in addition, 17 responses were sent in direct messages because of the reluctance to publish the response even under a pseudonym (one of the messages was recorded on a voice recorder by a participant). The author also received verbal refusals to participate in the research (12 in total).

Among the limitations that this kind of method imposes on the researcher are:

- 1) The need for short and concise formulations of a limited number of questions in order to attract the maximum number of participants and not scare them away with the volume of work (writing the text by themselves).
- 2) The inability to observe the process, the lack of information other than the one that a participant decides to reveal (not only their name, but also sex, age, place of work, etc. may be unavailable). (Although it should be added that any information provided to the sociologist by a participant is accepted at face value without verification. That is, the researcher always relies on the sincerity of an interlocutor and does not have the opportunity to check all the facts, so it can be said that the author mostly studies verbal discourse).
- 3) The risk of reducing the amount of information received because a participant does not speak directly but is forced to write down their response, which requires a lot of effort and time.

It should also be noted that in addition to the sensitivity of the topic, it was perceived as politicised, which was associated with some Internet communities refusing to advertise it.

The materials obtained in this part of the research were examined like other texts in the framework of a qualitative discourse analysis, and the most different interpretations of the concepts 'old age' and 'active ageing' were selected as motivation for inviting their authors to participate in an in-depth interview.

2.1.3.3. The focus group discussion method

Initially, the plan was to do a focus group with young people (students or young professionals), since it was this age group that replied with the largest number of refusals to participate in the interviews. Among the undoubted advantages of this research tool is the focus on a specific problem, as well as the possibility to observe group interactions that 'replicate social interactions' (Hennink *et al.*, 2011, p. 166). Other advantage of this tool is that it '[generates] large volume of information, [identifies] a range of views, [has] limited researcher influence, [allows] participants identify issues, identify new issues, issues [are] debated and justified' (Hennink *et al.*, 2011, p. 166). However, there are also limitations that significantly reduce the value of the data obtained: for example, the responses are not completely independent and are not suitable as individual level data, and these studies are also costly (p. 166). Having considered all the pros and cons, it was decided to use a modified version of the focus discussion, turning the disadvantages of this method into advantages. It was decided to use the existing debate club *DysKUT* for the focus discussion; the club regularly conducts debates on socially significant issues, has a professional

moderator, a team, a panel of judges, as well as an audience both in the studio and on the Internet .

DysKUT is a youth club for debates on important topics significant for Belarusian society where all opposing sides and positions are represented. This is a debate tournament based on the Olympic competition system. In total, a tournament consists of 16 games, 2 teams of 2 people take part in each. These are not value-based, but game-based debates which use adapted Lincoln–Douglas format.

The topics of the debate include acute social, economic, and cultural issues. Two teams participate in each series of debates. Each team forms a position which supports or opposes a stated topic. Each team has two participants. The debate is game-based, thus, the participants' opinions may not coincide with their position on a specific topic of the debate, but the participants compete on the proposed topics 'in good faith', using the information found on the topic along with opinions and arguments existing in society.

The debate is broadcast live online, and since 2018 (Season 3), video recordings have become available on social networks (*Facebook, Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki*) and on *youtube.com*. The debate structure and timing follow this format: intro (introduction by the moderator); 1st round — the participants present their positions on the topic; 2nd round — cross-debate; 3rd round — questions from the audience and an expert from the panel of judges; the conclusion from teams (1 minute per each), *vox populi* (7 minutes), comments from the audience, comments from the panel of judges and the summing up of the debate. First of all, debates are evaluated for their logic, information content, presentation and rhetoric, culture of discussion and timing, while for this research, the most important component is semantic, substantive, which is analysed as a part of the discourses existing in Belarusian society.

The debate topics are approved by the *DysKUT* debate advisory board, which includes representatives of partner organisations and co-founders of the tournament. Initially, topics (resolutions) are developed so that they meet the following criteria: debatable and specific, meaning that there must be opposing arguments within Belarusian society and/or internationally, so participants have to be able to disagree on the topic and argue in debates; currently politically relevant; currently covered in the media, or at least recently covered in the media; interesting enough for youth to keep talking for the next week or so; complex enough to generate serious research; simple enough that participants can all become relative 'experts' within one week (these criteria are taken from an internal document of the debate advisory board).

Thus, the very approval of the topic by the advisory board means its approbation by an expert community, confirming the relevance of the problem for Belarusian society. This fact was crucial for the researcher and the decision to use the debate platform to analyse intentionally provoked discourses.

Despite the fact that in normal focus groups, a moderator plans follow-up questions in order to clarify certain points or make sure that the necessary information is received, in this case, the researcher deliberately did not interfere in the discussion and preparation of participants. First, it was important to understand which aspects of the problem are visible to the participants of the discussion, and which aspects remain outside of their discourses (mental models). Secondly, given that the participants had time to prepare arguments on the given question when they had an opportunity to use any search engines and consult their social circle; it is important to understand what information they did not find and what problems remained invisible.

During the discussion, the researcher notices the positive significance of deliberate rejection of moderator-dominated data collection at some stages of the discussion to the dynamic discussion between participants (Morgan, 1997, p. 2 as cited in Hennink *et al.*, 2011). First of all, this allowed each of the participants to ask a clarifying question, ask for arguments, or express disagreement, provoking elaboration of a previously expressed thought. This kind of exchange between participants allows getting an 'inside' view: to open dimensions of interpretation that could remain untapped by the questions from the outside, for example, from a moderator or researcher. Such questions also add to the spontaneity of the discussion and make it unique (such uniqueness is difficult to achieve only with the questions prepared by the researcher). A strictly defined time frame for statements and questions to each other creates equal opportunities to speak out and eliminates the problem where some of the participants do not have an opportunity to speak out.

In this case, the problem of the deference effect was completely irrelevant; this effect makes a researcher doubt whether the participants expressed their own opinion, or the one that a moderator/researcher expects according to their opinion (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). The participants initially did not defend their own opinions, and it was important for the researcher to understand what those opinions are and how they are articulated in society, as well as what remains unnoticed in the discourse and what is not expressed.

The topic for the focus discussion was initially formed from the selection of semantic 'nodes' or categories emphasised by the interview participants: 'older people', 'pension', 'retirement age', 'state', 'discrimination', and 'injustice'. Then the author formulated the final edition of the question collectively with the debate advisory board to give it a debatable character and acuteness.

The final version of the topic for the focus debate was: 'Is a pension a social guarantee or age discrimination?', as it provokes participants to discuss the relations of the state, society and older people; as well as pensions as a social institution and the problem of age discrimination. It is the relations between the state and older

people that are the focus of attention for a significant proportion of official and independent Belarusian media (see Chapter 4), which highlights this issue in the Belarusian discourse of pension reform.

Among the advantages of this kind of focus debate/discussion are the following:

1. In this case, participants do not feel restrained, since it is not their first debate. Participants feel at home in a familiar environment; they are comfortable and enjoy the process of debating.
2. Given that researchers call focus groups problematic because their 'responses are not independent' (Hennink *et al.*, 2011, p. 166), we initially set the task of studying not the individual opinions of specific participants in the discussion, but consider them as representing opinions of a certain part of society (since in the process of preparing to defend a particular position from the point of view of the public, participants studied these opinions and arguments in order to convey them in the most convincing form). That is, given that the possibility of obtaining individual opinions in focus groups is disputed by researchers, the objective of obtaining individual interpretations was not set.
3. The additional participation of the audience and the judges allows additional opinions to be heard and conclusions to be drawn about what opinions are really shared in society or are known, and which were not mentioned (but appear in the statements of those present during the debate). In other words, the range of possible interpretations is expanded at the expense of the audience and, in particular, the experts present (a Doctor of Philosophy, a candidate of Economic Sciences, as well as a media researcher and a journalist).
4. The judges and the organisers of the debate modified the question proposed by the researcher, thereby allowing a relevant problem field for the Belarusian society related to the studied concepts in the framework of the pension reform discourse to be determined. In other words, a debatable opposition of opinions was developed, which reflects conflicting ideas about pension and related issues: retirement age, old age and older people, pension reform and the discrimination of older people in connection with reaching retirement age.
5. According to the rules of the debate, the participants can ask each other questions.
6. The physical absence of the researcher and video recording allow for unobtrusive observation, which excludes the possibility of the researcher's influence on the course of the discussion.
7. A problem called the 'deference effect' (Hennink *et al.*, 2020, p. 163) can be overcome. In their responses, participants are not concerned about the moderator's supposed opinion, and even in the case of an explicit articulation of such an opinion, the researcher has an opportunity to explore it as well.

8. The absence of inactive and clearly dominant participants is due to the use of timers for each participant's speech, which creates equal opportunities.

Among the existing limitations of this modified method of focus discussion (focus debate), we can distinguish:

1. A limited focus for discussion, which is formed not only due to the identification of two contrasting opinions (the closed nature of the discussion's main issue) but also due to the lack of time spent on discussing other important concepts.
2. The researcher can not ask clarifying questions or additional ones that arise in the course of the discussion.
3. A limited group of participants, which is nevertheless compensated by the supra-individual nature of the presented opinions, as well as the presence of judges and an audience.

The debate on the question: 'Is a pension a social guarantee or age discrimination?' had 23755 views in various communities on Vkontakte, as well as 8268 views on Facebook, and 5640 views on Odnoklassniki. The participants were: Tatiana Gabartsevich, Siarzhuk Dubin, Nicholay Ampilov, Nikita Semianenko, and the Moderator was Ilya Malinovsky. The three Judges came from various fields: the cultural scientist and journalist Maxim Zhbakov; the philosopher, candidate of philosophical sciences, head of the concentration *Contemporary Society, Ethics and Politics* at the European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus (ECLAB) Olga Shparaga; and the Belarusian economist and analyst Sergey Chaly. The total number of participants was 28 people (See Annex IX). The duration of the debate was 1 hour and 27 minutes.

2.2. Reflections of the researcher

Contemplating the feasibility of achieving the greatest possible variability of meanings and interpretations of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in Belarusian pension reform discourses, the researcher tried to use the mixing research methods. Both methods across the paradigms (qualitative and quantitative) and various methods of qualitative research were combined. The author employed not only widely used methods for recruiting research participants and types of data, but also, taking into account the specific tasks and characteristics of the sensitive topic and context, modified research tools and adapted them to benefit from their advantages and reduce their limitations.

In the part of the research related to media publications, the opportunity was used to conduct quantitative research in order to identify trends and dominant messages

in the broadcast discourses. The transition from quantitative to qualitative analysis of discourses made it possible to understand and explain trends. The qualitative research of perception discourses (induced discourses) made it possible to identify the perceptions, interpretations, and motivations that remain behind these trends and which may be invisible in media discourses, but exist (sometimes in a discourse that is not publicly articulated but only in the form of private discussions, conversations).

The researcher is aware of the problem of subjectivity (both of the interpretations under research and of the inevitable influence of the researcher on the analysis process); the problem was constantly opposed by introspection. The researcher's actions at each stage were constantly evaluated in terms of their impact on the research participants, data, research and analysis processes. There was also self-awareness about how the researcher's background, rather than specific actions or decisions, could influence the research results. Such reflexivity is necessary to constantly question the research process, and therefore to validate and legitimise it (Pillow, 2003, p. 175).

That is why the researcher sought 'theoretical' and 'methodological openness' and a detailed description of the decisions and choices made in the research process (following Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 195). This 'openness' was combined with a readiness to make changes in research design at any time and take into account the peculiarities of the social settings and wider social and cultural context. For example, initially it was planned to start a flash mob, where Internet users would publish their reflections on the proposed topics related to understanding old age and active ageing. However, the preliminary (pilot) stage of publishing an invitation to participate among 'friends' on *Facebook* showed that there are obstacles to the implementation of this kind of research tool, they are:

- The sensitivity of the topic in the perception of potential participants. Personal messages received in the first days after the invitation that were published contained either a refusal to participate, motivated by inability to speak on such a 'personal' and 'painful' topic, or consent to the anonymous publication of opinions on a specially created website without duplicating this text on the user's personal page.
- Other obstacles were the prejudices and superstitions held about the negative impact of articulating one's plans, dreams, and ideals on their achievement in the future. Some users motivated their refusal to participate (since the questions were available from the very beginning) by the fact that for the sake of their own good one should be silent about their wishes ('If you want to make God laugh, tell Him about your plans' or 'If God wants, I'll live [to an old age], then we'll see.').

That is why it was decided to move away from the initial idea of starting a flash mob and to focus on using a website as a resource for collecting comments and opinions on the proposed issues.

When analysing the texts of media publications, it was noted that readers (presumably) left comments on the articles. However, the idea to explore this feedback — comments under the articles — had to be abandoned. The obstacles were:

- the impossibility of using this analysis tool continuously, especially in the case of official discourse, since pre-moderation of comments (based on the realities of Belarusian media set out in the chapter 'Context') in official and independent media may be incomparable and will affect the results;
- technical limitations due to the volume of analysed publications (since the number of comments sometimes exceeds not only hundreds, but also thousands, researchers limit themselves to studying comments on a single news article or event, or limit the time period to one day or an hour — Panisson, 2011);
- the consideration of opinions expressed using such technical mechanisms as ratings, 'likes' and 'dislikes' or 'emojis', which represent an additional technical difficulty. There are approaches to their interpretation and analysis, however, to achieve the main aim of this work this information was unnecessary.

It should also be noted that the idea of using focus debates seems to be a valuable research method that has proved itself in solving a specific task set by the researcher in the framework of mixed methods research. However, given the limited focus for discussion due to having opposite opinions, as well as the limited number of participants, this method can be recommended in combination with others. The game-based nature of the debate, which implies the discrepancy between the presented and reasoned positions and the real opinions of the participants in the debate on the issue under discussion, is in contrast with the expression of internal personal reflections and individual interpretations in interviews and opinions expressed online. However, both types of data are perceived as valid and enriching the analysis of modern Belarusian pension reform discourses. It was unexpected, but the most suitable option for young participants was not to present their own opinions but those developed on the basis of the study on Belarusian discourses. This was because the young people were the least willing to speak on the topic of 'old age', 'active ageing' and pensions, explaining that they did not think about it and that the issue was irrelevant to them. Thus, the analysis of positions and the search for arguments stimulated them to form their own opinions on the problem, which is a kind of an added bonus or positive side effect.

Bringing benefits to the research participants and not causing any undue suffering were the primary principles in the work of the researcher, so the reluctance to speak out on a sensitive topic was accepted with respect. The fact that the topic of old age is perceived as bringing psychological discomfort is shown in messages like this: 'Now I'm trying to write something, but [I feel] very strong resistance: Apparently, [I have] an existential crisis — I can't think about old age: [tears] I feel violence against myself.' The researcher replied that caring about one's psychological state is an unchanging value and the primary goal of any research, so if one does not want to participate, one should not do so.

Taking into account the research objectives formed on the basis of a reflexive understanding of its purpose, the methodological basis of the research was formed. Within the framework of the interpretive social science paradigm, discursive institutionalism was singled out as an approach that combines attention to both discourses and context. Following the theorists of discourse analysis, attention is focused on the performative aspect of discourses and their special significance for the study of social phenomena.

The most suitable methods of data collection and analysis were selected for achieving the research aim; they were selected separately for each part of the research. A secondary descriptive analysis of statistical data and research in the domain of history, politics, economy, law, demography, cultural studies, and sociology was used to analyse the context of discourse existence. Quantitative content analysis and qualitative analysis of discourses were chosen to analyse the discourses of Belarusian media, highlighting the content aspect and rhetorical means of communicating ideas to the audience.

The analysis of perceptual discourses was based on materials obtained in the course of various research methods: semi-structured interviews with Belarusians of different ages, purposely initiated online survey, and youth focus debates. Each of the selected methodological tools has its drawbacks and certain limitations; nevertheless, their benefits and advantages for this particular research prevail, and therefore determined the research choices.

CHAPTER 3. The Belarusian context

In the section devoted to understanding the theoretical directions of research, the author indicated the interest of modern researchers to the connection between social structure and actors. Moving from understanding social actions as internalised norms to the actions of 'cognitive agents' (Giddens, 1984) and 'communicators' (Habermas, 2000, 2002), the very understanding of social structure has changed. Following Giddens (1984), the laws of structure can be understood both as resources used by social actors and as the result of the actions of these actors. The attention of discursive institutionalism to the historical, political, economic, demographic, and socio-cultural context is caused by interest in this duality in the nature of structure and space in which actors operate.

The purpose of this section is to present the features of the Belarusian socio-cultural and political context, which are necessary not only to illustrate the arguments presented in the methodological part of the research explaining the choice of tools, but also to understand the cultural background, circumstances, conditions, surrounding factors, and the general situation in which the analysed concepts arise and are transmitted. This is why a socio-legal (overview of the development of the country's pension system), political, economic and demographic, as well as socio-cultural context are presented below. Since this context includes factors that have emerged and developed over a long period of time, the analysed phenomena (institutions, actors, events) are not limited to the time frame of the studied discourses (2017-2019).

The methodological basis for this part of the research is described in the second chapter, Subsection 2.1.1.

3.1. The political context of the country

The influence of the political factor on social processes and trends is indisputable for the modern academic community. Discussions about ways to reform the welfare state, which began in Western Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, did not develop properly in Belarus. However, Subsection 3.2 is devoted to the specifics of the country's social policy, and this subsection will present the key features of the country's political field, without understanding of which there will be no proper explanation of the choice of discursive institutionalism with its emphasis on both discourse and context. The political context has also determined the choice of materials for the analysis of media discourses and their division into two separate blocks.

With the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991 and the Declaration of independence by the former Soviet republics, the Russian Federation became the

main successor to the USSR, treating the post-Soviet territories as its exclusive sphere of influence. Relations with the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine, and especially the tragic events in Ukraine from 2014 to the present day, clearly demonstrate the difficulties of accepting the political independence of new republics. This geopolitical revisionism of Russia (Swider, 2015) is an important aspect that affects not only the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus, but also the domestic one (even the transplantation of 'active ageing' concept into the power discourse took place synchronously with the Russian Federation).

The 'transit paradigm' that had spread in countries that had taken down dictatorships provided an optimistic vision for the development of 'transition' countries. This trend towards the democratisation of former dictatorial regimes that took place in the 1990s was called the 'Third Wave' of democratisation (Huntington, 1991). However, democratic assistance programmes (judicial reforms, strengthening of the parliament, civil society, the development of political parties, or working with communities and the media) in some countries have not led to the achievement of organised democracy. This leads Carothers (2004, p. 65) to conclude that the prolonged use of the transit paradigm leads to a simplified conceptualisation of a living and more complex empirical reality.

The window of opportunity created by the disintegration of the Soviet Union was used to proclaim the country's independence, but the political parties that began to emerge in the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s needed time to gain the trust of voters. The country's economic crisis was exacerbated by weak political institutions. Attempts to transition to a market economy were negatively met by a heterogeneous mass of opponents who felt a significant decline in living standards. The general distrust of economic and political reorganisation, as well as increased levels of corruption and crime, on the whole, encouraged voters to vote for a non-party member of Parliament with no political past who promised to defeat corruption in the country. Unlike the other candidates who represented political parties or power structures, A. Lukashenka won the trust of a heterogeneous electorate. This choice proved to be key for the country's political development, and in particular for social policy.

Populism as a political strategy is widely discussed by researchers and there are different approaches to its definition. When defining the policy of Lukashenka, researchers call it a case of 'classical populism': a strategy of a charismatic leader who directly appeals to the masses, bypassing intermediary political institutions without relying on any party (Shulenkova, 2009, p. 45). His closeness to the people is also emphasised by his simple language, commitment to various sports, and the manner of communicating with his subordinates. A wide audience is captivated by his emotional and long speeches, his ability to respond in an impromptu manner,

as well as the use of a special language – *trasianka*, characteristic of poorly educated Belarusians. I. Shulenkova (2009) believes that the most significant example of A. Lukashenka's charisma is his nickname *Bat'ka* (Father) (p. 52).

The victory of Lukashenka in 1994 was a defining event for the most recent decades of Belarusian policy. The weakness of the institutions necessary for building a democratic state was complemented by the lack of political culture and national identity of the people (Shulenkova, 2009, p. 50). For decades before the collapse of the USSR, the Belarusian cultural and political elite was itself subjected to repressions, which inevitably affected the formation of the national self-consciousness. 'Soviet Belarusian patriotism' inherited from the state that had by then disappeared, was built on the heroism of partisan movement during World War II, and the 'golden age' of Belarusian history was the period under P. Masherov, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the BSSR Communist Party, who was popular among the people (Silitski, 2006). That is why the assurances of Lukashenka (a new person who had nothing to do with the power structures during that economic and political crisis) to restore the Soviet order and preserve Soviet traditions were accepted by society, which observed the consequences of radical economic reforms in Russia.

It is important to note that for more than 26 years of rule, the President has remained non-partisan, although political experts say that it was owing to his decision that the non-governmental organisation 'Belaya Rus' was created in 2007. The organisation's programme contains assurances of support for the current government and aims to 'assist the country's leaders in preventing, identifying and addressing shortcomings in the work of public administration' (Belaya Rus', n. d.). The party has more than 177,000 active members, making it the largest political organisation in the country (BELTA, 2018, 10 Oct.).

The very name of this organisation refers to the ideological concept of *zapadnorusism* (west-rusicism) of the 19th century and emphasises the connection between Belarus and Russia. Belarusian researchers quote D. Marples, who believes that Lukashenka 'recognises the historical heritage of Belarusians selectively: only in Russian context' (Lastouski & Yafimava, 2013, p. 426). In modern state ideology, the establishment of Soviet statehood in 1917 is perceived as the beginning of the history of Belarusian statehood.

The Belarusian political scientist A. Kazakevich (2004) calls 2001 one of the turning points for Belarusian historical policy when the strategy of self-preservation and adaptation to the environment replaces the strategy of expansion, the discourse of contextualisation replaces the discourse of expansion, and the rhetoric of 'tradition' replaces the rhetoric of 'revolution' (p. 55). The researcher attributes the launch of the Belarusian state ideology project to this period. Although in 2001-2002 Lukashenka mentioned the Principalities of Polotsk and Turov in his speeches twice,

as well as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the foundation of Belarusian statehood, the President's speeches and official discourse are dominated by the emphasis on the feats of the Great Patriotic War and the BSSR as the most important historical milestones of Belarus (Lastouski & Yafimava, 2013, p. 427). Researchers associate the regular short-term manifestation of the rhetoric of common European heritage and common cultural traditions with periods of increasing tension in relations with Russian leadership (Lastouski & Yafimava, 2013).

However, the Russian-centric narrative that defines Belarusians as an integral part of the Russian super-ethnos is dominant in the modern Belarusian ideology (Lastouski, 2010). That is why those periods of history that are characterised by the cohabitation of Eastern Slavs within the borders of one state entity (Kievan Rus, the Russian Empire and the USSR) are brought to the fore, while other periods are marked as unfavorable and caused by the negative influence of hostile forces. Thus, ethno-nationalist concepts oppose the dominant concepts in state discourse. Although, as noted by A. Lastouski and N. Yafimava (2013), even in this discourse, several different variations of the concept of historical statehood coexist, which affects the mass historical consciousness (p. 431).

A. Lastouski (2010) identifies a number of specific features of the ideology of *rusocentrism* (the ideological successor of the *zapadnorusism* from the 19th century mentioned above)(p. 59). Lastouski highlights the following features of *rusocentrism*: idealism, manifested in the constant emphasis on the superiority of the spiritual over the material, high over low and the religious over the secular, as well as in irrational argumentation; in the duality, manifested in perceiving the world through a dichotomy of good and evil, the Slavic world and the materialistic West, which are in a state of perpetual and uncompromising struggle; in conspiracy theories, finding secret intentions, plots, and intrigues arranged by ideological enemies of 'our side'; eschatological and tragic worldview (Lastouski, 2010, p. 59). These features are extremely important in the context of the discourses studied in the work, and their manifestations particularly in the normativism and monochromy of the pro-government media discourse.

The foundations of this ideological concept were conceived in the 19th century by intellectuals of the Russian Empire, but modern Russia has a broader set of tools for popularising the ideas of Slavic unity and great Russian spirituality. Various channels are used to promote and develop the concept. Post-Soviet countries remain under the significant informational influence of Russia (Szostek, 2015), supplemented by the energy factor, which is considered 'one of the most important means of enhancing <...> cooperation within the CIS countries' (Solovyov, 2010, p. 66). Initially, the unequal conditions and economic dependence of the proclaimed republics were aggravated in Belarus by the military presence of Russia, as well as

by the commodity dependence. Russian mail and search services, social networks, popular science and entertainment websites and news portals, television and print media dominate Belarusian space (Potrebin, 2019).

And while some of the former Soviet republics choose open confrontation with Russia, for Belarus as an independent state, the consequences of confrontation could be deplorable. This was shown by the events in Ukraine. In most post-Soviet countries, hybrid aggression takes place, and in the case of Ukraine, it is possible to talk about a hybrid war (Renz, 2016; Fox & Rossow, 2017). Since Belarus and Ukraine lie within the sphere of the increased interest of Russia, Russian information propaganda is actively working through the media and opinion leaders, through which the 'Russian thinking' or mindset is broadcast. The concept of 'soft power' has emerged in Russian political discourse since 2007 when V. Putin announced a 'new Cold War' and the need to popularise Russian language with the help of the 'Russkiy Mir' Foundation. Currently, *Rossotrudnichestvo* is represented in 81 countries of the world through 98 representative offices (*Rossotrudnichestvo*, n. d.). Representatives of these centres or non-governmental organisations can also deal with political issues, including the allocation of funds. Political parties cannot receive money from foreign investors, but non-governmental organisations can help to promote pro-Moscow values, so 'Russian soft power' sometimes seems concerned not so much with promoting Russia's image as with weakening the enemy's position, according to A. Barluet in *Le Figaro* (Barluet, 2019).

Analysis by A. Sivitsky (2019), the head of the Minsk-based 'Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies', includes the active phase of a 'hybrid war' waged by Moscow in Belarus aimed at undermining the sovereignty and independence of Belarus, hence preventing it from leaving Russia in the medium term.

'Stability' is a significant concept in the election campaigns of Lukashenka, and it can also characterise the regularity of government legitimisation. Today, the President of the Republic of Belarus holds office after five re-elections (five terms in office). After the victory in the first presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus on July 10, 1994, as well as the referendum on November 24, 1996, the powers of the Executive branch and the President were expanded. After the elections of May 16, 1999 were not recognised, the incumbent President won the presidential race on September 9, 2001 with 75.6% of the vote (US Today, 2001, Oct. 9). On October 17, 2004, another referendum introduced changes to the country's Constitution, removing the limit on the number of presidential terms. The next elections on March 19, 2006, December 19, 2010, and October 11, 2015 resulted in the re-election of Lukashenka. The last elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus, held on August 9, 2020, ended with their non-recognition by the OSCE countries, international sanctions and a ban on Lukashenka's entry to the European Union. All elections held in the country were

assessed by OSCE observers as 'inconsistent with OSCE commitments, international obligations and standards for conducting democratic elections' (OSCE, 2015, p. 6). However, the last election was marked by the 'Intimidation and persecution of political activists, candidates, journalists, media actors, lawyers, labour activists and human rights defenders, as well as the detention of prospective candidates; election fraud; restriction on access to information, including internet shutdowns; excessive use of force against peaceful protesters; arbitrary and unlawful arrests or detentions; beatings; sexual and gender violence; abductions and enforced disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and widespread impunity for all of the above.' (OSCE, 2020, p. 3). According to the OSCE recommendations, the results of the presidential elections of 9 August 2020 should be cancelled due to irregularities at all stages of the process (OSCE, 2020, p. 4).

The actual lack of a real veto player in the process of social policy making is extremely important for understanding the institutional context of the country and justifying the choice of materials for the research. Elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly were held 5 times: in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. The composition of the Chamber of the first convocation was not elected by the people but was formed from deputies of the dissolved Supreme Council of the XIII convocation who supported Lukashenka. In different terms of office, the House of Representatives included either 2 opposition candidates (2000 and 2016) or none at all (2004, 2008, 2012).

The President of the Republic of Belarus actively uses the possibility of direct presidential rule enshrined in the Constitution through decrees that have the force of law. These normative legal acts have the power to establish, change, or cancel certain legal norms and do not need the approval of the Parliament or the people (Article 37 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus). Today, the most resonant is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 3 'On prevention of social dependency', known as the Decree on social parasitism, issued on April 2, 2015 and repeatedly supplemented. The prototype of the legislative act is the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR 'On strengthening the struggle with persons avoiding socially useful work and leading an anti-social, parasitic way of life' of May 15, 1961. Initially, the decree provided for the introduction of a tax levy on unemployed people (which was stated by Prime Minister M. Myasnikovich before the document was signed) (Volchek, 2015). The creator of the Decree himself notes that this legal act is neither economic nor financial, 'it is an ideological, moral decree. The state will not receive any big money there. The purpose of this decree is one thing: to make those who should and can work do some work. This is the main issue' (BBC, 2017, Lukashenka postponed the collection of the 'tax on social parasites' after the protests...).

However, this regulatory act brought a wave of protests, and the Decree was repeatedly supplemented with clarifications and changes in the procedure for collecting payments. Protests and rallies forced the President to suspend the decree on March 9, 2017, and Lukashenka said that officials were executing it 'abominably and irresponsibly' ('To make those who should and can work do some work' — Lukashenka answered all questions about decree No. 3, 2017). Such facts attract attention as a manifestation of the indirect influence of public response on political decisions in the country (including in the field of social policies). And although there is no real veto player in this system, we can talk about this special influence of a wide public response. Distrust of democratic institutions and officials, bypassing the national Parliament and ministries to implement his policies, as well as personal control over the decision-making process have convinced experts to assess the policy of the Belarusian leader as 'populist' (Shulenkova, 2009, p. 56). It is this feature that enhances the importance of the media as a channel for broadcasting discourses.

It is important to note that in the absence of widespread coverage in the country and abroad, other manifestations of human rights violations are deliberated in Belarus that include: forced membership of employees and students in pro-government public organisations (Belarusian Republican Youth Union, *Belaya Rus* party, Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus) (33), forced subscription to state media (32), forced participation of employees and students in public events and early voting during elections, etc. Separately, a special attention should be paid to the situation in the sphere of the country's media. According to 'Reporters Without Borders', the Republic of Belarus ranked 155 (2018) and 157 (2013) in the international media freedom index (World Press Freedom Index, n. d.). The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe reports on 'extreme bias of state media and censorship of independent print media' as well as 'a campaign to intimidate opposition activists, internal surveillance organisations, opposition and independent media' (OSCE, 2001). The state-owned media compete in the discursive field with the independent outlets, which were pushed into the Internet space, yet still occupy leading positions in the popularity ratings of the population.

Major adjustments to the country's political and economic processes are being made by global changes towards information society. The information revolution is fundamentally changing the understanding of communication, affecting social relations, culture and politics. Belarusian expert P. Bykovsky (2007) believes that 'the Internet forces even dictatorships to adapt to the conditions of information society' (p. 344). He believes that it is the Internet that ranks first among all mass media in Belarus, since the main ones are monopolised by the state, and this platform remains the only opportunity for the opposition to present its point of view.

However, traditional media, which are represented online, also have a manipulative potential (Bykovsky, 2007, p. 344). Independent media form alternatives to the pro-government discourses and influence the country's discursive field.

Thus, the Belarusian political system is characterised by some researchers as 'authoritarian' (Rovdo, 2004) or as a 'dictatorship', 'elective dictatorship' (Korosteleva, Lawson, & Marsh, 2003), defined as a: 'personalistic authoritarian regime', 'the last dictatorship of Europe' (Daco, 2013). Political prisoners, as well as regular arrests of protestors and legal battles with journalists, are nevertheless combined with the support of a certain percentage of voters and the leader's willingness to respond to the signals of the electorate (Ioffe, 2018), whose number is difficult to estimate. Analysts attribute this phenomenon partly to the charisma of a talented public politician (Sverdlov, 2018), and partly to certain economic and political decisions. However, the events of 2020 showed that the autocratic regime of Alexander Lukashenka relies primarily on law enforcement agencies and the army, as well as on the state apparatus. The populist nature of Lukashenka's rule is also evident in the command economy, which, owing to the use of cheap raw materials of its political ally (Russia), tries to maintain the loyalty of the general population by preserving the Soviet social security system coping with severe economic and demographic challenges.

3.2. The social and legal context and pension system development in the Republic of Belarus

As noted in Chapter 1, the very understanding of old age and ageing is changing and is interdependent with the characteristics of social policies and traditions of a particular society. Not only are the officially established age norms important but also their content in a specific social and cultural context. The retirement age is directly related to the specifics of a pension system that each particular state has. There is no single approach to the legal and social definition of an individual's transition to the category of older (old) people and exit from the labour market. However, not only demographic indicators of life expectancy and age structure of the population, or economic factors are important, but also a specific historical context.

According to D. North (1990), 'institutions are the rules of the society game or, more formally, they are humanly devised constraints that structure the interaction between people' (p. 97). While North focuses on the macro aspect, Hodgson (2006) believes that the internal structure of an organisation dominates, and focuses on the system of established and implemented social rules on which social interactions are based. In other words, it is rules, norms, and beliefs that guide people's actions.

Formal social institutions include legislation, legal norms, and their structure, while informal institutions include habits, customs, social norms, and values (Amin, 1999).

After the establishment of institution of social insurance (under Bismarck) in 1889 in Germany and the adoption of this practice by other European countries, traditional ideas about the dominant role of the family in providing for and caring for older people underwent changes (the transformation of these ideas was different in various communities). In the 19th century, the territory of modern Belarus had the laws of the Russian Empire which annexed this territory at the end of the 18th century. Instead of pension payments, the Bolsheviks introduced special disability benefits for certain categories of the population: soldiers (1917) and industrial workers (1918). This system was based on the insurance principle, i. e. the created fund was replenished with insurance contributions from employers (Sivakova, 2015). Only in 1932 was pension provision introduced for workers in all sectors of the national economy; however, the amount of payments was significantly lower than the subsistence minimum (Mamyachenkov, 2014).

The relevant system for the modern Republic of Belarus was established in the USSR in 1956 by the law 'On state pensions', which guaranteed state pensions on the specified grounds. A uniform age and length of service requirements were defined, as well as the principle of calculating pension benefits. This legislation began to apply to collective farmers only in 1964, meeting the resistance of the collective farm heads who were afraid of the emergence of 'parasitical behaviour' (Seleyev, 2017). Only in 1967 was the retirement age of collective farm workers lowered by 5 years (becoming equal to the retirement age of workers), becoming 55 years for women and 60 years for men.

In the Republic of Belarus, this age is undergoing changes in accordance with the 2017-2022 reform. On the basis of the Decree 137 of April 11, 2016 'On improving pension provision', the minimum age of registration for a labour pension is increased annually by 6 months. By 2022, the retirement age for men will have reached 63 years, while for women – 58 years. At the same time, the minimum contribution period required for registration for an old-age pension increases too (from 15 to 20 years) (Ministry of labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, n.d.). The main reason for the changes is the demographic situation that has increased the burden on pension funds. It should be added that in 1929, when the USSR set the retirement age for men at 60 and for women at 55, life expectancy in neighboring Ukraine was 46.2 years for men and 49.9 years for women (Kukhta, 2019, p. 70). Unfortunately, the author did not find such data for Belarus.

Today, the Belarusian pension system is state-owned (by the type of state participation), and distributive/solidary (according to the type of accumulation). Thus, this is a state pension system that works on the principle of paying pension

benefits to today's pensioners at the expense of current pension contributions of the employed population. The institutional structure has remained unchanged since the Soviet Union, and the main changes made after the country regained independence were related to the length of contribution period and retirement age.

The right to early retirement is granted to certain professions and employees engaged in particularly harmful and particularly difficult work (for them, the generally established retirement age is reduced by 10 years): expedition workers, employees of the internal affairs authorities, drivers of urban public passenger transport, tractor drivers, and some other categories. Military personnel, officers and other ranks of the internal affairs authorities, the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus, bodies and divisions for emergency situations and financial investigation bodies are entitled to an employment pension after 20 years of service (regulated by the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 17.12.1992 No. 2050-XII).

Payment of labour and social pensions (Kungurova & Terekhov, 2007, p. 149) is made from the state budget and extra-budgetary funds. Labour pensions are accrued from the Social Protection Fund of the Ministry of labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus. This fund is not a part of the state budget and is formed directly from the insurance contributions of employers, insurance contributions of employed citizens and a part of the state budget of the Republic of Belarus. The Social Protection Fund ensures the collection and accumulation of insurance contributions, pension payments, funding health services, compliance with legislation and regulations on state social insurance, and other activities. Regional units of the Fund at the level of the Central office of regional and Minsk city administrations and district offices are responsible for the targeted distribution and allocation of funds for pension provision. The social assistance system is formed by budget funds. The non-transparency of the system of formation and distribution of pension contributions and payments, as well as the lack of choice of contributors, is noteworthy.

The legislation distinguishes the following types of labour pensions: by age (on general grounds; with special working conditions; with special benefits); disability; survivor's pension; for long service; for special services to the Republic of Belarus (Kungurova & Terekhov, 2007, p. 151), according to the Law of the Republic of Belarus of April 17, 1992 'On pension provision' (as amended on July 11, 2007) and other normative legal acts (more than 50 in total).

For this work, it is important to pay attention to the official wording of 'old age' and definitions given to the older age group in the documents. The main legal acts that establish the rights of older citizens in the Republic of Belarus are the following: 'On pension provision', 'On social protection', 'On the fundamentals of state social insurance', 'On state minimum social standards', 'On veterans', as well as other

legislative acts. The Law of the Republic of Belarus 'On pension provision' dated April 17, 1992 No. 1596-XII, as amended on January 9, 2017, contains the section 'Old-age pensions'. This normative act contains the conditions for assigning an age pension and sets the 'retirement age' for different categories of citizens, although the document never uses the terms 'pensioner', 'older', 'old'. However, in the legal field, the term 'older' is widely used in the sense of a person older than employable age (Ministry of labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus. (n. d.). State social support for older citizens).

Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 1488 of December 19, 2005 'On the Republican comprehensive programme of social support for older people, veterans and persons affected by the consequences of wars, 2006-2010' was approved and put into effect a set of organisational, social, legal and economic measures to strengthen social protection, including one for older people. This document defines the concept of 'older people' used in it: they are 'persons over 60 years of age' (as well as 'single older people are older people without able-bodied family members on the territory of the Republic', 'older people living alone are older people living separately from able-bodied family members') (Republican comprehensive programme of social support for older people, veterans and people affected by the consequences of wars, 2006-2010, 2005). There is a noticeable lack of reference to the status of the individual in the labour market, and the emphasis on the chronological component.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection uses international terminology in the section 'State social support for senior citizens' on the official website: 'According to the UN classification, the population is considered old if the proportion of people over the age of 65 is 7 percent or more. In our country, the share of the population over the age of 65 today is 14.7 percent of the total population' (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus. (n. d.). State social support for older citizens). There is no definition for the terms 'older', 'old', but there is a list of medical and social services that are provided to older citizens; thus, the range of potential problems associated with reaching a certain age and moving to the category of 'older people' is outlined: difficulties in movement, self-care, ensuring one's own safety, leisure activities, etc.

Definitions of 'older', 'very old' and those who live for a long time (known as 'long-livers') are contained in the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Belarus of September 21, 1992 No. 1825-XII, which establishes the Day of Older Persons in the Republic of Belarus: 'According to the classification generally accepted in gerontology, older people include persons aged 60 to 75 years. Beginning with 75 years old, people are considered very old, and beginning with 90 years they become long-livers' (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the

Republic of Belarus. (n. d.). October 1 is the international Day of Older Persons). In addition to chronological (calendar) parameters, this normative legal act does not offer any indicators (signs, factors, properties) for assigning citizens to appropriate age groups.

Thus, it is important to note the lack of a unified approach to the definition of the older age group and the lack of definition of 'old age' and 'ageing' in official regulations, which are used by various officials in their work and to which they refer.

As for social services, today its main subject is the state represented by various organisations. Some public organisations participate in social services through state social mandates. According to researchers from the Office for European Expertise and Communication, the opportunities to advocate for legislative changes in this area are limited, although the demand for paid social services remains or even increases (Social services sector: now the state has confidence in public organisations, 2016). However, in addition to the mentioned influence on the political processes in the country (see Subsection 3.1.), social policies also demonstrate the influence of the Russian Federation. This influence is directly related to the formation of the discourse of active ageing in the country.

In 2018, two years after the adoption in Russia of the 'Strategy for action in the interests of senior citizens in the Russian Federation until 2025' the Ministry of labour of the Republic of Belarus announced in 2019 the need to develop a National Strategy for Active Ageing to determine the main areas of work with older people and measures to support retraining in other professions or use existing experience (Petroshevich, 2018). The Minister of Labour and Social Protection, I. Kostevich, added that this document 'will determine our steps on all fronts in relation to older people in all spheres of their life' (National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus, 2019, The draft strategy for active ageing was planned to be submitted to the Council of Ministers in October).

However, in September 2019, the strategy received a new working title: 'Decent Longevity — 2020-30', which will be submitted to the government for approval (Reformation, 2019, Sept. 30). Members of the public are not involved in creating this strategy, and there is no broad discussion of this document in the media. According to government officials and experts, it is known that this document: 'defines the main areas of work aimed at maintaining active ageing for older people. An older person should not be associated with such an image: a person reaches retirement age and gets a "well-deserved rest" (Reformation, 2019, Sept. 30). It was assumed that in December 2019, the strategy will be submitted to the government for approval and 'all its provisions will be introduced into the sectoral state programmes' (Reformation, 2019, Sept. 30).

It is important to note that the concept of 'active ageing' used by the WHO (2002) and common in the academic literature has not been translated but adapted – literally as 'active ageing'. That is, the negative connotation of the word 'ageing' was seen in direct translation, which was changed to the more positively perceived term 'longevity'. This negative perception of the very concept of 'ageing' may be a sign of the denial or fear of ageing present in Belarusian (and Russian) discourses, hence requiring separate understanding and articulation.

Thus, the concept of 'active ageing' is being introduced into Belarusian socio-political discourse and into the conceptual framework of national legal documents; it determines both the development of social policies in relation to old age and the perception of old age in general.

3.3. The Belarusian economic context and its demographic resources

As the strategy of 'active ageing' is a product of the neoliberal economy and an attempt to respond to the economic and demographic challenges facing developed countries, the peculiarities of the Belarusian economic and demographic context are of interest. According to GDP growth indicators, Belarusian command economy showed stable growth in those periods when the price of Russian energy resources was favorable (by 1998, economic growth was 11%, and by 2004 it was 11% again). The decline began in 2001 when Russia experienced a financial default, as well as in difficult periods for Russia – 2009 and after 2014 (WorldBank Belarus, 1990-2019). After 2018, there was a steady decline, even though the export of Belarusian goods continued under restrictions imposed by Russia on imports from other countries.

In 2018, there were 438 unemployable people over the retirement age per 1000 people of employable age (Belstat, 2019, p. 75). Data for 2019 shows that the old-age dependency ratio continues to increase - the share of people over the retirement age was 24,53% (Belstat, 2020, p. 7). Economic factors that force Belarusians of employable age to emigrate remain relevant. Polish legislative initiatives, as well as the absence of a border with the Russian Federation, make it easier for Belarusians to access these labour markets.

In such circumstances, in order to mitigate the negative effects of demographic ageing on the country's economy, an increase in the retirement age was introduced in 2016, which increased the group of employable people. Nevertheless, experts note the deepening of the economic crisis and a decline in the standard of living in the country: 'During the last two years, absolute poverty in Belarus has increased twofold and reached 29% of the population' (Mazol, 2017).

The researchers K. Bornukova, K. Lisenkova, and A. Luzgina (2015) believe that at this stage the transition to an accumulative pension system is impossible for the

Republic of Belarus. Until macroeconomic stabilisation is achieved, only the features of the current pension system can be reformed. The authors show that without reform, the budget deficit of the Social Protection Fund will exceed 1.8% of GDP by 2020. While Bornukova, Lisenkova and Luzgina propose raising the retirement age for men and women to 65 years as a suitable measure, G. Shimanovich and A. Chubrik (2013) note that it is impossible to provide a decent period of life in retirement, especially for men.

Another very important conclusion is arrived at by researchers regarding the standard of living of Belarusian pensioners and the level of inequality in this social group. They draw attention to the fact that part of the older population benefits from the opportunity to continue their work, while when the retirement age increases, other citizens remain without guaranteed pension payments and, as consequently, fall below the absolute poverty line. If the retirement age is increased, the financial state of pensioners will not improve even if they are successfully employed (Chubrik & Shimanovich, 2013). K. Gaiduk, A. Chubrik and R. Giucci (2007) believe that the reform of Belarusian pension system should include not only an increase in the retirement age, but also an introduction of a two-level system. Moreover, according to the recent data, Belarus ranks bottom in the rating of The best European countries for retirement, occupying the last (37) place (Blacktower FMG, 2021). The ranking is based on several key factors: crime index, cost of living index, old age dependency rate, house price and life expectancy.

The minimum size of an old-age pension is 25 percent of the maximum value of the minimum subsistence level on average per capita, approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus for the last two quarters (Article 23 of the Law). As of January 1, 2019, the average age pension in the country was 216 rubles 3 kopecks (or 91.25 euros), and the minimum age pension was 53 rubles 55 kopecks (or 22.62 euros) (Benefit, 2019). In 2019, the Ministry of Labour stated that it 'expects to reach the ratio of the average age pension to the average salary at the level of at least 40% by the end of this year' (BELTA, 2019, August 5).

Demography considers ageing as one of the modern problems associated with sustainable changes in the way the population is renewed. On the one hand, these changes are forced by a reduction in the birth rate, on the other – an increase in the life expectancy of people and, as a result, an increase in the share of older and old people. Migration also brings changes in the age structure of regions. The population ageing is becoming relevant for places where the employable population decreases, which can be either regions of one country (villages and small localities), or entire countries.

Belarusian researchers use two types of indicators to assess demographic ageing: 1) they calculate the ratio of older people to the total population; 2) they calculate

the average and median ages of the population. The first indicator is used by many international organisations, and while the EU and OECD consider 65 years as old age, UN studies calculate it based on the age of 60. It is based on these indicators that population ageing scales are developed, for example, the scale of J. Beaujeu-Garnier—E. Rossette, which defines the demographic old age of the population by reaching the proportion of people aged 60 years and over 12% of the population (Chereshnev & Chistova, 2017).

The UN uses the following classification of communities in relation to population ageing: a young community has less than 4% of individuals aged 65 and over; a mature community has between 4% and 7% of such individuals; and an old community has more than 7% of people aged 65 and over (UN, 2019). This figure is used to calculate the shares of older and very old people (aged 80 or 85 years) in the population, index of ageing (the ratio of older people to the number of children under the age of 15), and the age dependency ratio (old-age dependency ratio) (UN, 2019). At the same time, the age (chronological) limits of employability differ in various countries and regions, so there may be variations in the proportions of employable population (see Table 4).

Table 4. Old-age dependency ratio in Europe, Belarus, and neighbourhood countries.

Country	Old-age dependency ratio (65+/20-64)		Prospective old-age dependency ratio		Economic old-age dependency ratio	
	2019	2030	2019	2030	2019	2030
Belarus	24.1	36.2	20.1	26.4	30.9	41.1
Latvia	34.5	46.4	24.6	28.9	47.7	63.9
Lithuania	33.5	50.4	21.8	26.0	51.8	75.8
Poland	29.2	40.2	16.1	22.6	41.4	56.5
Russia	24.3	34.7	19.3	25.9	27.3	38.6
Ukraine	26.6	33.3	25.7	29.5	28.6	35.0
Europe	31.3	40.6	19.2	22.6	41.5	54.1

Source: prepared by the author according to ‘World Population Ageing 2019’ (UN, 2019).

The demographic situation in Belarus today is characterised by a significant ageing of the population (21% of the population are over 60 years, while 13.7% of the population are over 65 years); however, according to UN forecasts, by 2050 the share of older people in the Republic of Belarus will have been about 31.4% (Antipova, 2017, p. 131). Transformations in the population age structure are typical for Europe

as a whole, but mesoregions tend to differentiate in the scale of ageing. Belarusian researcher E. Antipova (2017) used the method of calculating the ageing synthetic coefficient to assess the intensity of demographic ageing of Belarusian population and concluded that 40% of cities and 35% of administrative districts of Belarus belong to the most intense of the eight types of ageing – ‘unrestrained ageing’, while 48% of districts belong to the second most intense type of ageing – ‘increased ageing’ (p. 131).

Analysing the demographic situation in Belarus, E. Antipova and B. Manak (2007) differentiate various factors of regional differences: the historical, natural-geographical, economic-geographical, economic, social, and the settlement factor (urban and rural settlements), as well as the environmental (specific for post-Chernobyl Belarus), ethno-confessional, and geopolitical. Antipova (2017) concludes that there are differentiation and polarisation in the country’s demographic development and identifies three demographic zones: 1) the zone of persistent favorable demographic situation, which includes the capital and the central region; 2) the relatively favorable demographic zone, which includes the Polesie region; 3) the unfavorable demographic situation zone, which includes the Northern, Western, and Eastern regions.

The ageing of Belarusians is characterised by three main groups of factors: demographic and economic, and factors of social infrastructure and the population’s standard of living (Yuzaeva, 2016). That is why it is important to highlight these factors as well.

Urbanisation, whose main period fell in the 1950s to 1970s, remains relevant in modern Belarus. The increase in the population’s proportion of city dwellers is reflected by the increasing importance of cities in the economic life of the country. At the end of the 19th century, the urban population was about 10% of the total, while by 1959 it had already reached 31%; it continued to steadily increase, making up 69% of the population in 1999 (Krasovsky, 2002, p. 64). These processes are steadily reducing the demographic potential of many rural settlements and urban-type settlements.

Belarusian urban researchers noted an artificial increase in the number of cities in the post-war period, a weak manifestation of agglomeration processes (Krasovsky, 2002, p. 65). The high rates of industrialisation facilitated urbanisation in the country in the post-war period. However, in the highly developed countries where the processes of decentralisation and suburbanisation began, with the reorientation of migrant flows to the suburbs, the fourth stage of urbanisation ended in the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, in Belarus, such processes have been caused by economic crises and a decrease in the level of production (Krasovsky, 2002, p. 69).

However, Belarus has the highest level of urbanisation among the countries of the former Soviet Union, comparable to the level of urbanisation in the Czech Republic and Switzerland; about 74% of Belarusian residents live in cities. It is young people aged 15 to 19 who make up more than 80% of the population growth of Minsk, due to migration (Belarus has the highest level of urbanisation throughout the area of the former Soviet Union, 2012). Contradictions in the demographic development of regions and settlements are surmountable only if the quality of living conditions in these settlements has minimal differences. Therefore, at present, urbanisation processes still have a significant impact on the dynamics of ageing in the regions of the country.

Despite the 'loud' statements that 'Belarus has overcome depopulation' made rather vocally, when in 2016 natural population growth was noted in the republic (BELTA, 2017, January 18), negative trends, first recorded in 1993, persist in this area. The decline in the birth rate depends on the level of socio-economic development, as well as on the social changes that are typical for a given society. Improving the position of women in the labour market, and increasing protection against risks, stimulates fertility. The total fertility rate, that is the average number of births per woman in a hypothetical generation over an entire life, in Belarus in 2017 was 1.5 (Total Fertility Rate, n.d.). Compared with the total fertility rate in Europe, also 1.5, the situation in Belarus looks good. However, among highly developed countries with a high level of social support for families, there is an increase in this indicator; for instance, Finland (1.83), Sweden (1.9) and Norway (1.88). Africa remains the region with the highest total fertility rate (4.6) (Total Fertility Rate, n.d.).

The decline in the birthrate in Belarus is also associated with the manifestation of aspects of 'European' reproductive behaviour: striving for self-realisation, career growth, high consumption standards (Fertility trends in Belarus and in the world, and gender roles, 2015). A. Sidorenko (2016), Senior Advisor of the European Center for Social Welfare Policy and Research, argues that 'of the two primary causes of population ageing – low fertility and low mortality – the former one is obviously at play in all ex-Soviet states' (p. 8).

The average age of a mother giving birth to her first child in Belarus is 25.4 years, but there is already a trend towards an increase in the average age at the first marriage and the birth of the first child (Belstat, 2018). The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat) reports the Belarusian birth rate (the ratio of the number of live births during the calendar year to the average annual population) measured per 1,000 population as being 9.9, while the death rate is 12.7 per 1000 people (Belstat, 2018). At the same time, rural mortality is twice as high as urban, and the rate of natural population increase/decline in rural areas is 22 times higher than in urban areas: -11 in rural areas and -0.5 in cities per 1,000 per year.

Natural population decline in 2018 in Belarus amounted to 26,000 people (Belstat, 2018).

The age structure of the population of the Republic of Belarus, and the dynamics of the number of pensioners in the country, reflect the consequences of the heterogeneity of Belarusian generations: sharp fluctuations in the number of pensioners in the last three decades are associated with critical historical periods (the collectivisation and repressions of the 1930s, World War II in 1939-1945, and the post-war famine of 1946-1947). The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster (1986) that have already been seen, and will be seen, for the age pyramid and the dynamics of the development of the Belarusian population, have not yet been thoroughly studied.

In developed countries, 'ageing from the top' is of increasing relevance. It is demographic ageing of the population caused by an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in mortality among older people. However, in Belarus, as in other post-Soviet countries, ageing follows the 'ageing from the bottom' type, which is characterised by a slight increase in life expectancy, and at the same time a low birth rate, high mortality of the working-age population, and the outflow of skilled professionals (Sidorenko, 2016, p. 35). Such trends indicate a 'mortality crisis' in some countries of the post-Soviet region (Sidorenko, 2016, p. 29) and the specific phenomenon of these countries, that is, 'ageing without living longer' (Sidorenko, 2016, p. 29). Thus, nations are ageing, but longevity does not increase significantly.

Today, the general life expectancy in the republic is 69.44, while for men it is 63.59 (with a prescribed retirement age of 63 years), and for women 75.53 years. That is, there is a gap between the life expectancies of men and women of about ten years. Such a significant gap between the genders is also typical for other countries of the former Soviet Union, but especially for Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, and is 'beyond anything ever recorded in peace-time population history' (Sidorenko, 2016, p. 30).

However, demographers are focusing their attention on another indicator – life expectancy at age 60, which in 2016 was 15.9 years for men and 22.3 years for women. The World Health Organisation also calculates healthy life expectancy at birth (61.4 years for men and 69.3 years for women in Belarus in 2016), as well as healthy life expectancy at 60 (12.3 years for men and 17.2 years for women in Belarus in 2016) (WHO, 2018). That is, men who turned 60 in 2016 can expect to live for just over the next twelve years of their lives 'in full health' (WHO, 2018).

According to the 2016 Global Burden of Disease Study, a Belarusian man who turned 30 in 2016 can be expected to live to 70 years of age, and a Belarusian woman of the same age can live to 80 years of age (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), n.d.). This demographic feature reflects negative social phenomena arising from the prevalence of widowhood amongst older women:

the risks of living alone with limited access to home care, and the risk of social isolation (Sidorenko, 2016, p. 30). Other researchers insist on the negative impact of infectious diseases, environmental pollution, and insufficient development of medicine (Cockerham, 1999; Hertzman, 1995), as well as stressful socioeconomic conditions 'for the downturn in life expectancy, that accompanied mature Soviet-style socialism' (Cockerham, Snead, & DeWaal, 2002).

According to the Minister of Health of the Republic of Belarus, V. Malashko: 'Over the past 20 years, life expectancy in Belarus has increased by 5.5 years and reached its maximum in 2017 at 74.3 years. The trend towards a reduction in the difference in life expectancy between men and women continues' (BELTA, 01.10.2018). At the same time, the title of the article and the presentation of information by other media incorrectly use the term 'life expectancy at birth' as the average life expectancy. That is, there is a chance that a modern Belarusian infant will live up to 74.3 years, but this is not the real arithmetic average life expectancy of all citizens of the Republic of Belarus who died in 2017. Unfortunately, life expectancy at birth of men who were born in 1960 and have not yet retired (according to the new legislation upon reaching 63 years of age) is 65.03 years, for those born in 1970 – 66.67 years, and for those born in 1980 – 65.58 years, in 1990 – 66.30 years, in 2000 – 63.40 years, while for those born in 2010 – 64.60 years (Life expectancy at birth, 2017). That is, life expectancy at birth after reaching retirement age and the cessation of activity in the labour market does not even reach five years, and for some generations, the ages virtually coincide.

Researchers identify various factors that could affect such a short life expectancy. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the researchers reported a subsequent mortality crisis and dropping life expectancy (Bornukova & Lisenkova, 2017). In uncovering the causes of these negative phenomena, some research has focused on the role of the healthcare systems (Schechter, 1992; Field, 1995; Garrett, 2003; Rivkin-Fish, 2005) or on the role of socio-economic changes in individual practices (Brown & Rusinova, 1993; Brown & Rusinova, 2002; Rivkin-Fish, 2005; Cockerham, 2000). However, some have blamed the structural problems of doctors, the Soviet healthcare system as the cause of this crisis: insufficient funding, the dependent position of, and a lack of nurses (Field, 1995; Burger, Field & Twigg, 1998). Thus, the problems with life expectancy in the post-Soviet region are natural and are caused by the systemic impossibility of adequately addressing issues typical for developed industrial societies: cardiovascular problems, various types of cancer, chronic illnesses, alcoholism, accidents, and other external reasons (Schechter, 1992; Burger, Field & Twigg, 1998).

According to the portal 'Unity.Democracy.Freedom', the mortality rate among men of employable age in Belarus is 4.5 times higher than in the EU in general. The leading causes are diseases of the circulatory system, myocardial infarction, cancer,

and external causes. The Deputy Head of the Department of Population, Gender and Family Policy of the Ministry of Labour, M. Artemenko, called accidental alcohol poisoning one of the leading external causes of death of the employable male population (about 5% of all the employable-age deaths in 2015) (UDF, 2016, Male mortality in Belarus is at 4.5 times higher than in the EU...). Belarus is consistently among the world leaders in alcohol consumption and, according to the WHO, one-third of the adult population of Belarusians smokes (Astapenya, 2018).

Concerning emigration and migration of labour, it is difficult to assess the impact of this factor in the context of the non-transparency of statistics and the absence of a real border with the Russian Federation. There is a similar situation with the assessment of unemployment in the country – the statistics are questionable. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in the report 'The Adapted Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of the Republic of Belarus' (UNECE, 2012-2013) recommends, among other things, describing 'in the statistical law the principle of "professional independence", including 'powers and procedures for the appointment of the chairman', to 'ensure in the statistical law that the Chairperson of Belstat is endowed with 'full administrative autonomy', and to 'ensure that statistical information, including the one obtained from new surveys, should by law be published as soon as it becomes available, without prior government access to it' (UNECE, 2012-2013). The assessment group believes that 'it is necessary to step up efforts to improve the transparency of data flows and statistical information'. The group also recommends that Belstat should 'publish Belstat's statistical methodologies on their website in English to facilitate international partner assessment and increase transparency' (UNECE, 2012-2013).

According to the official state statistics, which records only those migrants who sign agreements with foreign employers through official employment agencies, in 2013 the number of Belarusians working abroad was only 5,715 people (Eliseev, 2012, p. 3; Eliseev, 2015). A. Eliseev (2012), Academic Director of the Warsaw Analytical Centre EAST, believes that 'since gaining independence, the migration balance in Belarus has been negative and is estimated at up to -130, 000 people <...>. The data of the official statistics on the balance of external migration and the number of labour migrants are distorted, due to an inefficient methodology for registering migrants. At the same time, political considerations did not contribute to a more critical approach to assessing migration parameters by official academic institutions' (p. 1).

Eliseev (2015) noted the increasing attractiveness of the Polish labour market for Belarusians. The number of work visas to Poland received by Belarusians from 2015 to 2017 increased almost sevenfold to more than 35,000 visas and 58,000 invitations. The number of holders of 'Pole cards', documents giving citizens of the Republic of Belarus the right to a simplified procedure for obtaining a residence permit, legal

employment, and admission to educational institutions, has increased (Eliseev, 2012). Experts K. Mrozek and A. Eliseev predict a further increase in short-term and long-term labour migration of Belarusians in connection with the problems of employment in Belarus and the standard of living (Daneiko, 2018).

In such economic and demographic conditions, in order to reduce the burden on the country's budget, a gradual increase in the retirement age was undertaken in 2016, which increased the group of people of working age, while continuing the development of strategies in the field of social policy for the revitalisation of older people in the labour market. Although barriers to the development of active ageing in the country are low life expectancy (and its quality), as well as the precarisation of the work of older people, attention to these problems remains insufficient.

3.4. The sociocultural context

With the development of the theory of the habitus of P. Bourdieu (1973, 1979, 1990, 1993), studies in this direction have added attention to the sociocultural context and content. The attention is focused on the differences in the social experiences of ageing, with regards to old age, cultural practices and values of old age and ageing (on the conscious, unconscious, and body levels), as well as the ways of transferring and reproducing social norms and value orientations, including ageism (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005; Kempf, 1999; Smolkin, 2016). The modern Belarusian community is being gradually 'displaced' (using the term of Bourdieu itself) from local and national settings and increasingly feels the influence of global forces and processes. Nevertheless, the institutional context, economic and political characteristics, though with trends common in Europe in terms of demography, are distinct and specific (see Subsections 3.1, 3.2., 3.3.).

The sociocultural and socio-political discourses of local, regional and global levels affect cultural and historically conditioned values, social attitudes and habits; however, it is difficult to compute the strength of the impact of each component individually, and even more so to predict them for the future. These discourses can both compete and echo each other, moulding a set of core values – the fundamental attitudes that, prior to their replacement, affect the habits of several generations.

In the same way that P. Baudrillard (2000) has compared old age with the 'third world' and older people as a population in colonial countries, old age is also investigated in those territories that until recently were part of the 'second' and 'third' worlds. The processes of understanding old age and changing traditional ideas about social roles are even more urgent in these regions that are characterised by changes in the ratio of centre and periphery, the instability of government

systems, corruption, distortions of historical memory, *etc.* in both the Third and the Second World (Dirlik, 1994).

The traditional hierarchy of three worlds no longer works. Only a complementary tool will help us 'to rethink modern imperialism' on an interterritorial scale (Chari & Verdery, 2009, p. 12). Nevertheless, while the traditional hierarchy can be changed at the level of the field of power, the cultural field can preserve and reproduce traditional discourses (Bourdieu, 1973). 'The identity of the postcolonial is no longer structural but discursive' (Dirlik, 1994, p. 332); therefore, the analysis of discourses in these problematic regions is relevant in the context of the global postcolonial situation.

Belarus is a specific example of a post-communist state which does not rely on the ethnic factor, as the ethnic composition of the population is predominantly homogenous. Ethnic Belarusians make up the majority of the population (83% according to the 2009 population census). The peculiarity of the ethnically homogeneous population of the country is the vulnerable position (according to the UNESCO definition) and the ambiguousness of the real status of the national language. The problem of the national language is called a marker of the issue of the self-determination of Belarusians (Bekus, 2011, p. 118; 2014), since only 23% of the population use Belarusian as a spoken language (Belstat, 2018).

Russianisation, also known as Russification, was a long-term political and ideological tool of the Russian Empire, and then of the Soviet authorities, in the process of assimilating Belarusians and levelling out the cultural and linguistic identity of Belarus. A short period of Belarusianisation in the 1920s was finished with the massive repressions of the Belarusian intelligentsia during the so-called era of 'friendship of peoples'. The new national and linguistic policy, formulated in the USSR Constitution of 1936, was aimed at creating the unity of the peoples of the USSR. The Russian language was to become the basis of that new unity; therefore, the enthusiasts of the national revival were to be destroyed. For instance, all the Belarusian linguists preparing the five-volume 'Explanatory Dictionary of the Belarusian Language' were killed. In this regard, the Belarusian language has become both a symbol of social outsiders and a 'sign of trouble' (according to the formulation by the philosopher V. Akudovich (2007, p. 122)). By the 1970s, there were no Belarusian-language schools left in Belarusian towns and cities; they had all been closed. The language of the titular ethnic group changed its social status, having ceased to be public and having lost its social credibility. The use of the Belarusian language as a language of communication became synonymous with ignorance or a sign of rural origins.

Although *Perestroika* marked a new stage for the activity of the Belarusian intelligentsia to revive the culture and again actualised the process of the national

self-determination of Belarusians, this period was short-lived. The extensive public debate following the country's independence led to the adoption of the Law on Languages in the BSSR by Parliament in January 1990, and then to the ratification of a decree making Belarusian the only state language. However, Belarusianisation was stopped by the results of the 1994 presidential election won by Lukashenka. That choice defined a new trajectory in the understanding of the Soviet legacy and the role of the Belarusian language in the processes of nation-building. At present, there are no Belarusian-language universities in the country; there are no Belarusian-language schools in Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Grodno (only 2% of urban schoolchildren were educated in Belarusian in 2012-2013). 1st-grade children have only one lesson in the Belarusian language a week (Belstat, 2018).

Since the establishment of the new Belarusian state, attempts by the opposition politicians or cultural figures to draw attention to the vulnerable position of the Belarusian language and culture have been meeting with acute rejection and accusations of nationalism: 'In Belarus, as a result of the activities of a group of nationalists and some state executive structures dancing to their tune, an unnatural situation has developed, when Russian, the language of the indigenous nation, spoken and thought in by the majority of the citizens of the Republic, is outlawed and, in every possible way, is infringed upon and suppressed (Lastovsky, 2010, p. 63). The idea of commonality of peoples has been developing into the idea of restoring a common state with Russia, which formed the basis of the concept of the 'Union State'.

Such 'weakness' or 'immaturity' of the national identity of the people, according to V. Rovdo (2008), is the most critical cultural obstacle on the country's path to democracy (p. 149). Akudovich (2000) introduces the concept of a 'swamp' to define the dialectical principle of the idea of Belarus (p. 3). It is the absence of a dominant idea that would structure reality and shape the centre, building a metanarrative, which is the determining factor for the 'swamp'. From that comes the desire of the society to establish an order which is understandable and familiar from the times of the Soviet totalitarian state. The Soviet system is attractive as it orders reality according to the familiar specific order (in Bauman's philosophy, it becomes synonymous with totalitarianism and subordination, preventing free development (Davydzik, 2010, p. 112).

Even though researchers have noted earlier problems with the formulation of the national idea, the presence of a particular mentality is noted by cultural studies scholars and philologists (Chernyavskaya, 2010; Smirnova, 2015; Kirienko, 2004, 2009, 2018; Melnikov, 2004). Specific traditions and cultural differences of Belarusians are clearly articulated in everyday life and are being studied by researchers. It is the presence of this national specificity that justifies the need to analyse the cultural

context for a deeper study of the Belarusian discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing'.

Studies of the traditional beliefs of Belarusians about old age and older people provide various options for understanding them. Old age is often a characteristic of God who is all-wise 'because he is old' (Chernyavskaya, 2010, p. 108) or a saint, although the image of an old man has a common and realistic character. Elders are endowed with wisdom and a deep understanding of the essence of things; sometimes they are poor or weak, but they possess invaluable knowledge and experience. Besides, the characteristic qualities of the Belarusian *Muzhik* (a rural male dweller), such as 'fatalism, submissiveness to circumstances, patience, some social lethargy ('indolence')', (Chernyavskaya, 2010, p. 112) largely remain formative for the old Belarusian man. Although common sense or learnedness can distinguish a traditional person from the environment and contradicts the desire of a Belarusian 'to be like everyone else', as well as the Belarusian value of 'quietness' (Chernyavskaya, 2010, p. 122), learnedness or moralising is not condemned among the older generation. Old age allows us to mentor and stand out with common sense; however, not with knowledge garnered from books, but with wisdom and by reading hidden meanings.

It is essential to focus on the masculinity of the wise elder's image. The authority of a man in the family is unquestioned, as is his will; however, with the transition to the category of the elders, it is endowed with symbolic respect. Owing to the transition to this social group, 'the *muzhik* is approaching perfection' (Chernyavskaya, 2010, p. 136). The characteristic features of old age are: wisdom; detachment from passions; altruism (life for grandchildren and great-grandchildren); calling for respect; and being allowed to play the role of an observer, mentor and, in some situations, an arbiter.

The image of the *baba* (a *muzhik's* wife) as 'the significant other' in Belarusian folk tales is the opposite of the 'quiet' and reasonable *muzhik*. The '*baba*' has many vicious traits. She is cunning, noisy, curious, susceptible to temptations, unfaithful, and is therefore associated with the devil. Based on this, men are forced to use physical force so that peaceful, quiet coexistence could become possible (Chernyavskaya, 2010, p. 204). The masculine nature of the culture paints the image of the *baba* as an anti-model, inappropriate to female behaviour, occasionally offering an ideal image of a 'good wife': hard-working, quiet, and obedient. J. Chernyavskaya (2010) notices a significant contradiction: the age types of a man are organically included in a unified image (a youngster, a man, and an old man), whereas 'a woman at different ages is not identical' (p. 211). A girl is either romantic and gentle, or creative and smart. A woman is either a 'good wife' and 'mother', or an 'old woman' (*baba*); as for the image of an older woman, it is associated with the images of a mature woman:

an old loving and kind mother or an evil mother-in-law, or a reckless woman. The characteristics in these cases are identical to being middle-aged.

However, in contemporary post-modern Belarusian society, whose traditional culture is dynamically displaced to the periphery (in its broad sense), the chronologically nearest period is also crucial for understanding the socio-cultural context. In the cultural field of Belarusians, the legacy of the Soviet epoch, the era of industrialisation, collectivisation, and communism building, is noticeable to researchers. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many studies on the specific culture of socialism and the daily practices of the Soviet people have emerged (Boym, 1994; Neidhart, 2002; Gerasimova, 2002; Aronson, 2015; Chari & Verdery, 2009; Rogers & Verdery, 2013; Yurchak, 2013). The transformations of Soviet society and social institutions also influenced the perception of older people as a social group.

The ideology of the new Soviet state rejected the pre-revolutionary traditions and social norms ('We will build our new world!'), and older people, transmitting the social experience and values that had become irrelevant, were stigmatised as ideologically alien, backward, corrupting the new generation with religious education and superstition. Older women were particularly subjected to such rejection (Romashova, 2019). Unlike children and the youth, being on the frontline of such large-scale social, economic, and cultural changes, older people were perceived as a relic of the past and an obstacle to modernisation. M. Chudakova (2001) wrote about the marginal status of old age: 'The old were equated with the dying out, and the process of extinction should not have focused anyone's attention <...>. Youth and old age ceased to be equally natural biological phenomena, different stages of the same human life. The young were certainly not going to grow old. Old age was not to be trusted, it was suspect' (p. 387, as cited in Romashova, 2019).

However, from rejecting and stigmatising old citizens as the representatives of the pre-revolutionary past, in the 1930s, the discourse of old age turned to the motive of transferring valuable experience and connecting generations in building a bright future (Romashova, 2019). This rhetoric was used to glorify the merits of the new state and to express the gratitude of older generations to the Soviet people for the opportunity to have a 'secure and peaceful old age' (Romashova, 2019). With the development of the pension system, especially after the inclusion of collective farm workers in 1964, a social structure had been formed that positively affected the image of old age as the age associated with certain privileges. Even former housewives who were not paid retirement pensions strengthened their authority at home.

This was facilitated by the mobilisation of women in the labour market; additional factors were a shortage of nurseries and kindergartens, and strict anti-abortion legislation, as well as the increase in single-parent families after World War II, and

the housing problems that prevented young people from living separately from their parents. The active participation of older people in the lives of their children and grandchildren was not only supported but also cultivated by thematic posters, films, op-ed essays, etc. The official discourse recognised old age as worthy of respect and requiring care and attention from others (Romashova, 2019). M. Romashova (2019) speaks of a new generational contract that institutionalised the role of older women in the family and society. The performance of feasible activities and labour input by older people increased the importance of older citizens and constructed a normative type of behaviour for an older person. That is, if the discourse of 'active ageing' in Western Europe in 1980-1990 was a way to counteract the social isolation of the old age adults and their activation in the labour market, we can say that in the Soviet Union the active participation of older people in the lives of their children and grandchildren, their voluntary assistance and labour contribution were popularised as normative behaviour in the 1960s and were not associated with neoliberal ideology. It is noteworthy that before the modern 'wave' of activation of people of an older age, there was a noticeable period when the concept of having a 'deserved rest' spread in conjunction with the concepts of 'old age' and 'ageing'.

Another important aspect of the social and economic reality of the pensioners in the Soviet state (mainly the urban intelligentsia) was the opportunity to travel around the country and regularly stay at health-improvement facilities. It was in the last decades of the USSR when the concept of a 'well-deserved rest' as part of the Soviet ideological discourse gained regular usage and general acceptance. The right to rest was proclaimed by the Constitution of 1936, and in the second half of the 20th century, 'in the concept of rest, semantic evolution brought to the fore the idea of the absence of duties: rest is the antithesis of work' (Levontina, Shmelev, & Zaliznyak, 2012, p. 350), and the right to rest became associated with retirement in the 1970-1980s. This fixed usage of the collocation 'well-deserved' rest as almost being synonymous with retirement itself was characteristic of the Soviet discourse and its population whose conscious life began at that time.

Another important aspect that deserves special attention in connection with the available data for analysis concerns gender. Since the 'issue of women' was perceived in the Soviet Union as 'a secondary conflict of fundamental class antagonism' (Ousmanova, 2003, p. 38), gender issues were not a popular topic of discussion. When the Communist Party came to power, the original contradiction between capital and labour was resolved. However, the change in the position of women in the family and society was radical.

As S. Ashwin (2000) writes, 'In Soviet times, <...> the authorities tried to create a specific configuration of gender relations – a triangle in which the relations of men and women with the state were more important than their relationship with each

other' (pp. 1-2). Women, gaining a relatively more stable position in the family, then combined both the traditional duties and new social roles entrusted to them by the state. 'What did this imply for Soviet men? If they were able to demonstrate their supposed superiority in the workplace, then their masculine identity was secure <...> Alternatives were not promising – drink and violence being the most obvious outcomes' (Linz & Stepan, 1978, p. 88).

In addition to controlling women's reproductive life, the state provided generous maternity leave and a huge network of child-care centres. These policies not only strengthened dependence on the state (while reducing dependence on men) but also allowed the state to control the process of raising new generations. On the one hand, a woman received the right to self-realisation through work; however, in reality, her role in society and in the family was far from equal. Salaries remained significantly lower compared to that of men, while household responsibilities were still perceived as female. Furthermore, ancestry was represented as a sphere of additional professional realisation of an older woman (Romashova, 2015). In essence, 'Soviet women's emancipation declared the achievement of women's equality and never realised it' (Holmgren, 2013, p. 536). This situation had a significant impact on the perception of old age and activity in old age for different gender groups.

However, there was no movement for women's rights in the USSR. Perhaps this is why, along with the fall of the USSR and the destruction of the gender order artificially created in Soviet times, many models of understanding gender roles emerged in the society, proposed by gender researchers, civil society groups, political parties, and non-governmental organisations. Based on the analysis of the data from many researchers, Ashwin (2000) concludes that 'the gender relations and identities of the Soviet era tended to reflect the combination of traditionalism and radicalism in Bolshevik ideology, and that this was often a cause of tension' (p. 17). Perhaps that is why, following the collapse of the former Soviet state, there was uncertainty and confusion about gender identities and roles. Both men and women's roles were challenged, but, according to Ashwin, the main consequences of the transformations for women were the following: a lack of government support in the labour market and new conditions for competition for jobs; increased discrimination against women; redefining maternity as personal responsibility and the 'destruction of financial security' (Ashwin, p. 20). The new position of women meant that they were without job security, without support for their role as mothers, and without providing any kind of social protection system; all of these factors allowed M. Kiblitckaya (2000) to characterise post-Soviet women-breadwinners as 'divorced from the state' (p. 66).

For men, the collapse of the Soviet system has meant the return of the institution of fatherhood, while economic transformations challenge their work identities with changes in the concept of 'real' male labour. As Aushwin (2000) notes, 'the key

question, however, is whether men are ready to return to the family to resume their paternal responsibilities' (p. 20). The idea of the necessity to increase the role of the father in the family and involve him in actively caring for them is becoming popular in the mass media (Gradszkova, 2007, p. 19). At the same time, the difficult situation in the labour market and the economic crisis are bringing back a patriarchal model of relationships, in which a man is given the role of the 'head' and 'breadwinner' while the role of a 'home keeper' is allocated to the woman; this also gives rise to the idea that it is impossible to be a working mother (Gradszkova, 2007, p. 19).

Today, the new economic relations, increased inequality, and the strengthening of the positions of the traditional patriarchal ideology are shaping new forms of masculine and feminine identity; neo-traditional gender-political discourses flourish, significantly infringing upon women's rights again (Kondakov, 2012, p. 38). The consumer society, without government support for the feminist movement, objectified women 'as trophies and servants to men' (Holmgren, 2013, p. 538). The desire to fix the patriarchal concepts of gender relations and roles is observed today, not only in Russia but also in Poland (Nowak, 2010). Basically, liberalisation in Russia (as well as in Ukraine and Belarus) has promoted the patriarchal, unconventional concept of gender relations, empowering men in the public sphere and relegating the role of women to the background (Hardwick, 2014). This situation of women also affects the understanding of women's old age and can affect the perception of scenarios of living in old age by women and men.

W. Cockerham's studies (1997, 1999, 2000) consistently present the negative consequences of the socialist ideology for the health of Soviet citizens. Inadequate health care, the inability to improve nutrition, or living and working conditions, as well as to reduce environmental pollution – all these were the negative factors that determined the passivity of Soviet citizens towards their own health and predetermined the most critical structural problems in the society's attitude towards health (Cockerham, 1997; Cockerham, Snead & DeWaal, 2002). Alcohol abuse disorders, excessive smoking, mistrust of healthcare institutions, and other negative consequences which were not solved with the collapse of the Soviet Union are called the direct consequences of the Soviet-style socialism. Thus, these researchers reveal the connection between contemporary demographic problems and the sociocultural determinants of the historical context.

It is also important to note that the perception of today's cohort of older people by the younger generations is influenced not only by the logical difference in age and life priorities and values (the eternal 'generation gap') but also by the difference in the attitude of these groups towards the Soviet legacy in various spheres, in particular, in economics and politics. The research conducted by A. Lastovsky and N. Efimova (2013) confirms that the supporters of the BSSR (Byelorussian Soviet

Socialist Republic) are, first of all, older people with a low level of education (p. 444). For the nationally 'conscious' youth, as well as the opponents of the existing political regime in the country, it is older people who are viewed as an obstacle to the country's democratic development and transformations, since their support for the policy of reactivation of the Soviet institutions and ideology, as well as their electoral choice, has led to the contemporary problems and challenges, predetermining them.

In this part of the research, the political, socio-legal, economic-demographic, and sociocultural contexts of the Belarusian pension reform discourses have been analysed. Studies have shown the problems of the formation of the modern official state ideology and its significance in the socio-political field of a country with an authoritarian regime. The dominance of *Russocentrism* and the Russian media in the information field is combined with the growing popularity of global information sources and the influence of global information and entertainment discourses.

The analysis of the Belarusian political context indicates the importance of media communications for the modern Belarusian state and the head of state, who perceives the media as an efficient tool of political influence. For the political regime, which is viewed by experts as populist, it is exceptionally crucial to dominate the media discourse, transmitting a particular image of social reality and convincing people of the realness of this image. The state-controlled media channels, government officials, and pro-government experts use media discourse as a 'soft power' tool, broadcasting ideas and interpretations of concepts and events, as well as competing with the independent media discourses created primarily on the Internet.

It is the examination of the political context that influenced the choice of a separate analysis of the Belarusian official (provided by the state-controlled information agency and the media) and alternative (conditionally independent of the state) media discourses.

Studying the economic and demographic conditions shows the importance and urgency of the challenges of the 'ageing' population facing Belarus and its society. The conclusions of experts about the inadequacy of the modern social security system to these challenges confirm the relevance of studies of problems related to demographic changes and social security of the old age people in Belarus related to the study of the problems of old age and ageing in the country. These contemporary challenges repeatedly raise the questions for discussion and rethinking the established norms (both of the legal and socio-cultural institutions).

The sociocultural context is also subject to rethinking and continuous assessment. The traditions of the perception of old age and older people that are deeply embodied in Belarusian culture and society provide valuable information about the social norms and typical images of older Belarusian people. The studies on this topic reveal the basis on which new meanings grow – the soil into which the seeds of the

new ideas of modern Belarusian and global discourses are sown. Reflection on these meanings and examples of them are offered by the data analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this research. Following O. Shparaga (2010), it can be assumed that ‘the extraction of new possibilities of the present from the conditions of the past that formed us outlines the ways for a different design of the future’ (p. 78).

CHAPTER 4. The concepts of old age and active ageing: interpretations, presentations, problems, and risks

The particular importance of media discourses for the formation of social attitudes and policies, as well as their ability to reflect existing and transmitted ideas in society, influenced the choice of discourses for analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research into concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' within the framework of the modern official and independent Belarusian media discourses, as well as the interpretations shared by members of Belarusian society to uncover the widest possible range of definitions and interpretations.

It is important to note here once again that in the analysis of media discourses, the researcher is primarily interested in the definitions and interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing', so they will be presented in all their breadth and variability. As for the thematic fields related to old age, the text will analyse the most intensively transmitted, since it would be impossible for one piece of research to encompass all of the thematic aspects and problem fields related to old age. So it is the most intensively broadcast – the most popular thematic categories – that will become pivotal for constructing interview questions (see Subsection 2.1.3 and Subsection 4.3.). The results of the qualitative and quantitative research of media discourses revealed the main thematic categories within which 'old age' and 'active ageing' are interpreted. It was these topics that were additionally touched upon during the interview and online survey. Also, that is why the topic-based principle has been used in presenting research results. Subsection 4.3. will then present the ways in which individuals negotiate the concepts proposed by the discourses.

For this research, it is extremely important not only to analyse the definitions and concepts that exist in Belarusian discourses but also to outline social issues specific for contemporary Belarus. Thus, Subsection 4.4. will present those problems that were identified through a comparative analysis of discourses, taking into account the study of the Belarusian political, social, institutional, economic, demographic, and cultural contexts.

4.1. Discourse analysis of the official state-controlled news agency and state-controlled media

The objective of this part of the research is to analyse the official field of the discourses that are formed by the representatives of the state authorities and state-controlled media channels, for the period from January 1, 2017, to August 1, 2019. Based on the concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Sending & Neumann, 2006), it seems necessary to analyse the official policy documents and statements

of actors in authority. On the one hand, we consider the official discourse as the one determining state priorities; on the other hand, as a partial expression of the meanings and attitudes that are prevalent in this particular society (at least among some voters). Therefore, the meanings and content of the concepts analysed in this chapter are considered both as products of and as contributors to modern Belarusian discourse.

- How is old age defined in the official Belarusian discourse? (Who are the old? Who are older people?)
- What are the thematic or problem fields related to old age (the key themes related to old age) covered in the official discourse?
- How is 'active ageing' understood? What is the meaning of the epithet 'active' concerning old/er people?

The analysis has shown the highest intensity of coverage was related to the topic of 'active ageing' in the texts of the official discourse (30.4% of all the analysed publications were attributed to this semantic category). Such popularity of the narrative in the studied materials of the official discourse confirms the importance of the 'active ageing' category for the analysis of the modern discourse of old age. Besides, a significant number of publications cover the interactions between older people and the state (26%); some texts reveal the content of the 'old age' phenomenon, containing discussions about old age, ageing and older people (16.1%). Less popular materials cover the relationship between an older person and society (9.7%), the problems and risks of old age (7.4%), and the labour activity of older people (6.8%). The least number of texts cover the relationship between older persons and their families (3.5%) (see Annexes X, XII). Each of these selected thematic categories will be presented below, along with an analysis of their contents.

4.1.1. Interpretations and presentations of 'old age' and older people in the official state-controlled media discourse

Normativism and monochromy

Anticipating the actual analysis of definitions and interpretations, it is important to note which words are used in the media to refer to persons in the older age group and what the members of this age group are called. This basic vocabulary (as well as the frequency of certain concepts) through which old age and ageing were approached in the articles is of particular interest. When analysing the quantitative indicators of the concepts related to old age, ageing, and older people used in the official discourse, it is necessary to emphasise the high popularity of the neutral words or collocations 'an older person' (31.9%) and 'a pensioner' (31.3%); this is

consistent with the results of the research on the Lithuanian discourse conducted by S. Mikulionienė in 2005 (Mikulionienė, 2005). The word meaning 'a long-liver' (Russian *dolgozhitel/dolgozhitel'nitsa*) is also intensively used within this discourse – 17.7% of the total number of the selected concepts related to the name of the people in this age group. The least used words are those meaning 'an old man'/'old people' (10.1%), 'an old woman' (0.31%), 'an elderly person' (0.3%) (see Annex XIV for the exact quantitative data).

The lexical analysis by the MAXQDA12 program is limited due to the specific aspects of the grammar: it is not possible to separately count the feminine and masculine forms of words with the same stem; but it is possible to compare the frequency of occurrence of such words as 'grandmother'/'granny' (in Russian *babushka/baba*, Belarusian *babulia/baba*) and 'grandfather'/'grandpa' (Russian *dedushka/ded*, Belarusian *dziadulia/dzied*), emphasising not only the age but also the family and social roles of older men and women. In the texts of the official discourse, the usage of the female alternatives of 'grandmother' (5.3%) and 'granny' (0.16%) is almost twice as high as the total number of the male alternatives of 'grandfather' (2.3%) and 'grandpa' (0.6%). In the research of G. Rapolenė (2012), this feminine family and the social concept prevails. Rapolenė refers to the studies of the American media, revealing that women are underrepresented in comparison to men, and the researcher mentions the opposite trend in Lithuania. Such a conclusion could also be attributed to the situation in the official Belarusian discourse. However, it cannot be said whether the higher frequency of the feminine 'grandmother' and the low frequency of the term 'grandfather' appearing in the mass media are connected with a much more independent, unconditioned family role of an older person in this discourse, or with the virtual lack of a greater proportion of older men due to the huge longevity gap and mortality rate of the male population (see Subsection 3.3.).

Thus, when analysing the frequency of the usage of the terms, it is necessary to note the accentuation made on leaving the labour market for both genders (real or potential), as well as on belonging to the senior cohort using the neutral alternatives of 'older', 'long-living'. As for the usage of gender-different terms, the frequency of mentioning women's traditional family roles (regardless of having a family and grandchildren) draws attention. Unfortunately, there is no deep analysis of vocabulary with all mentalities and normativities that could be implied by them; it requires more detailed research with certain tasks.

It should be noted that none of the articles analysed in the public media offers a thorough substantive definition of the 'old age', 'older person', 'older age' concepts, except for the reference to the chronological frameworks and age standards, conditionally established by the World Health Organisation, or the documents

regulating pension legislation and retirement age. During the period under research, only eight articles attempted to define the concepts of 'old age' or 'older people'.

There are two approaches to defining old age in the analysed materials: defining old age as a phenomenon that is not controlled by a person or society; or as a phenomenon that is controlled or partially controlled by a person, medical advances, social attitudes, or other factors.

Old age as a phenomenon that is controlled or partially controlled by society or medical advances

When referring to the urgency of the problem in the Russian discourse, journalists from the *Belarus Segodnya* Publishing House ('Belarus Today') and BELTA discuss the expediency of reviewing the age boundaries adopted in society (also in the form of a public dispute with the thesis, using the terminology of Roy 1994). The journalists use arguments of 'authoritative' personalities, references to experience, traditions, expert statements, and appeal to the readers' common sense, discussing the reasonableness and expediency of expanding the age boundaries. In such materials, old age is defined as a natural process of dying, biologically determined and the same for everyone, even chronologically, and the dispute is not about the substantive component of the definition, but about the chronological frameworks. The authors focus on the changes that have occurred in the understanding of age, as well as the changes in life expectancy due to medicine and technologies, which already allow and will allow in the future the retirement age for those citizens who can still be employable to be postponed: 'Keeping it within the existing frameworks is impossible, otherwise the whole age gradation of the WHO will go to hell. It is just mathematics', says a journalist in the article 'What are our years?' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 26.05.2018)³.

An article on BELTA raises the issue of the necessity to revise the very concept of 'older people', as it has lost precise outlines; the author refers to an expert's opinion that there is no logic in defining 'older person' as a person who has reached the age of 60, while in many countries the retirement age is 68. The article argues that the necessity to revise the concept of 'an older person' and to change the attitude of the state and society towards this age group (BELTA, 13.06.2017). That is, the main factor for attributing a person to the social group of older people is the change in their role in the labour market – their transition to the category of unemployable people. In this case, the biological indicators of a particular individual play a secondary role, as the primary norm becomes the institutionalised one – the right or obligation to

³ Here and below, only the source and date of publication are listed for brevity. A complete list of all publications can be found in Annex XIX.

retire. Such normativism denies not only the heterogeneity of the social group but also other interpretations and forms of old-age living.

In such materials, journalists ask the reader to reflect on the chronological frameworks of old age; and in this case, 'old age' is understood as something conventional that is constructed by society. The same chronological criterion is suggested in other materials: for example, in the article 'Why Ageism conquers the whole world but is doomed to death' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 16.03.2018). The conventional and contractual nature of the definition of age groups is emphasised, as well as the possibility of making changes to the classification, especially in connection with the changing living conditions and the level of medical development (*Belarus Segodnya*, 04.07.2017). This 'external' view of the old age concept as a homogeneous group may take the form of a directive (a call, if J. Searle's illocutionary acts classification is applied), which aims at convincing society to increase the upper boundary of the employable age and encouraging continued active participation in the labour market.

The author's analytical materials emphasise the temporary nature of the modern classifications and the prospect of shifting the age limit up for the old age category: 'Officially, according to the WHO classification, old age starts at 75 years. Those who are over ninety are considered to be 'long-living people'. However, as life expectancy rises on the planet, this gradation becomes obsolete right before our eyes. And there are more and more suggestions to revise it upwards' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 27.09.2017).

The loss of ability to work, as well as the related destructive physical and mental changes, is brought to the fore when defining old age as an unnatural phenomenon – a disease which humankind combats with medical advances. Not only medicines but also lifestyle, nutrition, useful habits, and emotions (psychological processes) are called 'to fight old age' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 21.06.2019). The rhetoric of the fight against old age conflicts with the attempts to bring positive connotations into the concept of old age and with constant appeals to 'accept' and 'rethink' the traditional ideas about this period of life.

Experts from various professional fields, including medicine, speak about the prevalence of the social component in the definition of the age group: 'In my opinion, recently age has been shifting from a purely biological concept to a social one', – says K. Proshchayev, a geriatrician (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.06.2019).

Old age as a phenomenon that is controlled by the individual

Of the attempts to determine old age that have already been mentioned, it is necessary to highlight those that do not refer to the external social or objective physical (biological) factors, but the internal age determinants/identifiers controlled

by the subject. Such an internal age identifier can be a person's internal subjective self-perception and psychological mood. One of the articles by the *Belarus Segodnya* Publishing House quotes L. Zhilevich, the main freelance geriatrician of the Ministry of Health, using her words in the title of the article: 'Old age can come at 40 if you have lost the ability to keep a positive outlook' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 14.04.2018). The readers are asked to reflect on the contemporary demographic challenges, to change their behaviour (health control, vitality) and, above all, their attitude towards old age: 'For some people, 30 years of age is a burden, and for some, even at 70, life is just beginning. It turns out that our years of age is a subjective value' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 14.04.2018).

An even more subjectivist definition of old age is offered by a journalist quoting André Maurois: 'According to André Maurois, the classic of literature, old age is nothing but a bad habit that very busy people do not have time to acquire. And it is hard to disagree with that – as long as you are active, you are young; if not in your passport, then in your soul, for sure. Old age, in my opinion, is synonymous with apathy. And its first sign is when you do not want to leave your sofa' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 10.02.2018). In this case, old age is shifted from the category of objective phenomena to the range of subjective phenomena which are fully controlled by a person. It is the personal will (unwillingness) of an individual that determines their behaviour, well-being, appearance, and social status, so the transition to the category of older people becomes a matter of a personal choice: 'Many scientists around the world are convinced that the human body has the ability to live longer than one hundred years. It is another matter how many of us have really taken advantage of it' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 15.04.2019). However, being convinced of the conventionality of the chronological age frameworks, a person receives clear and specific messages about what old age is, how it should be understood, how it should be presented to a modern person, and what older people are like.

Old age can be characterised as the time of vulnerability and childish naivety. As confirmation, the audience receives data from the crime statistics or the opinions of psychologists who warn about the gradual loss of older people's ability to think critically and state that older people become too gullible: 'Elderly men and women are 'bought' with the imaginary attention from crooks. <...> At the same time, lonely pensioners are more vulnerable than the others' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 12.01.2019). Parallelism is used between older people and children in the rhetoric of the discourse; older people are portrayed as those who must be watched, cared for, and protected from danger. Their relatives are encouraged to talk more often to them so that they do not make contact with strangers or fall into the trap of fraudsters. As a separate consideration, criminal chronicles in which older people were mentioned as victims of criminal acts make up a significant part of the material which was found but

was not selected for further analysis. (The articles were not selected to be analysed because mentioning the age group was only a single statement of the fact. If the material contained reflections on older people, old age or age, the text was included in the further analysis).

Old age and belonging to this social group are also determined through the non-compliance with the standards of the 'young' (body, voice, productivity), which makes up a reason for a compliment or for sending someone 'to retirement' as exemplified by this article on the famous singer: 'So could it be that same Madonna?' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 25.05.2019). An individual's inability to control their body and create a particular visual image becomes a criterion for using the category of 'old age' and the definition of 'old' in relation to a person. And while society judges the discrepancy between calendar age and social expectations (the so-called 'youthful appearance') as positive, the blunders and flaws giving away the age, contrary to the efforts of an older person (primarily women), are judged negatively: 'phiz gig', 'time had taken its toll', 'she is over the hill', and the derogatory 'old lady', found in the provoking question to make a public decision: 'And what do you think, dear readers, isn't it high time for the "old lady" to retire?' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 25.05.2019). It is the audience, members of society, who are invited to assess the compliance of an older singer with the standards of a young singer. To bow out 'on time' is the decision expected from an older person, and the reader is offered a quote by E. Shifrin: 'Who knows exactly when to leave? Old age is not a vice, it is such a non-kosher state when you know how to play Romeo correctly, but you should no longer play Romeo' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 25.05.2019). An ever-young and youthful person receives the compliment of 'unfading' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 09.04.2019).

At the same time, readers are encouraged to get rid of negative stereotypes about old age. Old age is called 'the sunset of a person's life' and the 'elegant age' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 09.04.2019), 'golden age' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 20.06.2019), 'venerable age' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 08.12.2017), and the 'transitional age' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 08.12.2017); and older people are presented as those 'who are young at heart' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 04.01.2019). Geriatric experts and psychologists encourage people to overcome phobias associated with old age, suggesting that old age should be regarded as the 'third stage' of life and stating that this period is associated with physical weakness: 'The three things people are most afraid of in the third stage of life are as follows: being alone, being a burden, and death. Whereby they are not afraid of the very fact that they will cease to exist, but of the fact that passing away will be painful, not nice, and challenging. Perhaps, people are subtly trying to avoid this with the help of someone else, wishing they would take care of them' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.06.2019).

However, the publications have been retransmitting over and over again that 'old age is not joy' as 'folk wisdom', as well as the definitions of old age as a destructive

uncontrolled process culminating in death. At the same time, a paraphrased version of folk wisdom also appears: 'old age is joy', and the main reason and driving force of changes in the public consciousness are attributed to the demographic ageing of the population in the country and the region as a whole. An expert and a member of the 'Decent Longevity' coalition, R. Sinelnikova, critically reviews the negative stereotypes rooted in the Belarusian society and draws attention to the 'invisibility' of older people for the society: 'Once they retire, they disappear, as if they are covered with an invisible hat. And only social services interact with them' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 20.06.2019). Both the expert and the journalist focus on the heterogeneity of the group and the prevailing majority of active, healthy older people who are mobile and positive, and therefore they live longer.

Old age is called the time of new achievements and opportunities, and unlike the Japanese, who call old age the age of contemplation, the Belarusians are encouraged to use their strength and experience – 'The main thing is to give back to others what they have accumulated. This is why older people often become volunteers. For example, they help children who have difficulty learning. In Finland, such a teaching assistant position is **even** paid for' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 20.06.2019, emphasis supplied). That is, instead of the mythologeme of 'a well-deserved rest', which was widespread in the USSR (Levontina, Shmelev, Zaliznyak, 2012), older people are encouraged to meet new demographic challenges and social expectations. The emphasis on the possibility to pay for their work forms a disciplining attitude among older people to free work and the lack of expectations for a decent salary.

The naturalisation of work for the benefit of all brings older people's work out of the traditional economy and reduces the importance of their personal preferences. Old age becomes a period of forced usefulness. However, the vector of support in the opposite direction turns out to be unequal: 'According to R. Sinelnikova, it is important not to cultivate dependence: an older person, like any adult, is responsible for their life, health, condition, and social connections. Only when they are not able to manage on their own should we come to their aid' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 20.06.2019). Like any adult, an older person is responsible for themselves, but they should not demand the same payment for their work as any other adult. Such attempts to approve new social attitudes are found in the materials covering the realisation of older people's potential 'to meet their needs in all areas of life' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 20.06.2019) and deserve separate consideration and research.

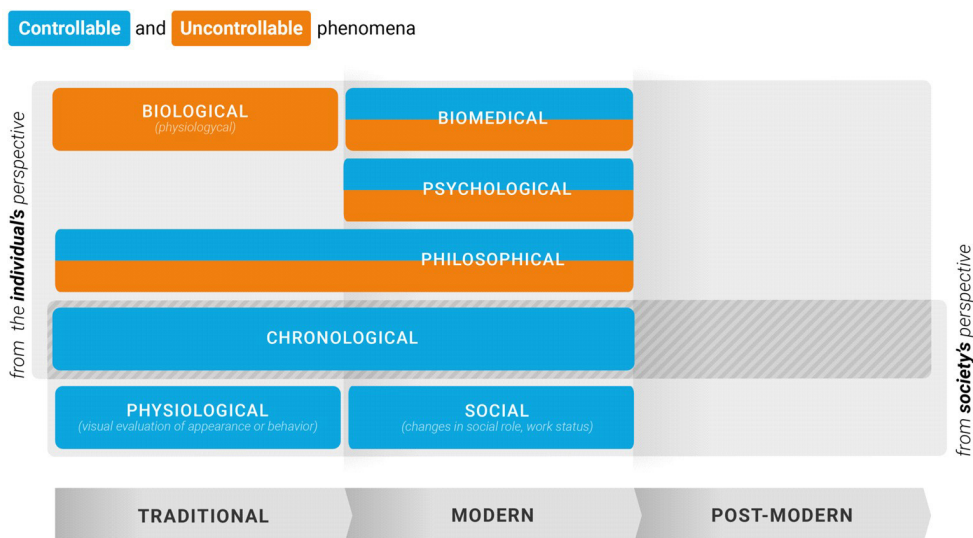


Figure 6. Approaches to defining old age in the official Belarusian media discourse (2017-2019).

Source: the author

Accordingly, the schematic variation of the old age definitions is presented in Figure 6. The definition of old age in the official discourse is controversial and fragmented, combining approaches to this age period as an uncontrolled destructive phenomenon and as a phenomenon that is controlled (to varying degrees) by the individual person, medical achievements, or social attitudes. There are both traditional and modern interpretations of old age, but they do not contain definitions based on the post-modern theories of old age.

Definitions of older people by indirect interpretations of the concept of 'old age'

Older people in the official media discourse (2017-2019) are presented, on the one hand, as objects of care, suffering from destructive physical and intellectual changes. On the other hand, they are portrayed as experienced professionals with abundant potential and knowledge, most of whom need motivation to be active.

A general and colourful description of older people is given by the President of Belarus, A. Lukashenka: 'They do not chase the imported stuff, what they wear and eat is produced in Belarus' (BELTA, 02.05.2019.c). The asceticism and simple tastes of older people are presented as a well-known truth, and this unpretentiousness and contentment with little can be presented as a sacrifice, a desire to help their

children and grandchildren. In response to the question about raising pension payments, the President said: 'Our Belarusian pensioners complain that they do not have enough money, but they can always put something in their children's hands and pockets. You should make them work' (BELTA, 22.03.2019). The image of older citizens unjustly complaining about the financial problems is complemented by the image of the crotchety old people who want to live at any cost, even without being useful: 'So it turns out that the procedure of prolonging life if it is really created, will be financially available only for the decrepit rich people who will not be useful to society. They will not increase the production capacity of their country, nor will they have much impact on demography. They will be sitting on a sun lounger on the lawn, enjoying the opportunity to see this world for another fifty years' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 28.10.2017). The desire to live for one's own sake itself is portrayed as a manifestation of selfishness, and older people are assessed only in terms of their usefulness to society.

Besides the fact that the usefulness of the representatives of this social group is in question, 'older people require special attention, sometimes they are moody when they are sick and do not want to be treated. Show your understanding and patience, control taking the medication by them and inspire hope in them for a speedy recovery' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 13.12.2017). Older people are moody like children, so dealing with them should also be as if they were children. 'Older people are like children: they absorb new knowledge like sponges. However, they get tired quickly, because their cognitive function (the ability to process thoughts) deteriorates, and their mood can fluctuate from high to low' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.11.2018). And even though there are exceptions to the rule about unpleasant, untidy people who have lost their intellectual abilities, their former character and physical strength, this fact only serves to reinforce negative stereotypes about older people: 'There ARE such older people whom you look at, and you admire them. They are easygoing, tidy, wise, and there is power and kindness in their eyes. They have not turned into grumpy negativists, or moody and helpless children' (the emphasis was made by the author of the article, *Belarus Segodnya*, 18.08.2018).

It is particularly important to emphasise the inherently discriminatory comments made by journalists when describing or presenting older people who look younger than their age or do not seem to be older by some characteristics. Moreover, this discrepancy with the actual age or with the interviewer's expectations is transmitted as a compliment: 'Who would have thought? If you did not know Arkady Aristarkhovich's age, you would think he was no older than 50 years old on the phone' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 07.03.2018). Or 'retired women easily do the splits, demonstrating their flexibility' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.11.2018). Thus, deliberately hiding, or at least attempting to conceal the age group one belongs to is actively encouraged. Subjects

of the materials are praised for their ability to hide their real age. Journalists note that an older woman 'explains it sensibly' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.03.2017), expressing not only surprise that a woman in older age has preserved her cognitive abilities but also transmitting a stereotypical perception with this surprise.

Older people themselves also demonstrate ageism in the perception of older people as a social group. Dance-party lovers talk about themselves: 'It's invigorating and helps us to keep fit. By the way, our children are also satisfied. After all, we do not grumble, do not impose ourselves, but we are enjoying our time' (BELTA, 01.05.2019). The latent ageism or self-ageism, manifested in such statements, is transmitted within this discourse; it characterises not only the perception of older people but also their relationship with the younger generations. The following passage may serve as an illustration of the retransmitted self-ageism; it concerns elderly people in old people's homes: 'The boarders are so used to Natasha caring for them that they affectionately call her "mum". They trust her with all their joys and sorrows and tell her about their children and grandchildren. Many of them have relatives who are ready to take them home. However, old people disagree. First, they say they do not want to mess with the young. And secondly, they feel good, warm, and nourished here as well' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 04.01.2019.b). The older people mentioned above not only perceive themselves as a burden but also equate themselves with the category of children. The discriminatory nature of this kind of attitude is not obvious either to the author of the article or, it can be assumed, to the subjects mentioned in the text.

In addition to the negative discrimination in the representation of older people, there is also a positive one: 'They are wiser than others, and they adopt a more serious attitude towards solving issues' (BELTA, 14.06.2019). Both 'Grandmothers' thrift and the value of paying attention to others are noted; 'the resilience and hard work of older people are admired' (BELTA, 05.01.2019), 'older people especially look forward to having guests' (BELTA, 2019.01.14). Even without a direct definition of older people, the contrast between young specialists and their distinguishing qualities is also informative: 'I am not afraid to appoint young specialists for the positions <...>. Still, they have different approaches to their work. Young people bring something new and advanced, keeping up with modern technologies' (BELTA, 11.01.2019).

On the one hand, this discourse enumerates the benefits of old/er age as 'a lot of free time and independence, as well as the opportunity to be creative. According to Goethe, old age is a golden harvest' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 21.12.2017). On the other hand, even the value of this free time is levelled out if older people concentrate on themselves: 'And in general, why does a person need to live long? To consume, to epicure, to "smoke" the sky? Or to express oneself as fully as possible, to leave

longer footprints on the sand of time, to understand more deeply why you have been called to this world. It seems to me that the answer is obvious for those who can think' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 28.10.2017). Thus, there is a contrast between the older people who are idle consumers and active hedonists living their life to the fullest.

Among the priorities that typical older people are associated with are the following: communication (with a variation of 'attention to'), health, and family. The value of these components is emphasised by the findings of experts, as cited by journalists: 'Being in a relationship is even more critical for an older person than for a younger one. Because at the age of 60+, loneliness is directly related to health. <...> Having a life companion motivates considerably – vitality and body functioning increase' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.06.2019).

It is possible to agree with the statement by J. Harbison & M. Morrow (1998) that older people are presented in connection with the dichotomous oppositions: 'healthy' – 'sickly', 'independent' – 'dependent', 'self-sufficient' – 'a burden'. In this case, we were interested in the dichotomous oppositions to the concept of 'old age', used in the official discourse: 'joy', 'not joy', 'youth', 'activeness', 'health', 'activity', 'motivation', 'self-sufficiency'.

Typical for the language of these materials is the positioning of older people in unequal positions, in the position of objects of care, guardianship, motivation (external influence). The knowledge about the passivity, inertness of older people and the unfriendly attitude towards them is introduced as a given, which is supposedly shared in the society, contrasting with the image of active and successful older people.

The role played by older people in their life and well-being is levelled out, on the one hand: they are perceived in this discourse as one homogeneous group defined only by a calendar factor, and they are unable to choose and make decisions about their well-being and life in general. On the other hand, using the example of active, extraordinary older people, the reader is encouraged to reconsider their views on old age, and to adopt a proactive attitude towards life and take responsibility for their own well-being.

4.1.2. 'Active ageing' in the official media discourse

Contribute, do not be a burden

It should be noted that among all the written material relating to the topic of ageing and older people, the category of the publications related to active ageing, the activity of older people, the secrets of active ageing, and state support for the activity of older people, is the largest and accounts for 147 documents out of 246. Among the thematic groups prevailing are the materials on how the state supports

the activity (75 publications), the factors and conditions that are necessary for active ageing (46 publications), the active ageing strategy (41 publications), active older people (35 publications), and medical achievements that allow an older person to stay active and live longer (28 publications). Only nine publications attempt to define 'active ageing', and four publications discuss possible barriers to activity.

A quantifiable trend of a significant increase in attention to the concept of 'active ageing' in recent years is evident (see Annex XVII). For the first time the term 'active ageing' appears on the pages of the *Belarus Segodnya* Publishing House in 2006 (once), once in 2007 and 2008, then three times in 2010, and 11 times in 2016. Since then, from 2017 its presence in the official discourse publications has become regular: in 2017 it appears 15 times in the output of the publishing house, 50 times in 2018, and for the first eight months of 2019, 39 times. The search for material on the BELTA website has been available only since 2010 when the term 'active ageing' is used only once. The term is mentioned twice in 2011, three times in 2012, four times in 2013, five times in 2014 and 2015, and in 2016 the frequency of its usage rises sharply to 28 times, in 2017 the concept remains popular – 21 times, and reaching 48 times in 2018. As of the first eight months of 2019, there were already 25 publications with the concept of 'active ageing' (see Annex XVII).

The statement of intent to create the National Active Longevity Strategy was made back in 2017. Its newer name is the National Strategy for Older Citizens. The strategy has been formed on behalf of the Government as part of the country's socio-economic development programme for 2016-2020. The draft strategy was to have been submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration by October 1, 2019, but as of December 2019, the text had not yet been made public. However, during the research period, the official media in Belarus was full of comments from officials and experts on the subject.

A. Zakrevskaya, Head of the Department of Labour Market, Employment, and Social Protection Studies at the Research Institute of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, justified the need to create such a document: 'The country does not have a comprehensive document that would coordinate all the efforts of the state for active longevity. Much is being done, but numerous activities and initiatives are scattered across various programmes' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 22.10.2018, 'How a national strategy for older people is developed today'). According to the officials, the strategy will cover all aspects of older people's lives, including their health, education, pensions, employment, social services, and social support, as well as physical activity and the formation of a barrier-free environment.

It was planned to create and publish this strategy for 2019 (however, to date, this strategy has not yet been published). Citizens are assured that 'the strategy will be developed based on the scientific and research work conducted by the

Research Institute of Labour. Research in this area will make it possible to create a national age classification, determine who should be classified as older people, what conditions have already been created for the development of the potential of older citizens, and propose directions for moving forward' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 'Such are our years'). Officials' reports do not show that the broad public is involved in the development of this document, and there is no information about the plans to conduct sociological surveys. There is an evident desire to divide the category of older people into age subgroups to realise the potential of pensioners. However, apart from mentioning the objective need and high burden for the state and society due to demographic changes, neither the desires and needs of all individuals nor the existing and potential obstacles to activity are specified in this discourse.

'Our country does not have vast natural resources. Therefore, the spurt in economic growth is associated exclusively with human capital. The loss of this resource will have a major impact on the country's future development. Aware of this problem, Belarusians have started to develop a strategy of active longevity', explains I. Kostevich (BELTA, 01.10.2018). The arguments of the government officials cover the vector of development and prepare the audience for the knowingly unpopular steps (as follows from the speeches of the officials). 'People over working age have a golden asset – experience; and it should be used as much as possible, both to the benefit of the state and to serve the interests of older people themselves' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 'A person is at the centre of any state strategy').

The activation of older people seems to be a priori positive and necessary for all, even those who are not aware of it: 'It is good if an older person has grandchildren, children and friends, but if they are lonely, they withdraw into themselves. They need to be shaken up' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018). Experts offer readers a collective image of an older Belarusian, uniting all older people into one homogeneous group who are starting to prepare for retirement as early as 50 years old. Since they have already fulfilled all the most important things – they have children and homes – they no longer have any future goals. It is the passivity of older Belarusians that causes the media to look for examples of active, charismatic people who continue to live actively 'at 50, 70, and even 90' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018) and to talk about them, as well as to create videos to motivate older people.

Activity for the benefit of society is the task of this social group, which should 'be aware of the need for its active participation in the development of society; but also society itself should perceive this participation as a natural, normal process and duly appreciate such a contribution' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018). So, is society asked to perceive inactivity as a deviation from the norm?

Official media publications provide an opportunity to make sure that there are no obstacles to human activity; the main thing is will. The texts showing the state's

efforts to activate older people and maintain a high quality of life (75 publications) can be highlighted as a separate block. The achievements of Belarusian medicine, the efforts of officials and social services, the initiatives of employers and retraining courses, hobby groups and leisure facilities – all these are at the disposal of older people. Plans are being made to strengthen preventative measures and make changes to the social standard of medical care. ‘This is not only a positive result of the state social policy but also a challenge to society, which makes us take a new look at our activities’, said the Minister of Health, V. Malashko (BELTA, 01.10.2018).

An image of a comfortable and supportive world for older people is being created: ‘At the centre, we have started to implement what we call a comprehensive geriatric examination – a multidisciplinary approach. Various specialists take part in the examination and treatment of our patients. We can determine the health status, identify signs of ageing and the stage of the process. Special testing is carried out, and the information is put into an evaluation table. After that, a longevity plan is drawn up, including medication, an individual exercise programme, psychological correction, and the basic principles of nutrition’ (*Belarus Segodnya*, 14.04.2018). In this way, even physical problems appear as corrective difficulties that can be overcome when seeking medical attention. The emphasis is on the fact that older people do not go to medical centres, do not control their blood pressure or blood sugar level; they do not know how to improve their health, or do not care about it because of their laziness or passivity.

Journalists offer many examples of active older people to look up to (more than 35 texts): ‘Another example from life is the 77-year-old Gomel worker Viktor Alekseevich Ershov, a regular participant in ski races. He not only works out with young people in the gym but also trains himself. His strategy is clear: “You can take medicine, or you can get up on skis or ride a bike”’ (*Belarus Segodnya*, 22.03.2019). The publications introduce older swimmers, marathon runners, dancers, entrepreneurs, actors, singers, and employees of various institutions.

The older people mentioned in the publications have not only retained their ability to work, but also their desire to work or help others as much as possible. For example, 93-year-old Edmund Ludvikovich Chaley, who ‘still works as hard as he can, chops wood, grazes goats and helps out with household chores. He says that life has now become much easier: his house is more comfortable and his daughter and son-in-law are always nearby in case he feels unwell: “If it had been like this before, we could have lived 150 years”’ (*Belarus Segodnya*, ‘Belarusian scientists have identified which region has the longest life expectancy’). The reader receives confirmation from older people that even hard physical work in the challenging conditions of the past was feasible for active people of different ages, and the current conditions are more than favourable for a long working life ‘so not to just live out

the rest of their lives and become a burden for their children, but to be active, needed and not afraid of frailty' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.11.2018).

The argument works to strengthen the thesis that the state motivates older people and creates conditions for active longevity, although only a small proportion of older people are active and energetic. The main obstacles to the activity of older people in this discourse are their passivity, unwillingness to change their life attitudes, and the need for retraining (for work). One of the publications draws attention to the lack of programmes and activities in villages where a significant proportion of older people live. Diseases and destructive physical processes are not considered in the context of barriers to the activity of older people.

Economic experts from the *Belarus Segodnya* again say that the boundaries of old age have shifted and 'many modern pensioners in their 70s are still full of strength and energy to continue working, paying contributions to the Federal Social Welfare Fund' (E. Bornukova, a leading researcher at the Belarusian Economic Research and Education Centre (BEROC), *Belarus Segodnya*, 02.06.2017). Another authoritative opinion from Lyudmila Zhilevich, a geriatric expert, suggests that leaving the labour market has a negative impact primarily on the person, increasing their ageing: 'Today it is proved – after retirement, health deteriorates' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018). Thus, ageing itself seems to have a negative effect, a consequence of an individual leaving labour activity. But work becomes a tool to influence the ageing process and gives a person control over pathological changes.

L. Zhilevich, a geriatric expert, draws attention to the dependent position of older people: 'Indeed, in my work, I often come across a situation when older people consider themselves unnecessary to society. They do not know how to organise their life in old age. So far, the mentality of an older person is as follows: they expect benefits, a subsidy, or other assistance from the state' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018). It is significant that such statements are made by the future creators of the Belarusian strategy of 'active ageing', it is they who participate in the formation of the 'perception of older people' vector. Demographic trends explain the need to include older people in labour activity: 'Taking into consideration that the number of older people will grow, the need to create jobs for them to increase their employment will grow' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.11.2018).

This rhetoric is supported by the materials about older people who have been actively working or volunteering for many years after they retired, and they are surprised (also making the reader wonder) at how they can be sent to rest: 'Anna Grigorievna retired about half a century ago. I look through her workbook, carefully kept in a drawer, and I am surprised. In 1970 they wrote in it: "Dismissed due to old-age retirement". What old age! Anna Shatrova's young, energetic, genuinely fighting character is enviable even today' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.03.2017). The very

retirement of people who can still potentially benefit from their work is positioned as illogical and incorrect; therefore, the implementation of the concept of 'active ageing' is proposed as a way to normalise the existing situation. In turn, this raises the question of the need to revise the very concept of old age.

4.1.3. Old age, older people, and the state in the official media discourse

More gratitude and diligence. People should learn to take care of themselves

As noted in the section on research methodology, the decision to present this thematic category in the results of research is dictated primarily by the intensity of its promotion. The frequency of the coverage of the interaction between older people and the state has made this thematic category one of the two most represented in the official media (101 out of 246 documents). The great majority of the published material represents texts originally encoded using the working version of the 'Hurray Discourse'. These materials are created in the spirit of Soviet publications about the achievements of the state bodies and officials in maintaining and improving an already well-functioning social security and support system for older people: 'There are almost 2.4 million people who are over the retirement age in the country. All of them need help and support, and primarily it is not financial support that is needed, but rehabilitation, and moral and domestic support. And if, for various reasons, their relatives and friends are unable to provide such support, a socially-oriented state will come to their aid. It has built a clear social service that is backed up by laws and substantial funding. The correspondents witnessed that once again when, on the eve of Older People Day, they visited the places where souls are warmed and touched' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 29.09.2018). It is noteworthy how, in caring for older people, the primary role of the family and secondary nature of such support from the state and its goodwill, are emphasised.

The legitimization of an older person's transfer to the care of the state happens due to exceptional circumstances. The publications, presenting the state's efforts to care for older people, often do not mention the fact that an older person's stay in state care institutions must be paid for. 'In our country, people are more protected; they have an opportunity to realise themselves as individuals, to prolong the retirement age, and to be more socially active. And all this in a complex is the components of life expectancy growth' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 14.04.2018). Furthermore, all comparisons with the social security systems of older people in other countries work to promote the Belarusian reality, which is close to ideal. The Republic of Belarus is characterised as the most successful example of the implementation of the 'social state' idea in the whole post-Soviet space (*Belarus Segodnya*, 28.04.2018, 'The idea of a social state

remains relevant'). And descriptions of the living conditions of older citizens in residential homes create idyllic pictures.

Defending the social orientation of the Belarusian state and preserving traditions of the Soviet system of social support, journalists and officials speak about the primary role of the family in providing support and care for older people. Such withdrawal or self-removal (inconsistent with the classical approach to understanding the social type of the welfare state) is quite compatible with the published reflections on the overall decline, and even crisis, of the welfare state.

'Our state has always been distinguished by the fact that there is a well-structured social policy, both in the capital and in the hinterlands. In January next year, this service will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Taking care of older people, large families, lonely people, and people with disabilities is always a priority in Belarus. The President has repeatedly emphasised this' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.11.2018). Even presenting the problems in the discourse contains a list of exact steps that are being taken to overcome and eradicate them, such as the activation of older citizens themselves, for whom 'it is important to feel like a fully-integrated member of society' and 'to be useful as much as possible to themselves and other people' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 03.11.2018).

Journalists emphasise the availability of medical services and the high level of qualified medical care that is provided free of charge to older citizens. They remind readers of this more than once, sometimes describing individual achievements: 'At the age of 100, undergoing heart surgery regarding stenting of the coronary vessels at the age of 101, having an oncologic dispensary operation done – this news is not from abroad but is an example from local Belarusian medical practice' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 26.09.2018). The effort to focus on the reality of the described possibilities of Belarusian medicine, rather than foreign, as the reader might think, in the journalist's opinion, gives these materials the character of the 'over-persuasion' of the audience.

Experts and officials also mention the reasons for the problems and difficulties, including financial ones: 'Often you come across those who have not gained insurance and work experience, so they receive a small social pension and wonder: "How can you live on this money?" Official employment creates a safety cushion for citizens in old age, said Irina Kostevich. The Minister also raised the problem of unemployment. There are now 2.6 vacancies per one unemployed person, emphasised Irina Kostevich' (BELTA, 11.02.2018). It is an older person who did not take care of their old age in advance and did not take advantage of the availability of jobs, that appears to be the reason for the low standard of living in retirement.

The rhetoric of parasitism and the dishonesty of citizens in their relations with the state is highlighted in the official media: 'In many countries, the social welfare

state has led part of the population to parasitism: there have always been those who would like to receive benefits all their lives, instead of working' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 28.04.2017). With reference to unnamed economists, journalists convince us of the negative impact of the welfare state on economic efficiency. Moreover, in such a state the population runs the risk of losing their freedoms, and the Belarusian model is positioned as a rational and viable one, preserving balance both in support for socially vulnerable citizens and in efficiency. The reader is convinced of the expediency and necessity of the measures taken by the Belarusian state to protect older people and is encouraged to help: 'It is also necessary to understand that, while remaining a socially-oriented state, we have entered the market economy and everyone's contribution is necessary <...>. It is obvious that people should learn to take care of themselves' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.07.2018).

Sometimes the personified nature of the state support and the state itself becomes noticeable: 'Only in a stable society can the state realise all the other obligations it has undertaken towards its citizens. Social conflicts that are quite natural for any country can always be used by extremists and radical politicians, pursuing their own goals. One thing is clear: the love and responsibility of citizens and the state must be mutual' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 28.04.2018). The state, opposed by some radical politicians and extremists, is identified with its leadership. This is also facilitated by the publications on the role of the state in preserving social benefits for older people, whose guarantor is the quoted head of state.

Some of the publications support the reliability and optimality of the pension system in the republic: 'It is essential that we have preserved a solidarity system. This mechanism is neither subject to inflation nor crises and serves as good support for pensioners' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 06.07.2018). The Minister of Labour and Social Protection, I. Kostevich, emphasises that the existing pension system is 'correct' and 'fair' (BELTA, 20.04.2019.a), and a possible change in the retirement age is a solution to the demographic problem of ageing. An additional measure discussed by officials and experts is the voluntary cumulative pension insurance, which Belarusians are still reluctant to use (*Belarus Segodnya*, 18.01.2019).

It is possible to separately highlight the published material about demographic trends that harm the state support system for older people: 'Population ageing is the most global challenge today' (BELTA, 02.10.2018). It is the age structure of the population that is the primary criterion for decision-making by the state institutions. The supra-regional and even global nature of the population ageing is emphasised, which has 'captured the whole of Europe' (BELTA, 01.03.2019), while the list of difficulties faced or expected by other countries and regions shows the reality of Belarus more positively. Moreover, the public is assured that due attention is paid to this issue in the country: 'The topic of demographic security is given great

importance in the country, and in particular, these issues are under the control of the President of Belarus' (BELTA, 04.04.2019).

This topic logically precedes the published material on the development of an 'active ageing' strategy for older people and the discussion of officials, experts and journalists about possible changes in the pension legislation to develop efficient strategies for sustainable economic development and demography. The increase in life expectancy is said to be the reason not only for the increasing demand for residential homes for the old age people and disabled but also for the revision of the retirement age due to the increasing costs of social services. The recent reform which raised the retirement age for women and men, is called the result of 'global practice' and 'the logic of social development, for which even 70-75 is no limit', and therefore, 'we should get used to the ongoing demographic changes and react more calmly to them', concludes the journalist (*Belarus Segodnya*, 26.05.2018).

4.1.4. The problems and risks associated with 'old age' and 'active ageing'

The main goal of this work is to identify inconsistencies and contradictions in the definition of 'old age' and 'active ageing' by social actors in modern (2017-2019) Belarusian discourses as a reflection of problems in the implementation and reform of social policies regarding old age and older people in Belarus; therefore, it is important to note which problem fields and risks this discourse are associated or in connection with 'old age' and 'active ageing' itself. The research also aims to identify which issues are verbalised, debated, and which ones are ignored (analysis of this is conducted both on the basis of studying the context (see Chapter 3) and by studying induced discourses (see Subsection 4.3). The analysis of the images of old age and older people in the official discourse is revealed in the interrelationships with different categories that have been formed from the sums of logically linked semantic codes selected during multiple studies of the texts. Each of these categories represents and reveals the meanings of old age and the images of older people, formed by the discourse of the Belarusian official mass media.

Thirty-seven publications within this discourse represent the thematic category that unites the publications on the problems and risks associated with old age. Beck (1992) wrote about postmodernism as a 'risk society', insisting on the increasing urgency of the physical threat to the individual and society in general with the development of the technological and scientific base. Risk is becoming an integral part of the modern individual's life, but for different social groups, risks can vary.

From the array of the official discourse texts, the following semantic units were singled out into this category: 'physical problems and risks', 'the problem of independence loss and need for care', 'the problem of financial resources lack and

financial risks', 'problems of rural dwellers', 'preparation for old age as a way to reduce risks', 'the problem of cognitive disorders', 'the problem of beauty loss', 'the problem of sexuality', and finally, 'death'.

One of such problems is the social problem of discrimination against older people: discrimination by society, the state, at work, within the family, as well as self-ageism. The problem of discrimination has been placed into the category of 'problems and risks', but the diffuse nature of the discriminatory practices and their penetration into all areas of the life of an older person does not allow this topic to be neglected when analysing other age-related categories. That is why, without dwelling on the analysis of other age-related problems and risks in the discourse, the direct mentioning of ageism as a problem in society will primarily be highlighted, as well as the indirect evidence of the existence or transmission of the discriminatory practices in the daily life of an older person, which challenge the very perception of old age. Some materials testify to ageism, while others indicate that it exists.

Some materials provide the reader with information about the phenomenon itself, explaining the essence of age discrimination. They reveal the irrelevance and unproductive nature of the dominant social attitudes towards 'outsiders in the labour market' and the harmful phobias about old age (*Belarus Segodnya*, 16.03.2018). The role of the society and environment in shaping such ageist attitudes is emphasised. The fact that one such publication is entitled 'In Belarus, it is time to start creating a silver economy' (BELTA, 13.06.2017) is noteworthy. Following the recommendation given by T. van Dijk and W. Kintsch (1983; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978), one can search for the central thesis in the title. However, it should be noted that arguments against discriminatory attitudes and the manifestation of ageism in the journalists' statements destroy the integrity of this thesis (this rhetoric).

A separate set of problems and risks associated with the phenomenon of discrimination reveals the loss of beauty and youthful appearance. This type of materials and text fragments is invariably linked only to the female gender and offers not only reflection on the essence of beauty in old age, but it also gives advice and recommendations for maintaining youthfulness and combating the signs of old age: wrinkles, pigment spots, grey hair, etc. Journalists quote the question of a 100-year-old female subject of the interview: 'Am I ugly?' (*Belarus Segodnya*, 27.10.2018). They also mention a 93-year-old woman who puts on lipstick before visiting her friend (*Belarus Segodnya*, 27.09.2017). The loss of beauty and youthfulness by a woman is a constantly actualised problem with a clear gender connotation.

Journalists invited the Director of a consulting company to discuss ageism as an age problem. He spoke about the origins and forms of discrimination against older people, especially in the labour market (*Belarus Segodnya*, 16.03.2017). The potential of older people's participation in the labour market was discussed as an

opportunity to overcome ageist stereotypes (BELTA, 13.06.2017). Other rights of an older person are also mentioned in the article 'In Belarus, it is time to start creating a silver economy' – the right to defend one's interests and realise oneself; but at the same time the author constructs the image of older people as a burden for the state: 'Not a single, even the richest state, can carry so many lonely, living-single disabled and older people on its shoulders' (BELTA, 13.06.2017). The inconsistency of such materials shows both attempts to combat discrimination and its retransmission.

Thus, the definition of old age in the official discourse is contradictory and fragmented, combining approaches to this age period as an uncontrolled destructive phenomenon or as a phenomenon that is partially or fully controlled by an individual or external circumstances. Along with this emphasis on the controllability of the phenomenon and on individual responsibility, the rhetoric of discourse is close to neoliberal ideology, but normativism, accentuation on authorities, Soviet traditions and the role of the state allow us to attribute it to a kind of mix of traditional conservatism with Soviet ideology. From the point of humanitarian scientific approaches, the discourse proposes illustrations for traditional (pre-modern) and modern sociological interpretations of 'old age' and 'ageing'.

The presentation of older people in the official media is clearly binary or implies that: the oppositions make up the images of 'typical', 'ordinary', 'familiar', 'common', 'usual', 'in need of care', 'needy' and 'burdening' older people; and the images of the ones who are 'different', 'excellent', 'other', 'unusual', 'self-sufficient', 'useful', 'outstanding' by any ground or characteristic. 'Atypical' and 'exceptional' people standing out from the older people cohort are chosen as subjects of the articles. They surprise and are set as an example being presented as a model for other people. There is also a contrast between the ones who 'deserve' the support and care from the state and the ones who 'overuse' it and who are neglectful.

Typical for the language of these materials is the positioning of older people in unequal positions, in the position of objects of care, guardianship, motivation (external influence). The knowledge about the passivity, inertness of older people and the unfriendly attitude towards them is introduced as a given, which is supposedly shared in the society, contrasting with the image of active and successful older people.

Although the discourse contains some attempts to present the problem of discrimination against older people, the stigmatisation of old age is not a popular topic for journalists, and it is not mentioned by the officials at all. The Belarusian official discourse shows a tendency to stigmatise not old age itself, but a passive old age. The responsibility for this negative phenomenon rests both on the society forming such ageist attitudes and on the individual retransmitting them. In each of the cases, an older person is a passive victim of stereotypes, and the society is

encouraged to get rid of such preconceptions. However, over and over again, older people are described as representatives of a large and homogeneous group, and this very schematisation and simplification discriminate against individual representatives of this age cohort. The texts characterising or defining old/er people argue with stereotypical social attitudes and simultaneously retransmit them or produce new ones.

Passivity becomes an extremely negative characteristic, synonymous with a deviation from the norm. Older people are given the right to be useful or active, with no attention paid to their conditions and desires. Their passivity and social attitudes are the main obstacles.

In the process of analysing, the main theses popularised in the framework of the official discourse have been highlighted:

- The age boundaries and the retirement age should be revised and increased;
- Older people should be encouraged to contribute to public welfare;
- The individual is responsible for their own life and old age;
- The state does its best to support older people;
- The family must take care of older people;
- Older people should not support their children financially;
- The dominant stereotypes about old age and older people in society are erroneous and harmful both for the individual and for the country's economy;
- A person can hide their age (by looking and feeling younger) (see also Annex XVIII).

The materials are full of generalisations and universalisations, one-sided representation of a particular position. In the discourse, no attempts to critically reflect on the current pension system and the situation of the modern older people can be found at all.

4.2. Discourse analysis of independent media sources

Although this will be a repetition (for more details see Subsections 2.1.2. and 3.1.), it is important to note once again that the allocation of independent media discourses (not state-owned) into a separate data block was dictated by the specifics of the country's political context and its media field. As a result, it is possible to compare the definitions and interpretations transmitted by these discourses. The actual comparative analysis will be presented in Subsection 4.4., therefore, with the exception of some references and parallels with the official discourse, the results of the research of the discourses of independent media sources will be presented below.

The objective of this part of the research is to analyse the alternative field of media discourses in Belarus from January 1, 2017 until August 1, 2019, which is shaped by news and entertainment media that are independent of the state and popular among the country's residents. To determine the media resources covering the largest share of the audience, the ratings of printed and online media were studied (for detailed information, see the Chapter 2.2.2.). Alternative discourses are addressed through the lens of implications and social attitudes prevailing in Belarusian society, as well as those that are broadcast to the audience. The main questions addressed in this section are:

- How is old age defined in alternative Belarusian discourses? (Who are the 'old'? Who is viewed as being 'older'?)
- What thematic or problematic fields related to old age are covered in alternative Belarusian discourses? (What key topics related to old age?)
- What is the meaning of 'active ageing'? What is the conceptual meaning of the epithet 'active' in relation to old/er people?

The analysis demonstrated a high coverage rate as regards topics that could be categorised as 'old age and the older person' in alternative media articles (28.1% of the total number of independent media texts selected for the analysis). Although the leaders in terms of broadcast intensity are the publications containing the interpretations of old age and characteristics of the old age adults, a significant share also consist of publications that reveal the interaction between older people and the state (18.2%), as well as the topic of 'active ageing' (17.3%). A smaller share is taken up by texts devoted to problems and risks associated with or related to old age (12.4%), publications concerning the relations between society and older people (11.4%), and employment in old age (7.5%). The smallest number of documents covers the relations of older people and their family (5%) (see Annex XI, XIII). The three most popular of the singled out thematic categories will be presented below, along with an analysis of their content.

While analysing the quantitative indicators of the concepts used in independent media texts related to old age, ageing and older people, the strong popularity of the term 'pensioner' (38.8%) emphasising quitting the workforce and the neutral term 'older person' (31.1%) should be noted. Less popular, but often used are the terms *starik* (old man) (or *stariki* (old people) as a group designation, 8.5% in total), as well as feminine gender-specific term *babushka* (grandmother) emphasising the role in the family (8.8%). Masculine alternatives to the terms *babushka* (grandmother) (8.8%) and *baba* (old woman) (0.4%) are more than three times less frequently used: the words *dedushka* (grandfather) (2.1%) and *ded* (grandpa) (1.6%) (see Annex XIV).

The least used words are *starik/stariki* (old man/old people) (8.5%), *starukha* (old woman) (0.38%) (in this case, conclusions about the higher frequency of the masculine variant cannot be drawn, because grammatical peculiarities do not allow for separating the estimation of masculine words from the designation of the group of older people, including a couple of parents), *dolgozhitel/dolgozhitelnitsa* ('long-liver') (5.5%), *prestarely/prestarelaya* (senior) (2.84%).

Thus, when analysing the frequency of terms used, it should be noted that the terms 'pensioner' and 'older person' prevail when referring to the representatives of the older age group (see Mikulionienė, 2005); it is also noteworthy that the stronger verbal presence of 'grandmother' as opposed to 'grandfather' can be observed in the discourse. The latter can be explained both by the emphasis on a family role specifically for women and by the de facto absence of a greater proportion of older men due to the huge longevity gap and high mortality rates of the male population (see Subsection 3.3).

4.2.1. Interpretations of 'old age' and representations of older people in independent media discourses

From monochrome pictures to a wide range of nuances

The concept of old age and older people was repeatedly described in the Belarusian mass media over the research period (302 documents in total). The wording and explanations of this phenomenon were created both by the authors of the articles and by the interviewed public and political figures, physicians, researchers, and ordinary citizens (whose occupation and age was often not specified). The topic of advanced or 'third' age was further mainstreamed by statements made by officials regarding the economic consequences of demographic problems and the need to create a strategy of 'active ageing'. Journalists' articles consider old age through the lens of biology and medicine, the social environment, psychology and philosophy, as well as of the individual positions of specific people.

Combining all definitions and attempts to define the concept of 'old age' encountered in the materials studied, one can note their heterogeneity. Some of them can be grouped according to individual criteria depending on the emphasised aspect (controlled or uncontrolled process; natural or anomalous process; positive or negative impact on the person, etc.).

Based on the criterion of controllability of the phenomenon by external or internal forces, old age is defined as a natural but temporarily uncontrollable or partially controllable phenomenon.

One such approach is to define old age as a problem or a source of problems, whether for an individual or society as a whole. While from the perspective of

economics, ageing is characterised as a problem of modern society, on an individual level, researchers in the field of medicine and biology, the subjects of publications, journalists' interlocutors speak about old age as a problem. From the medical perspective, such an approach assumes both the possibility of overcoming old age as a problem and the need to find solutions and struggle with it.

This rhetoric distinguishes the notion of old age both as a disease ('Old age is a disease', *Argumenty i Fakty* [AiF], 02.05.2019) and as a time when health deteriorates and multiple diseases emerge: 'As we know, pharmacies are mainly frequented by older people...which is quite understandable, because almost everyone who has turned sixty or seventy has a chronic disease, and sometimes a few' (AiF, 09.12.2017). The rhetoric of old age as a disease is supported by the expressions 'medicine for old age', an 'old age pill', and 'death from old age'.

Since this interpretation rejects the idea of the normalcy and inevitability of ageing processes, these publications are characterised by narratives of resistance, the search for remedies to overcome old age: 'One should start fighting against ageing when they are still young' (AiF, 02.12.2018). The command and imposition, extreme negativism to old age as a phenomenon are characteristic of this approach. Society (social, cultural circles, municipal institutions, as well as public agencies in general), as well as citizens, are called to fight against old age. This manifests in both government programmes aimed at studying the biological processes related to ageing and individual efforts of enthusiasts. One example of this fight is an interview with 'The King of Etherium', the creator of one of the world's two most expensive cryptocurrencies, a young programmer Vitaly Buterin, who has donated more than two million dollars to research on ageing and believes that 'the best thing worth sacrificing money for is the fight against ageing' (*Komsomolskaya Pravda* [KP], 20.03.2018).

Journalists note that according to the revolutionary amendments to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) made by the WHO, people get sick because of ageing. Readers are presented with the approach of Russian researchers D. Khalturina and Y. Matveev who have developed and extensively rationalised the definition of ageing as a disease that leads to body failures causing complementary diseases in older people. This position is supported by the arguments of biologists and physicians. References to WHO documents are also used: 'At this stage, the WHO approved the amendments to ICD-11, whereby a number of diseases will acquire the definition 'age-related', that is, related to age or caused by ageing. Such an innovation, on the one hand, will help to draw more attention to the problems of ageing and result in more research to combat it' (KP, 20.03.2018).

Interviews with geneticists and biologists make it possible for the reader to get acquainted with the research that has been conducted on the DNA ageing

mechanisms and to learn about the chances of longevity and the risks of premature death, according to this theory. Thus, old age is presented as a temporary problem as the cure for it, or at least, treatment of it will soon be found. Old age is no longer a stage in human life before death, but a cause of death, a barrier that stands in the way of immortality. Looking at ageing from a biological point of view can strengthen the understanding of old age as degradation and degeneration. The argumentation of a genetic scientist is used to explain ageing as a side effect of the cell renewal (division) process involving the accumulation of defects and mutations. Although in this approach, ageing is seen as an exceptionally negative and degenerative process, experts are optimistic about the prospects for combating this phenomenon.

Time and again, the reader receives evidence that ageing is just a biological error or mutation, a reduction in the size of chromosome telomeres, and is presented with the discoveries science gives humanity along with the hope of overcoming old age. Journalists cite distinguished scientists who have won the Nobel Prize and other significant awards. From a formidable and inexplicable enemy, old age turns into a controlled and understandable biological process (KP, 03.01.2018). Furthermore, since this phenomenon is well researched and is about to be overcome, while waiting for the creation of tools for the final victory over age-related changes, the reader can learn some ways to postpone old age, to look beautiful, to stay vigorous and healthy.

By suggesting that old age is a disease, experts share different ways to overcome it with the audience. However, according to journalists, there is a tension in society regarding 'victory over old age': 'People say that they have the right to grow old and die. Well and good, nobody wants to deprive anyone of this right. But we also have the right to health and life, and we can't fully exercise this right now, because our genes have made it so that our body is only designed to live for about 80 years' (KP, 02.08.2018). Thus, not only is the biological essence of old age brought up but also the ethical issues related to it and the right of the individual to the individual perception thereof. Journalists talk about overcoming the old-age-related phobias and changing the 'societal demands'.

Ageing as an objective biological process has its characteristics, and readers are informed about them: 'The main signs of ageing are named: 50 important symptoms' (KP, 16.04.2018). The author of the article urges people who identified some of the symptoms not to rush to conclusions, as they do not qualify for being absolutely objective and do not reflect the reality one hundred per cent: the presence of these symptoms does not mean that the person who noted them feels old, and their absence does not guarantee that the person will consider themselves young. However, journalists pay attention to the importance of mental health and the perception by respondents of their appearance. The feeling of impending old age

is called subjective and independent from many objective factors: 75% of subjects agreed with the statement 'You are as old as you feel' (KP, 16.04.2018).

These results published by journalists show how conditional the interdependence of physical and psychological aspects of old age perception can be, and how subjective is the understanding of ageing 'too early', feeling younger than one's physical age or the age that is normally defined as old age.

Another optimistic approach to the prospects of mankind to overcome ageing was shared by the authors of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* article 'Before long, the concept of an "older person" will be out of use'. In this case, old age is viewed as an unnatural and socially conditioned phenomenon that depends on the attitudes of the community in which an individual exists. Instead of focusing on the biological component, the authors of the publication stress the social aspect presenting the successful implementation of the 'Best Years' project which allowed older people from Kaliningrad and Svetly to take a new look at old age and improve their quality of life. Such an achievement just requires motivation and willingness to help specific people, the support of government agencies and volunteers who facilitate active participation of older people in society, as well as help in overcoming loneliness and depression (which is one of the most important problems associated with ageing).

D. Belski, the author of the article who is also the manager of the project, insists on the need to change the traditional attitude towards old age in society: 'Did you notice that it is no longer accepted in society to say the word "disabled"? Denis suddenly asked me. "Today we call such people persons with special needs. In my opinion, before long, the words 'older person', 'old man' will fall into disuse". (KP, 22.08.2018). This approach implies both the social conditioning of old age as a phenomenon and the importance of social programmes for the mental implications provoked by external beliefs and associated with marginalisation. Medical and physiological components are omitted from this definition as they are regarded as being less important.

The constructivist approach to the phenomenon of old age and the role of social norms in defining age categories is emphasised in other articles which analyse old age in connection with the concept of 'retirement age' and the age norm established in the country upon reaching which a person moves from the category of the employable to the group of older people: 'Retirement age is a randomly selected figure. One day we will give up on it. What do young Belarusians need to do now in order to ensure they are well-off like in Europe when they reach old age?' (KP, 26.06.2018). Considered under the lens of retirement age and the position of pensioners in society, old age comes across as a period of high financial dependence and reduced opportunities.

Old age as a reason for discrimination of a social group by society is another facet of studying this phenomenon. The author of a publication consistently proves the tacit existence of ageist attitudes in Belarusian society and the presence of some 'mythical age', upon reaching which 'it is already too late' – either to learn, drive a car or do something else that goes beyond the 'reservations' created for old people: 'In our culture, old age is not just a natural development, but always inexorable hopelessness which must be pushed out of sight. That's why the employable society pushes old people into fictitious reservations with "late-life" leisure activities – summer house, grandchildren, and a seasonal race through clinics – and perceives all their attempts to get out with a certain degree of condemnation' (Onliner.by, 02.05.2018).

The author believes that such perception of old age and older people is rooted in the cultural heritage of the region, in its traditions. Unlike in the culture of the East with its unquestioned authority of the elders, Belarusians treat older people with pity. While respect is felt for an equal subject (or even a sublime one), pity requires an object for its manifestation: 'one usually pities the poor, the weak, and the sick – and always with some disdain. It is partly clear where pity for older people is rooted: if divided by the standard of living, a person employed in the economy can afford much more than the average Belarusian pensioner. But the endless pity is a rather insidious emotion: at first, a patronising tone ('it would be better if they...') is added to it imperceptibly, and then the irritation of the "Watch your step, old poker" type blends in' (Onliner.by, 02.05.2018). The term 'old poker' used here literally refers to a poker used to clean soot and ash from a stove; metaphorically, it is applied (usually to women) as an offensive term to denote someone who is repulsively old and ugly and not from our modern times. The author's thesis is amplified by a loud headline which emphasises both the proactive attitude of older people and the discriminatory nature of social attitudes.

In this case, old age is seen as a natural process that has become a reason for discrimination due to the cultural and socio-economic context. However, present-day older people begin to change the dynamic provoking changes in social attitudes and the system as a whole. According to the author, it is older people who shape the social demand and provoke the introduction of special programmes, courses, and universities of the third age. Referring to expert opinions, journalists are convinced of the need for education regarding old age and fostering respect for old age in Belarusian society.

D. Potapenko discusses the changing pace of life as an important aspect of modern generations ageing on the pages of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*: 'It's not so much the age that matters, but the ability to retrain all the time' (*KP*, 14.09.2018). Thus, it's

not old age as such, but the pace of technological development and adaptability of society that create tension and negative attitudes towards older people, including the feeling of them being unwanted. *KP* informs the reader that if old age is not perceived as a phenomenon of invincible nature, and resources are sufficient for an unlimited number of people, then prejudices against older people will be overcome (*KP*, 29.03.2017). It is the lack of jobs that forces the young generations to push older aged people 'to the margins'.

While the competition on the labour market between different generations and the increased financial burden on the employable population creates tension reflected in the press and imbues ageing as a demographic phenomenon with toxic colours, some materials emphasise the opposite. The published data of international experts demonstrate that ageing should not be perceived as a risk to the economy and an additional burden on it, but should rather be treated as a beneficial factor that can contribute to economic growth (*KP*, 14.09.2018). Older people's spending is seen as an inflow into economic progress, so it is time to rethink production with an eye toward older consumers. Thus, old age as a demographic trend is seen as a factor that brings impetus to the development of health care, cosmetology, safety, education, entertainment, tourism, service robotic technology, and financial services. Therefore, the problems associated with ageing are considered rather psychologically, and society is encouraged to reconsider beliefs about maturity.

The topic of old age and ageing on the pages of newspapers and online publications is brought up by experts, famous people in the country, and ordinary citizens. Passers-by (not necessarily Belarusians – polls made in neighbouring countries are also published) share their understanding of old age, and this perception varies a lot.

Approaches to the definition of old age as a phenomenon that can be controlled by the individual are also emphasised. Older people share 'recipes' for accepting old age as a new period of life and demonstrate how to enjoy activities that previously were not carried out due to the lack of time or courage: 'Everyone decides for themselves: to get out of the passive swamp or stay there till their dying day. Happiness begins on the day when you decide to be happy. So we are not afraid to grow old' (TUT. BY, 19.02.2018). A subject of the publication calls the absence of fear of old age a trait that distinguishes her from most people: 'We do not want to grow old according to the conventional social formulas. Here I often recall the phrase of Leo Tolstoy that I strongly disagreed with in my youth: "What a beautiful time old age is!"' (TUT. BY, 19.02.2018). The subject becomes an example of zest for life and optimism, and her interpretation of old age being a time of actualisation of all plans, desires, and dreams is offered to the reader as an idea for reflection.

It is also suggested that we look at old age from the perspective of post-modern sociology. The opinion of sociologist Elena Gapova is presented; she believes that post-Soviet society has formed a limited number of modi for the older person. Arguing for the need to broaden the concept of old age and move away from normativism, the author of the article notes that there are only two major modi: *'either a person working 'all the way to death', a grandpa with a walking stick or a grandma wearing a headscarf. If older people try to go beyond these limits, they start to think of other modi that are absent from our palette, so they seem pretentious in the eyes of others. But in reality, people want to be active. Is that a bad thing?'* (KP, 04.09.2018.a). According to this rhetoric, it is not the state that activates and motivates older people to get involved in social life, but the person themselves is committed to being active contrary to established social norms.

Instead of providing a straight answer to the question of what ageing is, the reader is encouraged to 'master the ageing philosophy' on their own by starting to think about their understanding of old age and its individual scenario as early as at the age of 35-40, at the same time re-evaluating the various options for living in old age considering new realities. According to the author, a nursing home, which is perceived by Belarusians as the embodiment of the worst-case scenario, has long become less frightening. Moreover, since the phobias associated with it, as well as the processes of ageing and dying, are common in society but declared taboo, it is necessary to inform people about the real situation and provoke them to leave these grounds for fear. In this case, ageing is perceived as a source of phobias, but at the same time as a period of life that must be reconsidered to improve the quality of human life and reduce anxiety in society.

Reflections on the topic of old age and ageing provoked by Belarusian journalists create and/or reflect a field of a variety of old age understandings and motivate readers to reflect further. By offering different interpretations of old age, independent media sources demonstrate the breadth and diversity of approaches and the lack of a common vector of old age representation rhetoric. This diversity of approaches can be schematically presented as follows:

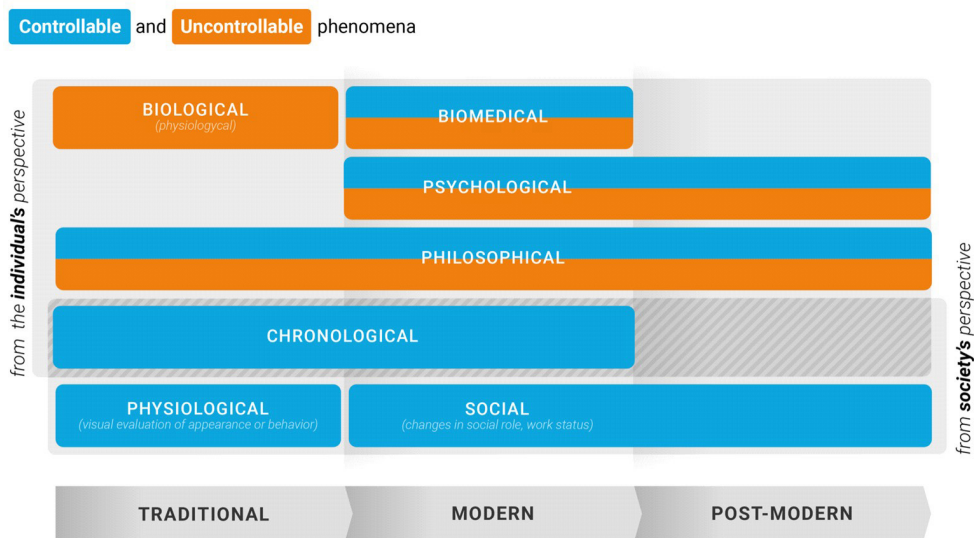


Figure 7. Approaches to defining old age in Belarusian independent media discourses (2017-2019).

Source: the author.

The figure presents a variation in the old age definitions offered by independent media discourses. The presence of both traditional and modern and postmodern interpretations of old age are noticeable.

The image of older people on the pages of independent media is created both by the uniform crime news items (the reasons why these texts were not included in the analysis are presented in the previous chapter) and by the authors' materials in the form of interviews with famous people, extraordinary old people, long-livers, author's columns, journalists' reflections on acute issues, and news items dedicated to the processes of reforming the pension system or creating a strategy of 'active ageing' in the country. Such images are complemented by materials on old age as a phenomenon.

In the course of researching articles and stories about older people, a pattern that unites them was noticed – all of them present their subjects as active, energetic, optimistic, and positive about the world and themselves in it, and it is precisely these qualities that distinguish them from the general population of older people, making them examples and role models; notably, it is because of this dissimilarity to other older people that they become the subjects of the articles. Although these images are exceptionally positive and the subjects are cheerful, the motive of comparison with the majority brings additional characteristics to the general media image of modern

older people. The oppositions of the images of 'our' vs. 'western' pensioners are also characteristic, in which Belarusian older people are portrayed in a less favourable light (this applies to both appearance, activities, overall quality of life, and life expectancy: 'The average life expectancy for men is 67-70 years, for women – 76-77 years. Meanwhile, in developed Western countries, it is above 80 for both men and women' (KP, 08.04.2017).

By presenting to the reader and complimenting older people who remain active, energetic, and youthful, the authors sometimes reinforce a negative image of old age and emphasise its non-aesthetic nature. Old age is a flaw that should not be visible to others, so you should try to hide it as long as possible. Here, the reader is also offered a set of external indications that will help to conceal the fact that one is an older person. It is these stereotypes about old age and the older people that account for the words of the subject of an article who 'does not consider herself to be a retired person' (TUT.BY, 15.08.2017, "Since the age of nine, I have trained hard". The story of Ninel Blokhina who does the splits at 71').

The article on TUT.BY portal 'You should take care of your figure at any age'. How retired women change garden beds to Latin American rhythms' offers a perspective on old age and older women in terms of meeting social standards of beauty. An older woman is assumed to be more warm-hearted, caring, though not sexy: 'And then at a mature age, it's more important to see a friend, a like-minded person next to you rather than a sexy woman that is all legs. Such a person would be happy to go to the country house, take no offence if you go fishing or hunting, generously share her affection, care... You can hardly expect all this from a young woman' (AiF 'Retired bride. Where to meet your soulmate?'). This excerpt is an illustration of broadcasting both the stereotypical perception of an older woman and the choosing subject – the man and the change in his needs when he gets older.

Despite the role models of exemplary, non-typical, and noteworthy older people, most frequently (44 publications) older people are described as a group and its representatives as having typical traits and common features. Journalists try to highlight the traits that distinguish older people and the reasons for this distinction: 'In our reality, the very definition of a "retired traveller" sounds contradictory. On the other hand, a retired holiday resident and a retired televiewer are familiar characters. Why are there so few people of this age who want to see the world?' (AiF, 12.04.2019). The Soviet past is considered the main reason why there is no habit or desire to leave the country even to learn something new and have a good time. Journalists point out that for pensioners in the post-Soviet region, getting to know new countries and continents is habitually possible with the help of television only, and they call to overcome this passivity by trying to find cost-effective options for travel even with limited funds.

When discussing the passivity and lack of initiative of older people, journalists refer to common sense ('as we know', 'it's common knowledge', 'it's understandable') and talk about the need to find motivation late in life. A common form of leisure time is watching TV and buying unnecessary things from TV shops. The Belarusian edition of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* introduces a research on the popularity of an excessive propensity to make unnecessary purchases of older single women (*KP*, 16.01.2019). The rhetoric of passivity is supported by the quoted statements of officials, including Minister of Labour and Social Protection Irina Kostevich whose quotes explain the financial difficulties of older people as a result of their position of dependency (*TUT.BY*, 05.04.2019 *etc.*).

Older people appear to be conservative and having difficulties learning new technology (*AiF*, 29.11.2018, 'How to teach grandparents to use a smartphone'). However, the fact that the use of technological innovations is uncharacteristic of older people is also a consequence of the financial insecurity of this age group. The journalist expresses his uncertainty that older women can use taxi services: 'We are precisely asking about old ladies because it is not very clear how older women who are used to saving every penny can voluntarily take a taxi' (*Onliner.by*, 18.03.2019, 'Report from the district whose residents have not been paid since January'). Thus, financial insecurity and the habit of saving become part of the image of Belarusian older people.

The lack of new emotions and attention is listed as the reason for the conflict behaviour of older people (according to a police officer – *AiF*, 28.02.2019). Moreover, another negative trait of a person which manifests itself with age is discussed – the protervity of older people (*TUT.BY*, 29.07.2019). The cause of irritability is not intrinsically age, but the awareness of the proximity of death and the unwillingness to leave this world.

Broadcasting stereotypes about ageing Belarusian women should be considered separately. The appearance of older women is given special attention, assessed, compared with the images of typical older European women. Presenting stories of real women, the authors persuade that 'when you reach 50, you can and should wear well' (*TUT.BY*, 19.02.2018, "I don't want to give up in despair and whine". Women over fifty speak about age, fashion and beauty'). One interlocutor says that if a woman has lost interest in taking care of herself, 'it seems that she has not developed a sense of respect and love for herself'. Beauty and well-groomed appearance as self-respect and youth are thus contrasted with old age and lack of self-love. Importantly, journalists choose successful Belarusian women as their interlocutors, and visual materials (photo shoots in the fashion genre) emphasise this atypicality.

Women are praised by journalists for their lack of wrinkles, elegance and upright posture, while men are praised for their amazing strength, endurance, and sporting achievements. Passivity and lack of interest in life is called the reason why men who retire early (at the age of 45+) age prematurely. In the article “He is only interested in joint ointments”. Why are husbands that are not yet old turning into dull pensioners?” (TUT.BY, 27.06.2019), the behaviour of men causes disapproval and lack of understanding. Sometimes the passivity and inertia of ageing men are contrasted with the energy of women, caused by both the ‘cult of youth’ that coexists with the new trend of natural ageing, and by social expectations. Journalists remind us that a woman must remain a good worker, wife, mother, and housekeeper, so she ‘has no chance to put her hands down and rest on the sofa. But that is not the case with men’ (TUT.BY, 27.06.2019). Thus, the differences in behaviour of older men and women are socially conditioned, and the publication summarises and presents typical characters.

While journalists regularly use the terms ‘grandmother’ and ‘grandfather’ without any visible negative connotations in their stories about older people, the concept itself, or assigning them to a cohort of older people may be perceived as an insult: ‘It sticks in the craw to call women residing in Zelva grandmothers, as they are gathering in the dance hall of the local district social and pedagogical centre in the morning. They are beautiful, joyful, they are in good shape and wear makeup, manicures and have intricate hairstyles. The women smile and set the table...’ (TUT.BY, 08.03.2017, ‘Beauties are capable of anything. Grandmothers in Zelva opened a fitness class, do yoga and help others’). Or: “We are far away from Europe, of course, but we are trying to keep up with them”, the interlocutors smile, “and they can hardly be called old ladies” (TUT.BY, 28.09.2018, “We are progressive”. Minsk women ride three-wheelers and enjoy life after sixty-five”).

Even the absence of negative changes in the cognitive sphere does not exempt older people from comparison with the younger age group. An ageing person is compared to a child: ‘The elderly are the most grateful spectators: they are surprised and delighted like children’ (TUT.BY, 11.07.2019). This kind of repetitive comparisons of older people with children, their periodicity in discourse, despite the supposedly positive content, represent old age as a deviation that changes a mature person and allows the speaker/writer to put himself in the position of a patronising adult in front of an old child. We can talk about the translation of subject-object relations and the discriminatory nature of such comparisons.

4.2.2. 'Active ageing' in independent media discourse

Not easy, but worth a try. Look at them!

The series of publications thematically related to the topic of active longevity is the most numerous and represented in this discourse (186 publications). These are primarily publications offering the reader an introduction to active older people (86 texts), describing the secrets of longevity (79 texts) and the habits necessary for active ageing (67 texts), and talking about the activities preferred by older people (30 texts). Some materials provide information on how medical advances facilitate the activity of older people (22 texts) and what obstacles to active living exist (17 texts). Discussion about the meaning of active longevity can be found in seven texts, while the state strategy of active longevity is brought up only in five texts.

Active older people are presented as role models. Many older men and women interviewed by journalists discuss the benefits of an active lifestyle and their attitude towards life in older age. For example, Viktor has been practising Qigong for about 30 years. Now he is 73. "I am only 73 years old" smiles the interviewee. "I stopped counting my years after 70. The countdown has started: I feel younger and younger. This is probably the best advertising for women who attend training. For many years I've been training on my own, I have developed an effective method which I now share with my trainees." (*AiF*, 20.02.2019). Active Qigong exercises make it possible for the subject of the publication to feel younger, *i.e.* old age is retreating. Significantly, there is an opinion that such an effect is specifically desirable for women.

The subject of the publication on Onliner.by demonstrates non-typical for older people activity: she invests in education to earn money and take advantage of all the opportunities available to her. She speaks out against the surrounding people: 'You know, people here do not want to learn. It's easier to complain about life. Take my husband... He's a former military man, graduated from an institute, and he's done. He says: "What else do I need?"' (Onliner.by, 13.02.2019). The relatives of a woman who marked the centenary are convinced that the secret of her longevity was active physical labour and agility (Onliner.by, 02.03.2019). However, the reader also gets to know how often the interlocutor talks about death and about the lack of will to live that she developed long ago. Good health (now her 'heart rhythm is a little broken') and physical strength does not seem to guarantee happiness to the active long-liver.

The secrets of active longevity are shared with the audience both by compatriots and by foreign experts and long-livers themselves. Explanations of the phenomenon of longevity include a philosophical attitude to life, rejection of acquisitiveness, calmness, physical activity, and ageing surrounded by the family. Experts representing different scientific fields advise to stay positive, be humble and live on

short rations (or vice versa, be a hedonist and a gourmet), develop brain power, and keep the body active. However, there is no consensus on the quantity and quality of the physical activity. The abundance of various tips and recipes rather convinces us of the lack of a universal recipe and the need for an individual approach in each case.

Among the types of activity, intellectual activity is proposed for consideration: the article 'Why older people need to solve crosswords' informs about the importance of intellectual activity for slowing down ageing (*AiF*, 01.09.2017). Journalists cite the findings of scientists who have observed older people and found that those who like crosswords and puzzles develop a brain that remains more active for many years. Thus, this hobby is offered to the audience as another practice.

Experts from Belarus and Portugal talk about the degree to which the value of an individual for society and their involvement in work for the benefit of others are important for longevity. R. Sinelnikova focuses on demographic changes in the country and the potential that older people have. She understands the activity of older people as a useful activity that is made possible due to overcoming stereotypes and inertia of older people (*AiF*, 24.05.2017). The article '10 women and 12 men over 90 years of age remain at work in Belarus' on the Onliner.by portal quotes the findings of a study by the holder of Doctorate in Medicine R. Khursa, according to which, the working activity of older people is motivated primarily by the desire to be useful, communication with interesting people, the need for self-fulfilment, and a good family (Onliner.by, 26.10.2019.c). It is emphasised that only four of the people surveyed (the total number is not mentioned) explained their working activity by their desire to improve their financial situation. At the same time, the narratives of the subjects of the articles often focus on work out of necessity in older age.

The literary editor of Onliner.by shares her opinion on what a person who is considered to be old in society should do. She insists that the stereotype of childminding referred to as 'sitting with grandchildren' is not the best choice in older age, and she shares her doubts about the fact that there are women who are only willing to serve as mothers and wives for life (Onliner.by, 02.05.2018).

In addition to the 'domesticity' of older people from post-Soviet countries, a serious obstacle to activity is their financial instability and the need to save money. Journalists share the opinion that this obstacle can be overcome, for example, if they have wealthy friends and relatives: 'The average price of a five-day trip to Europe is 400 euros. It is very difficult to save with pension money. On the other hand, an older person can ask their relatives to give them the whole or part of the sum they need for the trip instead of presenting another TV set or ordering a banquet at a restaurant for the anniversary' (*AiF*, 12.04.2019). However, even in this case, it is not assumed that the opportunity to see other countries will be recurrent – rather, it is

an alternative to a hypothetical jubilee gift. The call to remain active despite financial difficulties becomes the main thesis.

The controversy of recipes for active longevity prevents the creation of an integrated whole picture. Beliefs in the overriding importance of positive attitude and proactive approach to life are confronted with data on 50% heredity, 20% environmental, and 30% lifestyle influence. The expert also suggests a theory of the importance of choosing a profession with a view of future active longevity, as it sets a pattern of behaviour. A statement by scientists that cycling slows down the ageing process is published. Journalists present active long-livers as exceptional and non-typical but worthy of emulation, and they expect to promote these role models among the readers of the publication: 'Well, all that is left to do is to give a standing ovation to such an active person and, of course, to follow his example!' (*KP*, 15.02.2019, 'The secret of longevity: a 91-year-old war veteran from Irkutsk runs and does push-ups...'). At the same time, publications contain expert advice not to get carried away with records and intensive training, but to try to maintain Healthy lifestyle: 'excessive physical activity (to the point of exhaustion), especially in adulthood, contributes to accelerated ageing' (*AiF*, 15.01.2018, 'Gerontologist Vladimir Shabalin: "There are no ascetics among long-livers!").

We should mention a separate article on the impact of financial security on active longevity 'Money extends lifespans? On why we live less than the Japanese and Spaniards' (*AiF*, 18.12.2017). It seems important that this emphasis on financial conditions for undertaking activities, which can become a potential barrier, was absolutely not mentioned at all within the discourse of the official media. Thus, apart from biological, social, and psychological factors, the focus is on another – the financial – factor. Only one of the subjects of the publication on the Onliner.by portal answers the question of what has helped her to live to the age of 99 as being 'Just God' (Onliner.by, 24.02.2019). The woman is confident that she is still active at her age and is in good physical shape thanks to God's providence and to her spending almost the entire day praying.

Furthermore, it is important to note the lack of attention to academic and political discussions regarding old age, ageing and 'active ageing' in particular. In fact, the development of the Belarusian strategy of active ageing was also ignored. The development of ageing-related policies in other countries is reported directly in just one article, in conjunction with discussions of the need for a similar policy document in Belarus. The New Zealand Strategy for Positive Ageing 2001 is named a model strategy. Unlike the Ukrainian strategy, it contains clear goals and objectives, as well as a commitment to developing action plans for a year with reports from all agencies and ministries (*AiF*, 16.08.2018.a). Four other publications mention this strategy but do not cover the topic in detail.

4.2.3. Old age, older people, and the state in independent media discourses

Survival benefits for (un)deserving or earned wellbeing

A significant proportion of publications (196 materials) are devoted to the relations between older people and the state. The overwhelming majority of them cover pension scheme issues (146 publications, including 63 in other countries) and pension reform (50 texts). The awareness-raising texts educate the country's population about the right to receive pension payments, about the accounting of pension and extra payments that certain social categories are entitled to, about additional measures of social support for specific social categories, such as long-livers, and answers to readers' questions about the pension system and its reform.

The analyses by economists on the current state of the pension system, recent reforms that raised the retirement age for men and women, and development prospects are also published. Economist E. Bornukova speculates about the fact that a growing number of citizens call Belarus a welfare state with bitter irony and invites readers to think about it (Onliner.by, 28.06.2019.a). The expert assumes that the retirement age will be raised to 65 for both sexes, and the conditions for receiving a retirement pension will gradually become stricter. Among other transformations expected in Belarus is the departure from maintaining the amount of pension payments at the rate of 40% of the average salary in the country. Readers are urged to 'understand that pensions will progressively become a form of survival benefits, and those who are 30-40 years old today should seriously consider how to secure their old age' (Onliner.by, 28.06.2019.a).

According to the journalists, the attitude of ordinary citizens of retirement age to the recent reform is qualified as the topic that has lost its acuteness and been talked through, 'and those who did not understand it have eventually accepted it' (Onliner.by, 25.03.2019). The theme of the reform is associated with the rhetoric of debating or silent condemnation. Although some of the stories describe how ordinary citizens who would have retired under previous pension laws, now are unwilling to put up with the reform and 'close the chapter on it'. The subject of a publication refuses to accept the term 'parasite' even though he cannot stay on the labour market at the age of 60. He shares his reasoning: 'We lived in the Soviet era, and the working man enjoyed credibility and respect. I wouldn't have quit if my health had been all right. My salary was good; I had a prestigious position. And now I should work just to get out of the house? For 130 roubles? Come on, people! Look at how much work I have on this site. When flowers bloom all around, people say thank you. This is what I appreciate! And the state will never say thank you' (Onliner.by, 25.03.2019).

Other narratives show how changes in pension payment conditions affect specific people. The subject of a publication called Olga spent 20 years looking after her

mother, a first-degree disabled person, and Olga's employment period is no longer sufficient for a pension under the new conditions (*KP*, 24.01.2017, 'If I live to 65, I will receive the same pension as a homeless person'). The point about the insecurity of certain social categories is also supported by expert comments who report the lack of tools that could secure from such situations. Journalists show that the most vulnerable group in this situation are those who have looked after children, older persons and first-degree disabled people, as these periods are no longer taken into account in the length of pensionable service. They also refer to vulnerable employees whose employers have stopped contributing money to the Social Security Fund and never informed the employees about this.

The media inform readers about changes in pension systems in other countries, the average and minimum benefit rates, approaches to calculating pensions, and assess the quality of life of older people in a given pension system. Readers are presented with the likely prospect of abolishing the retirement age as a status: 'The retirement age is a randomly chosen figure. One day we will give up on it', proclaims the title of an article in the *KP*: 'There is no scientific evidence that at 55 or 65 something happens to a person that causes them to stop working. Everyone has a different profession, career, and health condition. Some people are happy to work until they are 90, while others want to take their ease at 45. We should look at it case by case, and it is strange to believe that a certain general retirement age suits everyone' (*KP*, 26.06.2018).

25 publications discuss demographic trends of population ageing as a negative factor affecting state institutions and social policy. These changes in population composition are presented as determining the country's future. Experts believe that the demographic indicators and life expectancy of men and women in the country are conditioned by the need to raise or lower the retirement age or adapt it for specific gender groups. There is no unanimity on this issue in this discourse.

The government's efforts to maintain social assistance institutions under complicated and changing conditions are reflected in materials on social workers, palliative care, aid programmes, and innovations in this area. Other materials denounce the inaction of officials or inconsistency with the official rhetoric. The number of materials criticising the state's efforts as regards social support for older people (23 publications) is balanced by the same number of those approving and full of praise (23). Relying on expert research or the experience of the subjects of publications, journalists denounce the state's inability to support older people and call on them to start thinking about self-sufficiency in old age: 'Why shouldn't young people hope for a pension from the state and start saving for old age as soon as possible' (*TUT.BY*, 07.11.2018); 'For life rather than survival: how to invest in retirement' (*TUT.BY*, 11.04.2019); 'No matter what your salary is – pensions

will be almost the same for everyone. Explanation of what can be done' (TUT.BY, 03.08.2018); 'Belarusians who save for retirement: "The state will not provide for me in my old age" (TUT.BY, 30.08.2018); 'Save \$50 now to have \$400 in the future. Why you shouldn't hope for pension money from the state' (TUT.BY, 30.05.2019); 'Survival figures. Report from the district whose residents have not been paid since January' (Onliner.by, 18.03.2019); 'How the state saves at the expense of Belarusians who risk being left without pension benefits' (TUT.BY, 01.07.2019.a).

Journalists working for independent media provide readers with the opportunity to 'look at real life that is not discussed on TV' (Onliner.by, 18.03.2019), while the narratives of older people's poverty address the emotions and common sense of the audience: 'A bit of challenge? It's terribly difficult! <...> How are we supposed to live on peanuts? We are surviving. They throw 30 on the table, we get 70-80 in hand... I have three grandchildren; I want to give them something, but I have nothing to eat. It's up to us how we figure it out. If you have clothes or walk barefoot. They say on TV that Belarus is a country for living. Right! It's a country for survival! Let the president come and see what's really going on. Not this grandstanding. They sweep, mop the floor – everything looks perfect! But let him come in here. People are afraid to tell the truth: they are daunted! It will be your fault, they will hound you', says the dairymaid to journalists (Onliner.by, 18.03.2019).

At the same time, the ungratefulness and dependence of older people on the state are mentioned in 15 materials. Older people and today's younger generation are encouraged to be responsible and realistic in their expectations. Experts and journalists advise people to think about their future regardless of the current legislation in the sphere of social protection for older people and to secure their income in old age. Citizens are encouraged not to hope for governmental aid and to save money today so that they will not be trapped later in older age. Interviews with young people who already demonstrate a proactive attitude to life and are thinking about options for self-sufficiency in old age tell readers what can be done.

4.2.4. Problems and risks associated with 'old age' and 'active ageing'

Wide range of issues and risks

According to the main aim of this thesis, it is important to note the problem fields and risks this discourse is associated with in connection with 'old age' and 'active ageing'. Attention has been paid to examining which issues are verbalised, debated, and which ones are kept in silence and ignorance (analysis is done both on the basis of studying the context (see Chapter 3) and on the basis of studying induced discourses (see Chapter 5). This thematic category's significance is determined by its popularity in the analysed media.

One of the thematic categories that is most represented in these discussions (133 publications) is the 'problems and risks associated with old age' category. Readers are offered the opinions of researchers of ageing processes, news on medical advances, and warnings about the possible risks and diseases that older people are exposed to. The journalists' older-aged interlocutors also discuss the problem of worsening health conditions by sharing their feelings about their physical decline and questioning the concept of old age. Materials on the problem of cognitive health deterioration stand out too. The scenario of living in specialised care institutions in old age is problematised: even employees of such institutions demonstrate a strong belief that family should remain the main source of care for the older person. Thus, not only does the individual recognise their helplessness and dependence as an age-related problem, but the need to care for an older person is also held out as a problem for society, the state, and the family.

Risks include the danger of inability to find a job, as well as the risk of shrinking social bonds and loneliness. The financial problems associated with retirement and increased spending on medical supplies and services are reflected in this discourse: the problems of older people's 'survival' in difficult material conditions are revealed. The scantiness of financial security and the unfair vulnerable situation of older people are illustrated with examples from the lives of pensioners and complemented by the subjects' stories. The critical focus on the existing pension system and the fulfilment of obligations assumed by the state is evident in the very headlines: 'Monologue of a pensioner who has earned a good life. But she never had it' (TUT.BY, 29.03.2018).

Among the issues discussed in connection with old age, discrimination against older people is most frequently mentioned. One facet of discriminatory social attitudes towards older people is the perception of the ageing female body. A woman's old age is associated with a phobia of withering beauty: 'Common fear of losing attractiveness for a partner as you get older. Our reader admits that she is ashamed of her ageing body and afraid that her husband will leave her for a young woman. A psychologist comments on whether such fears are justified' (TUT.BY, 20.01.2019). Firstly, such materials are published in the women's section of the portal and are intended for a female audience. Secondly, the possibility of losing the attractiveness of an older male partner is not taken into account at all; quite on the contrary, such a partner can hypothetically be attractive to a young woman. This reflects the belief that an ageing body is solely a woman's problem, irrelevant for men. Journalists argue that ageing celebrities also share the ageing experiences of 'ordinary' women. Such materials do not offer any reflections about the normalcy of this youth race: women are offered recipes to lead a more successful fight with old age.

However, within the discourse, reports appear about projects that claim to be striving to erase stereotypes of standard beauty and inspire Belarusians 'who

are limited by mental boundaries' (TUT.BY, 07.03.2019). Experts in gerontology A. Ilyin and K. Proshchaev focus on the negative perception of older people and old age in society trying to dispel the myth of miserable and defective old age (TUT.BY, 09.04.2019). Emphasis is placed on the unsoundness of discrimination, its unnaturalness, and its impact on the quality of life of older people who share common social attitudes.

The definition of old age in the independent media discourses is therefore controversial and varied: from approaches to definition through negative controllable or uncontrollable phenomena to neutral and positive interpretations. The definitions are based on biological, conventional social, chronological, psychological, or multiple factors. It is impossible to identify a unified vector of the ideological scope of publications. It is important to note the complexity of identifying the main rhetorical theses that are broadcast within these discourses: a total of 30 assumed theses were identified (as opposed to 8 theses identified in the official discourse, see Annex XIX). It is possible to notice broadcasting of traditional local, traditional conservative Soviet ideology, liberal and neoliberal within discourses of independent media.

The representation of older people both implies binary oppositions of the 'typical', 'ordinary', 'average', and 'other', 'different', 'outstanding', and offers reflections about the heterogeneity of the group rejecting any stereotypical definitions. The subjects of publications are both the 'atypical' and 'exceptional' and 'mainstream' with their daily worries and pressing problems. Within this discourse, models of 'exemplary' older people are highlighted to inspire others, but other narratives are held out as ordinary. The image of a typical older person is characterised by the terms 'passive', 'conservative', 'thrifty', 'caring', 'inert'. There are no attempts to separate the concepts of the 'older' and 'old' person in the discourse; in their publications, journalists use them interchangeably as synonyms in order to avoid tautology or for no obvious reason.

The very concept of activity in old age and the term 'active' used in relation to older persons and 'old age' has several dominant meanings and contexts: physical and intellectual, working and non-working, paid and unpaid, desirable and unwanted. Among the barriers to activity are internal reluctance (sometimes caused by social attitudes – perceptions of old age), financial constraints, health issues, poor infrastructure. Only one publication in 502 over the survey period is devoted to active longevity strategies.

In addition to texts providing information on state support for older people and texts demonstrating the irresponsibility and dependence of citizens, some publications highlight the injustice of the current social security system for older people and the plight of representatives of this social group. Attention is drawn to

the problem of older people marginalisation and inequality (both among the age groups and older people).

The rhetoric of combating stereotypes about older people and old age is extremely relevant for author's media content, statements made by experts and government officials, as well as by older people themselves who become the subjects of publications. However, along with publications calling for reflection on the existence of discrimination against older people and the fight against ageism, stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes are broadcast to the audience. A striking example is presented by the materials on women's beauty addressed at a female audience.

Talking about the revitalisation of older people due to demographic trends and their value and relevance to society, the vector of value is not directed at the family. At the same time, it is the family that is put at the centre regarding the care of older people after they have lost their ability to work. The rhetoric of 'deliberation', releasing the old person from the sense of duty to help their children and grandchildren, is not accompanied by reciprocal calls for younger family members to be released from their duty to look after the elderly members of their family by providing care for them at home. The very same concept of duty is also used to remind them of the perceived expectation of responsibility towards their family.

4.3. Analysis of induced or intentionally provoked discourses

As it was noted in Chapter 2, for this research, it is important not only to analyse the definitions and concepts broadcast in the media discourses but also to reveal the interpretations shared by members of Belarusian society. The researcher started from the desire to initiate verbalisation of individual opinions and interpretations to uncover the widest possible range of definitions and interpretations.

Even though 19 thematic categories were created during the initial analysis and coding process, in line with the objectives of the research and its main goal, only four of them will be fully discussed in this chapter: the understanding of 'old age', 'active ageing', as well as the relations between the state and older people (including relations concerning the issues of pensions and pension reform), as well as problems and risks associated with the 'old age' and 'active ageing'. It was important to focus on the topics broadcast in the media discourses with the greatest intensity and to compare them meaningfully with the interpretations and judgments of the research participants. Moreover, given the objective of identifying the problems associated with the use of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the analysed Belarusian discourses, it is also important to focus on the problems the media and the research participants associate with old age and active ageing.

4.3.1. Interpretations of 'old age' and definitions of older people

Between the extremes

Interviews with subjects provide an opportunity to analyse variations of understanding 'old age' and such age categories as 'the older' and 'the old' which are widely used in both official and media discourses. The meaning of these concepts is disclosed in direct responses to a question (e.g., 'old age is...'), in a descriptive way, or through the disclosure of the pros or cons of this life period. The subjects' answers were conveniently classified depending on the approach to the articulation of the concept of 'old age' and presented by examples (excerpts from interviews): definition based on chronological age limits, on the criterion of participation in the labour market (established retirement age), on using mental measurements or parameters, descriptive-associative definitions, and philosophical-theological reasoning. These groups of definitions can be conveniently divided into two essentially different categories: old age as a phenomenon that is uncontrollable by the individual and old age as a condition that is internally controlled and dependent on the individual.

Although there is no single answer that defines 'old age' solely from the perspective of biological science, the four fundamental criteria related to human ageing, as proposed by gerontologist B. Strehler (Strehler, 1962), are 'implied' by the subjects: 1. Ageing, unlike illness, is a universal process and all members of the population are subject to it without exception. 2. Ageing is a progressive, continuous process. 3. Ageing is a peculiarity of any living organism. 4. Ageing is accompanied by degenerative changes (as opposed to changes in the body as it develops or 'matures') (from the encyclopedia of ageing): 'There's no happiness here, you know, in old age [smiling]. When you are young, it's there, but in old age, it's not... Personally, I'm afraid of how years add up, and you're thinking: one day you are alive, and the next day you are not there anymore! There is no space for joy if a person is gone' [laughs]' (F8). Some definitions combine several approaches both focusing on psychophysical factors and indicating approximate age (chronological) range.

Based on chronological parameters, old age is defined as uncontrolled or partly controlled by the individual condition. The research participants refer to specific or approximate figures, not necessarily based on any objective research or information obtained from external sources. Based on this chronological indicator, the subject names the age of a person that they consider an older or old person. In this way, temporal determinants are assigned to old age. For example, a 64-year-old research participant (F15) found it difficult to define old age when asked, 'How do you understand the terms "older" and "old"? Who would you call "older" and who deserves to be named "old"? The subject answered using chronological determinants: 'Well, an older person is about 70, while an old person is 90 years old'

(F15). In this case, physical, psychological, and other aspects are not considered or shifted to the background. For a 38-year-old participant, the age thresholds are 60 years for the 'older' and 80 years for the 'old' (F25). The 19-year-old participant's answer also refers to age parameters, but in this case, the numerical parameters of the age bar is different (even lower): 'Old is 50 to 65, older is over 70 years old' (M26). Thus, calendar dates are proposed as a criterion for separating adults from the old and the older. This chronological relationship between old age and the age of a person in general simplifies the answer to the question about the essence of old age, and subjects sometimes keep to such an attempt to explain the concept.

The criterion for distinguishing between older age and old age is physical strength, self-sufficiency or vitality, which depends on the individual's desire: 'I think that there are people who are 65 years old, let's say, they look like they are 80, and there are people who are so lively at 80! That is, everything depends on the individual. Someone may have abused alcohol or... <...> ... Right, when you're already over 60, you're certainly an older person, but not yet old, I would say' (M6).

The internal mental condition of a person is also emphasised by a 58-year-old interviewee as a criterion for identifying them as an old person, in contrast to the older person. The subject notes a lack of love for life and the world around them as a criterion: 'not just physical labour, but also the lack of love for their life, the interest in any news; the person is just waiting for death even surrounded by their family. They listen, are excited, but at the same time are very feeble. They are not really interested in what happens in the country, in the streets, with their neighbours, anywhere'(F1). Such psychological inertia and indifference to the outside world are noted as the difference between the old person and the older person by other subjects, too. Sometimes the expressions 'their soul doesn't get old' or 'old age in one's soul' are used: 'An older person is the one who lives, has lived for quite a while, and the old person, as I said, has an old soul. As for the older people, I say this to everyone, it means that I don't like it when they say "old", but I like it when they say "older". The word "older", "aged" comes from the expression "the one who has seen life", so that can be anyone at 20, 60 or 100. An old person had an old soul, that's it, deep despair, that is, one of the Christian sins – despair – it is a sin, I mean, you lose your soul. It's as simple as that' (F10).

As society becomes more aware of dementia, older people are becoming increasingly concerned about the development of dementia, which leads to the incorrect identification of ageing-related cognitive failures as signs of dementia. While some researchers have suggested that self-reported cognitive problems accurately identify older people with early signs of dementia, there is evidence that subjective cognitive decline is not related to objective cognitive activity and instead

reflects psychological factors consistent with patterns of health anxiety, including dementia concerns.

Such psychological changes can sometimes be explained by objective changes in the brain associated with the disease, as well as perceptions of the inevitability of such changes and general anxiety and concern about dementia (Kinzer & Suhr, 2016). A subject of the research mentioned dementia, but in her perception, this disease is collateral damage that manifests itself with increasing intensity as one reaches old age: 'I would call old a person who can no longer take care of themselves, for example, my father, he is really old, he is over 80 years old, he can no longer take care of himself, sometimes he is reasonable... Well, dementia processes are already in progress and so on, I mean, he is an old man who is no longer interested in anything. An older person is probably the one who is still interested in his family, in his loved ones, who has just reached a certain age, let's just say, but still... probably, hasn't lost their love for life, they still want to see many things in this life, at least' (F11). This kind of apathy may be perceived as natural for different age groups: both for 80 years (F11) and 70 years (F13).

A participant of the research (M7) expresses the hope that 'old age' is equivalent to the word 'wisdom' and harmony with oneself and others, but he calls old or older 'a person who has lost touch with life. They are scrubby, poorly dressed; they don't care' (M7). The subject also expresses the belief that old age and old people are of no value to society. This duality of interpretation is also found in the replies of other subjects: on the one hand, hopes and aspirations, on the other hand, the certainty that an unfavourable ageing scenario is much more likely.

However, when trying to understand 'old age' as a phenomenon, the significance and substantiality of valuable experience and knowledge gained may come to the fore. The content of life experience and occupational skills is important when defining 'old age' and expressing attitudes towards it. Older people can approach the definition of old age by describing internal changes and giving a sense of what they feel: 'It changes with age... Yes, I've probably learned to appreciate all this with a philosophical perspective, I've become a little detached and more tolerant of people, though I used to be more judgemental. Some events I just... which may be political, which used to be very worrying to me, now I just turn a blind eye to them, try not to get into it, because I understand that I will not change anything, so it is not worth wasting my energy and nerves on it. Of course, I would like the country to flourish and everything, but still... Well, what else has changed? Well, maybe there's something in my profession... there is a term "professional burnout", maybe it's already happening because... it's happening, yes, although... I generally think that if a person is young inside, they... Physically, we're a bit different, but it feels like... It feels like there's still a bit of fervour' (F11). These are no longer abstract

reflections on the topic of old age as an abstract phenomenon, but real changes in the sensory and thinking organs during the relevant period of life, an obvious phenomenon that shapes individual perceptions and attitudes. Therefore, such a personalised definition, although it may be influenced by external conditional attitudes or stereotypes (or may be created by external interferences), is perceived as 'one's own', 'verified', and 'true'.

There is also a philosophical and theological approach to understanding old age as being in line with the Divine Providence, the course of nature and a fact of life which must be gratefully accepted. For example, a person who has reached retirement age, but is still working and caring for an aged mother, notices: 'It's just that every age has to be accepted, well, as a gift of God. I am a believer, and I understand that every person, well... the time comes to accept this gift of God, well, as a given, and to be happy about it, because some people are deprived of this old age, they die in their youth, and that is why, well, I try...' (F9). By talking about her fear of death, the subject shows her awareness of the very existence of fear of old age. That is, based on the denial of the phobia, we can talk about the existence of such an approach to understanding old age. And it is this denial of fear of old age that allows F9 to subjectively classify old age as a positive phenomenon.

Philosophy regards old age as both a period of freedom and a period associated with the end of bodily life: 'Are there any possible advantages of old age?' Subject: 'I'm a free person: I go wherever I want...' Interviewer: 'What about the disadvantages?' Subject: 'The downside is old age itself' [laughs]. Interviewer: 'And what is old age?' Subject: 'Well... It's being closer to heaven' [laughs] (M14). The combination of this inner freedom as a positive phenomenon and a simultaneous restriction in the form of a rigorous end to life gives a dual interpretation of old age.

Socially deterministic definitions of old comprise references to the established retirement age or the age of actual termination of employment (labour market activity). In this case, subjects refer to the criteria of 'usefulness', 'working capacity', and 'self-sufficiency' of the individual as indicators that make it possible not to relate a person of retirement age to the category of the old, but they are included in the older people group. One of the subjects points out: 'Older people over 70, if they can take care of themselves... Well, to put it simply... if they can't, they are old... But if this is a retired person, but is still employable, why not stay at work? If health doesn't allow for that, they wouldn't do it! But health is changing... one day it's good, tomorrow it is horrible' (M17). In this case, socially defined age limits for participation in paid activities valuable to society dominate as the borderline which a person crosses before taking a well-deserved rest and joining the ranks of older or old people.

In some cases, instead of trying to define 'old age', subjects also present a descriptive-associative range of subjective synonyms, definitions, feelings evoked by reflections on old age, observations of old people or personal experience. Sometimes old age is perceived as a joyless period preceding death: 'I don't know if I'm happy in my old age... There's no happiness here, you know, in old age [laughs]. When you are young, it's there, but in old age, it's not... Personally, I'm afraid of how years add up, and you're already thinking: one day you are alive, and the next day you are not there anymore! There is no space for joy if a person is gone' [laughs]' (F8). Old age is not considered separately from death as the end of human life, but only as the precursor of the end, its anticipation, and therefore cannot be a positive phenomenon. Moreover, a person who faces old age requires consolation (for example, by using the word 'older' instead of 'old'): 'Older is a euphemism, that is not yet old, but not young anymore. The word was invented to comfort someone' (M18) and pity (F26).

Other interlocutors give a positive range of associations concerning the concept of 'old age': 'My first association with old age is peace of mind. The loved ones, cosiness, safety, something related to the family' (F20). That is, in this case, old age determines the emotional state of calmness.

Psychological perception dominates this kind of approach to the definition of old age as a phenomenon. One of the subjects speaks about the psychological perception of himself being old without assigning himself to the category of older or old people, but rather mentioning it as a sign of an emotional and mental state: 'I often joke about the fact that I am an old sick person. Most often this happens at moments when I am overwhelmed by apathy. Therefore, old age is clearly not about age! It is a state of... a moral state of mind. The feeling of uselessness – it seems to me, it is so depressing with the arrival of old age. <...> It is when you do not know what to do with yourself because nobody fucking needs you. That's what old age is. This is how I see it from a distance because this is how my grandparents feel about their retirement age' (M22). At a particular moment, apathy and fatigue, the feeling of one's uselessness can be identified with old age in general, and this perception of old age emphasises the negative emotional state. The interlocutor points out the secondary nature of age and the determining importance of other characteristics, giving a range of negative associative definitions: 'Old age – ha! I am going to tell you! Old age is when you are constantly waiting for relatives and friends to visit you, you sit and look out of the window more often. Old age is when you decide that it is better to plant potatoes yourself than buy them in a store because you start being slow in understanding the economy. Old age is when you start to regret that you haven't been able to do many things and you don't rush to do them now, because you think your life is over. Old age is when you wait for the day of your pension

payment, and you hope that the arrival of this little money will somehow make your routine more enjoyable. Old age is when your penis doesn't get hard anymore and it doesn't bother you' (M22). That is, apart from apathy and fatigue, a lot of free but unused time, passivity, disorientation, financial uncertainty, intellectual disability, and lack of sexual life are mentioned.

The answers of other interlocutors maintain the perception of old age as a phobia (or a phenomenon associated with fears): 'I see nothing good in old age, nothing at all. Fear is all that is left for me' (F4). Such negativism, caused by various factors, both external (the state, society, family) and internal (health, emotional state), is manifested in the rejection of old age.

Negative attitudes towards old age can also be expressed in the reluctance to reflect on this topic. In this case, the concept of 'old age' is not clearly defined; it is described as something negative and 'having nothing to do with me': 'Would you tell me what you think old age is in general? Perhaps, for you personally, or how, in your opinion, society perceives old age'. Subject: 'I don't associate myself with this word yet...'. (F3). The refusal to discuss this issue derives from distancing from the topic, deactualising thereof in one's life and removing it from the range of topics that are relevant for the person.

Old age as a state controlled by the individual characterises the psychological approach to understanding old age as a phenomenon that is manageable by an individual. F10, a 66-year-old teacher, answers the following to the question 'What do you think old age is? When does it come?': 'Old age can dawn already in youth: it might come at 20 or never come at all, so in my understanding, old age is a purely inner state of a person, their mind. If the mind wants to sing – sing, if you want to work – work. But if you go with the flow, if you settle down, let's say, you are retired, you sit on a chair and you refuse to stand up – that's it, it's old age, it's death. Old age is not a state of the body... well, maybe, yes, the body, yes, the senility, all that... but a state of the soul. If the soul is not old, then you will never be old' (F10). Thus, in this interpretation, old age is synonymous with psychological voidness and degrading mood, and in this case, the mandatory nature of its occurrence is called into question; it becomes an option rather than an inevitability. It is no longer a natural phase of the biological life cycle, but a personal choice.

Since the perception discourse is artificially created by the researcher's intention and by the call for free expression of opinions and reflections, there are also extremely negative images and definitions of old age, in which this phenomenon is not identified with death, but appears to be worse than death: 'Old age comes with the realisation that you can no longer work so actively and contribute to your life and that of others. The beginning of old age is a point of slow decay, and for everyone, it begins at different times. I hope I won't live to this period (I am not kidding).

Since I seriously do not want to live to old age, there is no point in answering other questions, I have no idea how to answer them. But thank you for the question' (ageingbelarus.org, 05.01.2019).

Such extreme negativism does not exist in the media discourses analysed above and in in-depth interviews (perhaps, because such answers could have been obtained from people who refused to participate in the interview, in which case the use of an additional online tool to obtain information was an exceptional opportunity to 'hear' the voices of those who consider the topic too difficult to discuss but have made some effort to briefly explain their position online, which also provides complete anonymity). It is also possible that such interpretations are edited by journalists, are never 'sent to the printing press': 'Having seen the terrible situations at hospices, I can say one thing: in my understanding, there is no such a concept as decent old age, for old age leads to the end, to death, and it is always terrible, pathetic, painful, depressing', E.P. writes adding that if they are not able to control their body, they will choose euthanasia (ageingbelarus.org, 07.01.2019).

When a direct answer to the question posed was not received, answers to clarifying questions were used, for example: 'What do you think the pros and cons of old/er age are?' Notably, the answers to these questions not only re-word many negative consequences of human ageing ('Well, we are not getting younger, we are getting older, and everything wears out. And that's why it all changes for the worse, of course [laughs]' (M6)), but such answers also reveal many positive factors associated with the period of old age in the subjects' perception. First of all, they mention the accumulated life experience, which gives an advantage in solving problematic situations and helps to survive psychologically challenging events and to cope with emotions. For example, an interviewee of retirement age (F9) notes: 'Pros? The fact that you're already wise, you have an opinion, and other people's opinions don't matter to you anymore, like when you are young, and you're afraid of some attitude, the perception that you might not be able to manage something, and in your old age you'll always be able to do everything, there's no need to hurry or worry. Among the cons are probably health issues' (F9). The same opinion is held by F10 who has reached the age of 66 years and who perceives life experience as a real advantage of older people over young people.

However, not everybody thinks that the accumulated experience is identical to wisdom that gives older people the right to give advice and feel their advantage. Some associate older people (the very fact of a person's belonging to this cohort) with their inability to take care of themselves and their unhealthy lifestyle (M18), and such a life philosophy is not conducive to mentorship and the status of a teacher for young people.

When talking about the conditionality of age range and definitions, some interviewees and online survey participants deny the possibility of creating a universal definition or formal standards. At the same time, there is a set of stereotypes among people that stipulate that a person should do certain things at a certain age. ‘It is stupid and unpleasant. This is a matter of my attitude. If I can afford to say: “I don’t give a shit, then...”’ an interlocutor notices emphasising the importance of the person’s inner will to resist social attitudes and choose their own scenario of ageing (M18). The subjects of the research express doubts as to the necessity and fairness of restricting a person by their reality in choosing their path, their understanding of old age and age in general. Negative social attitudes, as well as the imposition of any ‘positive’ models of ageing, are criticised. Such reflections can serve as an illustration of Giddens’ reasoning about the possibilities of a present-day postmodern person to create their old age (1991).

It is worth noting the amplitude of approaches to defining old age in the discourse under analysis, both in terms of the criterion of controllability or uncontrollability of the phenomenon and in terms of theoretical foundations (definitions are based on different disciplinary approaches and can be attributed to different theoretical perspectives: traditional, modern, and post-modern) (see Figure 8).

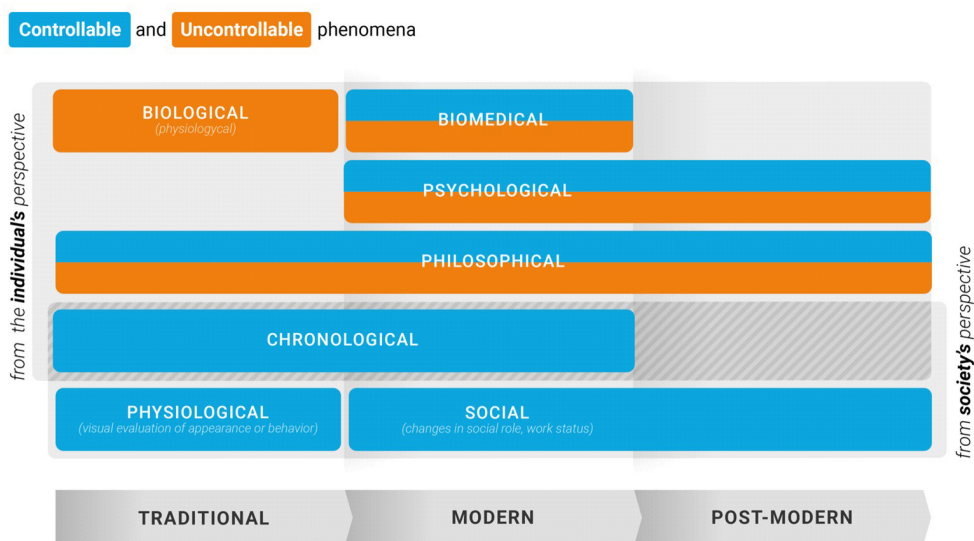


Figure 8. Approaches to defining ageing in induced or intentionally provoked discourses (2017-2019).

Source: the author.

Concerning the definition of older people and old people as representatives of the older age category, it should be noted that there is not only a lack of a consistent approach to the chronological boundaries of these categories but also to the prioritisation thereof. Interlocutors can define older people as those 'who are still active in this or that way' and old people as those who are already completely weak and not self-sufficient (M23). However, there is a reverse perception of these two categories: 'Well, an older person is the one in venerable age, while an old person is when it's been like ten years after you retired. An older person is the one who is already in the advanced years' (F2) or 'an older person is when one is not interested in anything at all', while an old one 'is still quite active' (F26).

Also, not everyone sees the difference between the terms 'old' and 'older'. For example, an interlocutor 65 years of age treats these words as synonymous: 'Older people... I think they are the same. The old and the older are the same' (M14). Neither does the 59-year-old interviewee (M7) distinguish between these concepts. He considers indifference to oneself and others a criterion for singling out both the old and the older: 'I call a person old or older if they have lost touch with life. They are scrubby, poorly dressed, they don't care' (M7). Within this discourse, the use of chronological age range is rather conditional and is usually named 'roughly', with an awareness of this conditionality.

Notably, the fact of having or potentially expecting grandchildren was not mentioned by retirement age subjects as a criterion for joining the category of 'the older' or 'the old', despite the frequency of the use of the terms 'grandfather' and especially 'grandmother' in media discourse. In the discourse provoked by the interview and the online survey, the survey participants hardly use the name 'grandfather' or 'grandmother' in relation to themselves or other older people, but the appearance of grandchildren is once mentioned in relation to the consciousness of old age: 'Four years ago, my parents were confused when a grandchild was born. It took my mother two years to start proudly calling herself a grandmother. To understand that this is an honorary status, not a reminder of age' (ageingbelarus.org, 27.12.2018). Thus, the fact of having grandchildren is symbolically associated with old age, and before the children were born, the subject's parents who are 63 and 64 years old had not identified themselves with the categories of older or old people.

From this perspective, along with attempts to categorically distinguish these groups, the characteristics that representatives of these age groups have (or are endowed with) in the minds of the interviewees were obtained. These characteristics range from obviously negative (demanding, frail, forgotten, weak, passive, pitiful or pitiable, as well as complaining, or dissatisfied) to positive ones (experienced, wise).

The negative image of an older person is sometimes vivid and expressive, fraught with negative characteristics: 'When does a person mature into the category

of the old? When they think they are very smart, while around them are “young people who don’t understand a damn thing about life”. But clearer benchmarks are slouching, wrinkles, limp, teeth in a glass at night, grunting, marasmus, and the unique ability to endure queues in health centres’ (ageingbelarus.org, 05.01.2019).

Attempts to define older and old people included both generalisation, despecification and definition through the opposition ‘they’ – ‘me’, ‘they’ – ‘us’, ‘common’ – ‘some’, and ‘active’ – ‘passive’. The rejection of the possibility of generalisation and de-specification based on age are also emphasised.

4.3.2. The variety of interpretations of the concept of ‘active ageing’

For pleasure, for health or to survive? A right for passivity

Interest in this subchapter is connected with interpretations of the concept of ‘active ageing’ among the participants of the research. In addition, taking into account the results of the analysis of media discourses, it was also important to understand what conditions and factors are perceived by the participants as obstacles to the desired activities and their intensity.

Based on the data received, activity in old age seems necessary, but the preferred types of activity and its intensity vary. In some cases, activity was a defining characteristic of a person’s attitude towards the category of the young or people who are ‘not yet old’; in other cases, activity was important for ‘integral’, ‘happy’ or ‘perfect’ old age. However, it should also be noted that the understanding and meaning of the term ‘active’ is very broad and variable. Completely different answers were given to the questions: ‘What do you understand by ‘active ageing’? What does this concept mean to you? What kind of activity does an older person need?’ The rhetoric of activity is present in answers to questions that do not explicitly contain the term.

The options for the activities preferred by the research participants or perceived by them as imperative are similar to those broadcasts in the media: paid work, unpaid domestic or voluntary work, and non-working activities (physical, communication, leisure, or intellectual). However, it is in this discourse that another variation of activity is articulated, which is recognised as necessary by some subjects – the civic and political activity of older people as a social group.

The rhetoric of the need for movement is present in the statements of interlocutors. This physical activity may be elaborated by mentioning specific types, but its meaning might not be disclosed and be limited to just stating the presence of motor activity. Its importance is emphasised for maintaining fitness and a healthy body, but enjoyment is not an end in itself or is not compulsory, the emphasis is on the positive effect: ‘You know, you probably have to be in motion all the time, because

otherwise, all the defects start to make themselves felt, and then the problems are even worse. And when you're already on the move, somehow you don't reflect too much: "Oh, I feel pain there, I am going to apply some ointment", and you have to go back to work because that's how problems accumulate' (F8). This kind of physical activity for maintaining the tone of the body can be denoted by the Belarusian word *varushytsa* ('to get a move on'): 'One should get a move on. You need to walk, to get everything done so that your arms, legs or spine, or other parts don't stagnate' (F15). At no time did the interlocutors deny the need for such physical movement without a specific purpose other than maintaining physical fitness (not for earning money, or having fun, or voluntary aid). The motive of the need for physical activity as such appears to be an axiom.

Paid labour as a form of physical activity is ambiguous in the perception of the research participants. Qualitative research does not allow for speaking about any trends or frequency of particular relations, but we can talk about a striking difference in attitude towards this type of activity. For some people, work is a desirable and encouraged activity: 'I wouldn't sit at home, because I'm bored alone! Well, some people might, you know, not want to... And they don't want, as they say, to perform any kind of activity. I want to be active in retirement, to be able to work a bit longer, so I can spend some time with people, you know? There is nothing good about staying at home alone. It's enough to make you desperate. Well, it depends on the person, it depends on everyone individually, I think. My point of view is that I want to work and I want to be healthy – that's the most important thing, and I want to have a mind of my own. Because in our age, you see, all sorts of illnesses are coming to the fore, so health is the most important thing' (F12). Those willing to work after reaching retirement age, or who have reached this age and are happy to work, note the beneficial effects of being active in the team, feeling useful, and doing what they love to do.

An online participant notices: 'If I were to retire, my main problem would be to find the motivation to live' (M18). In this case, retiring is like stopping doing something you love, because the subject specifies that this activity is the core that brings satisfaction, as well as motivates you to live. 'I believe that a person should engage in productive work for as long as possible' (M18). He assumes that the very amount of free time that appears after a person stops working might be a problem, or rather the lack of possibilities to fill in this time.

Reference is also made to unpaid physical activity, the purpose of which is to perform any household, family or community tasks, or to provide gratuitous services. However, there are variations in assessing such activity as desirable, necessary and natural, or forced and unwanted.

Both unpaid and paid activity can make you feel needed: 'Well, when a person is on the move, when they work, when they are needed and useful, somehow all the illnesses disappear... The moment they sit on a bench or decide to take a rest – some sore spots, diseases emerge. I think that a person should move, be active. I won't say that I have to be an athlete, but I won't lie on the sofa either' (M6). In turn, the psychological feeling of being needed is seen by the interlocutor as a critical factor in maintaining the health of the body. That is to say, not only the physical movement – work – maintains physical fitness, but also the psychological component, the feeling of being appreciated by others for your efforts.

However, other interlocutors have expressed the idea that it is impossible to enjoy work when it is a forced activity due to financial difficulties: 'Well, work is not something that you do for your pleasure, but you need money to survive. If I had enough money, I would walk in a park, visit exhibitions, perhaps, I would go out of town, but since I don't have the funds...' (F1). The motive of forced labour due to financial hardships is a cross-cutting theme in this discourse.

The role of inner intellectual or spiritual (!) activity is also discussed by the research participants: 'All kinds of activity – physical, spiritual, and mental – are a must. But I'm telling you: everything depends on a person. If they don't move, don't learn anything... You have to do something for your mind. I liked what was shown on TV there, in Russia, Scandinavian walking is in fashion now, and my uncle says: "Apart from Scandinavian walking (well, he's about 80 years old, over 70, probably... older), I am learning English. I am asked 'What for?' To get my brain working! Brains need to work. If you use it, everything else will work, too". It all depends purely on the person' (F10).

In their statements, the emphasis on the intellectual activity as a hedonistic pastime, as well as the self-improvement caused by external factors, by the constant change in the world in which people live are highlighted: 'People of all ages, of every social status, will have to learn throughout life, will have to remain flexible, will have to respond to change because the world will change very often and often quite radically. So, you have to prepare yourself for the fact that there will be no status quo. You will have to constantly change and change your lifestyle. It won't be possible to remain passive' (M18). The motive of being forced, doomed to such constant intellectual flexibility does not rule out the desirability of this kind of activity.

Another type of unpaid activity mentioned by interlocutors was having a hobby. A hedonistic vector in the choice of activity is observed in the subjects' responses. The motive of enjoying the activity is cross-cutting and is emphasised by the research participants. Although the types of these activities vary, they all primarily share the pleasure component, the gratification a person gets from them. These include

travelling, knitting, cycling, reading books, working in the garden, taking care of flowers, etc.: 'I would walk, ride a bike and travel. This is the kind of activity I want. I would... do something creative maybe... For me, the ideal example of old age, well, an older person, is Zhvanetsky, because when you're over 80 and you can speak so well that people listen to you – that's the activity...' (M22).

It should be noted that some people have not yet thought about what they would like to do when they retire, what could be fun for them: 'I don't know... I just don't know! Of course, I'd like to have enough energy for all this movement, to walk, to occupy myself... What I should be occupied with, I don't know, something that all grandmothers do, probably knitting, maybe sewing... visiting the neighbours' (F25). Here, too, it seems very important to note the emphasis on communication as a full-fledged activity in this discourse. The presence of communication in a person's life can become a significant element that allows them to define their life as active, even in the absence of physical activity. Even communication without going out of the room (by phone or via the internet) can also be interpreted as a valid activity, no less important than physical activity: 'Wow, what a question... What kind of activity... Well, I guess... For example, I would like to have more communication, more activity in communication, because you stay... I haven't worked for two months; I stay cut off from all the people. Well, there are some friends, but they're still working, not retired, that is they don't have time. The children have their own lives, they don't have time to spend with you either, and you're staying within these four walls, and I'm honestly saying that I was terrified. Because I can't call someone in the afternoon... in the evening, I can't annoy people... bother them... Well, a retired person should have a meaningful conversation if they want' (F4).

The civic and political activity of older people as a social group appears for the first time in the intentionally provoked discourse: Interviewer: 'What kind of activity do you think old age people need?' Participant of the research: 'First and foremost, the activity in asserting their rights. Old people are often disenfranchised and neglected...' Interviewer: 'What kind of activity do you think the state expects from an older person? What about society?' Participant of the research: 'None. These are the fantasies of the social security department employees...' Interviewer: 'What obstacles do you think are preventing older people from becoming active? Can you notice them?' Subject: 'The age barrier itself' (M7). The very possibility or desire of older people to participate in this kind of activity has not been stated in the media discourse or the official discourse discussed earlier. In any case, no clear and explicit articulation of this type of activity has been made in journalists' publications or statements by officials or experts.

There have been statements about the need to take responsibility for one's life, about overcoming stereotypes, but this has been presented as an individual process

or decision and special cases, rather than as collective organised actions of this social group to assert its rights. In this case, the emphasis on this type of activity as necessary and significant for older people is repeatedly made: 'I would like to maintain the present level of activity while having more time, but most likely it will not work. Otherwise, I think it's socio-political activity, at work and in general' (ageingbelarus.org, 13.01.2019).

Some research participants question the very need for activity as a mandatory component of 'successful', 'healthy' or 'preferred' old age (M19). The positive nature of this epithet is called into question: 'I'm not sure if being active is necessarily a positive characteristic', and also: 'I think it is worth planning a slowdown after 60. Making fewer commitments. More laziness. More rest' (ageingbelarus.org, 27.12.2018). Research shows that the preferred scenario of ageing can include peaceful reflections, contemplation and hedonistic enjoyment of the slow pace of being, and exclude active interaction with society: 'I hope to live in the countryside, away from the hustle and bustle. I hope to be satisfied with the simple joys of life. To devote more time to contemplation of nature and myself. <...> I definitely wouldn't be willing to work, get involved in social activities or family matters. I would avoid reading newspapers. What attracts me is finding a creative hobby of some artistic type <...> I want to relax and be free in body and soul. To allow myself to indulge in and sometimes abuse alcohol and other poisons. I hope that this will be a period of passivity, peace and contemplation' (ageingbelarus.org, 10.01.2019). Such interpretations of old age and ageing completely contradict the normative 'active ageing' discourse promoted by neoliberal economists and policy makers; however, these voices also need to be heard.

Some research participants even question the positive nature of the popularised concept of active longevity: 'Why should it be active? Why is a cult of youth, activity and so on so mainstream? Why is activity a good thing, while inactivity is not? Different people feel differently at different ages. I don't like the fact that people are trying to put everyone in one box' (ageingbelarus.org, 08.01.2019). Another research participant says that 'the hyperactivity in old age often looks very incongruous' (ageingbelarus.org, 28.12.2018). In other words, one may talk of the existence of notions of some activity standard for older people, and the inconsistency with the standard is assessed by others. Furthermore, the research participants highlight obstacles to activity that are relevant now or are recognised as unavoidable in the future. These include the obstacles that have been articulated in the media discourse (physical health; limited financial resources; social attitudes (stereotypes); lack of internal motivation; lack of infrastructure (opportunities and choice of activities), as well as one more obstacle – family responsibilities.

In the discourses provoked by the researcher, the motive of not having enough money for a favourite type of activity due to its high cost (*e.g.*, travelling) is encountered side by side with the motive of not having enough time to do a favourite activity due to the need to spend free time trying to earn a decent living: 'When you live and only think about satisfying your basic needs, you cannot afford to think about anything else, the most important thing is how? How do you live to the end of the month?' (M22). Thus, the financial barrier stands out as difficult to overcome.

Although the lack of internal motivation can be defined as an individual problem, sometimes interlocutors associate passivity with the social attitudes that surround the person: 'It's more of an internal problem than... [pause] The problem is that people are enclosed in a stereotypical system, which means that it is very difficult for them to change their mentality. If a person, for example, has worked in a factory or in finance, it is difficult for them to imagine that they could be doing carpentry or macramé, or solving crossword puzzles, or something like that. It is harder to change your attitude towards your position in society than to do something in real life. If people were more flexible mentally, they would have fewer problems' (M18). Some subjects insist on the personal traits as the root cause of a person's passivity, which in turn is identified with ageing. This internal barrier, according to some participants, can only be removed by the individual's efforts and is not dependent on external factors, or marginally depends on them.

At the same time, a working pensioner from a small town who takes part in amateur activities in his spare time, says that there are no options for self-fulfilment and that the infrastructure is underdeveloped, while cultural institutions are insufficiently financed: 'We live in a small town, there are no such things as... interest clubs, as they say, and things like that. We have a community centre... There is not so much choice. Take Grodno, there are more opportunities, but here we have nothing...' (M6). He draws attention to the inequality between the rural and urban population and the lack of opportunities in the provinces.

It is important to note that family responsibilities within this discourse emerge both as an option for preferred activity and as a restrictive barrier to it. Female research participants mention caring for relatives as a reason for not having time to do what they love or for having a hobby. Older women talk about the lack of time for some of their activities because they care for their ageing parents or help look after grandchildren while their children are at work. When asked about their preferred activities, a senior participant who continues to work for financial reasons replied that she does nothing but work, because both her parents who had been shut-in for the last few years died recently, and she too fell ill after their death. Besides, her duties include working in the country house and taking care of children: 'I would

say there isn't much of a choice in my case, there is no choice at all because physical activity is against medical advice for my heart condition, but still... well, you know, I still live, I have to clean up, I won't pin it on the children, I can still do it, well, I have arms and legs, my brain thinks straight' (F4). Such examples could be an illustration to the theory of the 'sandwich generation', which appeared recently and receives no coverage at all in the analysed publications of Belarusian discourse.

4.3.3. Perception of the relations of old age, senior citizens and the state

Supported by the state or discriminated against by it?

If not financial security, State, give me some respect!

In the statements of the research participants, the relations between the state and the older person are represented in the form of a vertical hierarchy. It is either characterised by a vague generalised image of an institution, a structure that the individual enters into various relationships with regarding pension payments, benefits, employment or tax payments, or is personified in the male pronoun 'he' denoting the head of state.

The state is represented in the subjects' narratives as a distributor of material goods and benefits, on the one hand, and as an institution restricting freedoms and opportunities of citizens, on the other hand. When talking about the source of support or its restriction, neither officials nor specific positions or institutions are mentioned (the Social Security Fund is mentioned once as an institution which is burdened by the existence of older people (M23)), nor ministries — only the impersonal 'State'. And this 'state' is sometimes endowed with anthropomorphic properties, desires, and feelings: 'The fact that the state does not provide... of course, I would like to get more, but we need to understand the state; there are fewer young people...' (F10) or 'If the state wanted, it would give us some opportunities' (F11).

The subjects are either thankful to the state for 'helping' or 'giving', or express their disapproval, distrust, but the range of opinions is wide from positive to negative. The most positive ones include statements that the state pays pensions and assists as much as it can: 'It seems that the state takes care of us... Here the state is already taking care of us when we reach 80 years. Maybe even after 75... after 80 years, right' (F3). There is also a positive assessment of state efforts combined with the failure to remember what kind of help the state is providing: 'They are just left alone, the state is not... of course, it assists, well, there is a pension, but what else is the state providing us with? I can't even say that... People are left to themselves...' (F11). In other words, pension payments are identified with the help provided by the state, but there is still a firm belief in the need to take care of oneself.

Neutral comments with criticisms as to the absence of any benefits or the amount of pension payments are to be found as well: 'Retirees could have already received some kind of discount on medication, I think, because the medication is very expensive nowadays. Well, the state must make sure we get some discount, we also worked "from dawn to dusk". As they say, "one doesn't receive a pension for nothing" (F12). However, in these statements, the person rather acts as a petitioner who does not insist on their demands but wishes to remind the state of their merits and needs as a citizen.

Others talk about hypothetical possibilities and desired improvements in their situation, sharply criticising the support provided by the state: 'The family, children, of course, do help, but that's all. If the state... If the pension was higher, I think a pensioner probably wouldn't have any complaints, but the state... of course, it pays the pensions, increases the amount once in a while, but this increase is miserable' (F8). The low rate of pension payments, as well as the fact that they are not commensurate with the amount of work that was done during the pre-retirement period, leads to condemning the state for failing to meet its obligations: 'A person has worked all their life, but after the retirement, they can no longer afford an expensive medication... more expensive, of higher quality, afford some other service, so, naturally, the state... Though a person has worked all his life, as long as he remembers' (F2).

The rhetoric of the state's injustice and cruelty towards older people is manifested in the subjects' statements: 'I have the impression that the state wants it for us to die faster [shows the "death" sign] because I don't see the state taking any care of pensioners. Absolutely no care. I feel no care at all.' (F4). A retired participant who continues working for financial reasons shares her memories of how hard it was to look after her shut-in old age relatives, and how she tried to find out what benefits they are entitled to, and how she sought those benefits: 'It cost us so much effort to achieve this and to find out all the information! They do not say anything about it! A person is left alone with their misfortune! This is the attitude of society. How can one think of favourable old age, if you know that if, God forbid, something goes wrong, it is not enough that you will suffer, you will also make your children suffer because no one will care about them and their problem. That's why I say: there is no point in asking me about this... I don't see anything good in old age, nothing at all. The fear is all that is left for me' (F4). It is the state that is becoming a source of negativism in relation to old age in general, as well as a source of phobias associated with a lack of hope for help in a critical situation.

The narratives of older people who faced the indifference of the 'state' themselves and did not receive support at a difficult time are supplemented by impressions of the situations they witnessed or heard of, which are shared by younger research

participants: 'We see a lot of negative examples of how people are having a bad time, how people suffer' (M18), a 46-year-old man says referring to the lack of adequate medical and social care, which puts older people in a 'survival mode'. 'The state does not fucking need us, let's be honest!', says a 33-year-old man who believes that the lack of older people's participation in economic life makes them an unwanted part of society (M22).

The situation in which older people find themselves through the fault of the state is interpreted as unfair, and among the 'wishes' attributed to the state in relation to older people the following three are identified:

- The older person must take responsibility for their well-being ('The state expects the person to take responsibility for themselves (an ideal state), for their health' (M18)).
- The older person should continue to work ('Our state is probably interested in pensioners working. Firstly, you can pay less for the work of a pensioner, you know, we pensioners work for peanuts. We take unpaid leave; we go here and there — this is why I think so' (F3)).
- An older person should not live long ('I think that our state is waiting for a person to cease to exist as soon as possible and stop being a burden for the pension fund [laughs]. These are my personal impressions' (M23)).

However, some research participants find no sense in commenting on the relations between the state and older people, as their opinion does not make any difference, and no research can change this situation: 'What can I tell you? If I tell you the whole truth, what are you... are you going to increase this support? Of course, you won't do it!' (M17). A similar comment was also received on social media under an invitation to participate in the research. The user refused to answer the questions because she knew in advance what answers would be received and that these answers would not make a real difference.

Concerning the answers given in the debate among the youth, it should be noted that the retirement age is a discriminated period characterised by:

- Low living standards of Belarusian pensioners;
- Difficulties in keeping a job or finding a new one at pre-retirement or retirement ages;
- Marginalisation through the transition to worse positions in the labour market;
- Unequal position among the colleagues;
- Unequal position of different social groups in the pension system;
- Dropping out of society;

- Equating the retirement age to old age – society considers a person to be old based on retirement, although they may still be young. ‘The pension benefit is not the amount you get, but the label “old man” or “old woman” (T2D2 – team 2 debater 2).

The researcher would like to emphasise the latter argument. The debaters suggest that pensions should be interpreted as discrimination against a person because crossing this age line can make them ‘old’ and ‘scrapped’ in the public perception. In other words, a priori old age is seen as a stigma, a reason why society is pushing it out of sight and the cause of discrimination. The issue of a negative interpretation of old age is not discussed; it is proposed as an axiom that does not require substantiation.

Neither the participants nor the audience present in the studio (who comprised a rather homogeneous age group – a requirement by Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 150) asked themselves who exactly was the agent of discrimination: the state, society, or the employer. The state became the main counterforce of a person of retirement age or their main challenger. It also acted as a subject caring for citizens that fails to cope with its obligations in the case of Belarus and can use a ‘nice excuse to give up some of their obligations’ (T1D1 – team 1 debater 1). All participants are unanimous in assessing the level of state support for Belarusian pensioners as insufficient and ‘to a great extent’ different from the ‘European one’ (T1D1), while pension payments are called ‘peanuts’ (T1D2). The state and officials are accused of ‘deception’ by using pensions as a social construct (T2D1).

A point is made that the state wants older people to continue working due to the financial hardships and the inability to maintain the habitually low living standard of pensioners. Therefore, the statutory retirement age as the right to stop working is interpreted as a guarantee. References to the negative social attitude towards the adopted changes to the pension legislation (retirement-age increase) were brought forward as additional arguments in the course of the discussion.

When talking about the loss of continuity in instilling respect for old age and older people, some research participants give specific reasons and highlight the negative role of the state. The focus is not on the financial, but on the ideological aspect, the absence or a negative impact of which is the root cause of discriminatory social attitudes: ‘The state must have respect for old age, and therefore, there must be some... of course, we live... the situation in the country is difficult, and I understand, but at least some ideology must exist! If only we had started with this, then maybe something would have changed! Otherwise, if the state itself... We are superfluous people because we occupy someone’s place, well, what do we expect from the youth then? Well, there’s nothing to expect! Of course, everyone is on their own... you know... in their family, there’s mum and dad, of course, that’s the most

important thing for everyone, but in general there is nothing. If you go out of the family relations, “Oh, look at the oldster!” What if this oldster saved a lot of people in his life at work? But we hear: “Here is the oldster!” That’s it’ (F4).

The topic of discrimination of older people by society and the primary role of the state in establishing social norms and creating a favourable social context is relevant and sensitive for some research participants: ‘This is from the state... I would like justice, for that matter. Justice, instead of using us, they say one thing and do another. Pensioners can work, but in reality, no one wants to hire pensioners. A pensioner does not go to work for fun, I would not work just for fun... If the pension was adequate, I would never work! Never in the world would I work! There are many beautiful things... At least now that the gardening season has begun, I could go to the country house! I would do something... In winter, I would take care of my health... I would go to a health resort. Well, even if I am entitled to visit the health resort once in three years, well, I have to pay my part, right? You need to pay for the medical procedures there as well. I need money, too, where do I get it? My pension benefit is so small that I can’t afford it. If I had a good pension, I would save up something, I would afford it, I would find something to do. But it’s all about this money. Even my sister, she thinks how to save: I would better walk three stops instead of taking a bus! Although it is hard for her to walk with a bad back. Here you go! Maybe I answered wrong?’ (F4). In this case, this is the reasoning of a working woman of retirement age, a grocery store worker, who acutely feels the official state rhetoric as unfair and discriminatory. She emphasises the influence of the state which created the image of a dependent pensioner in mass media, who is a burden for the society: ‘Probably, we need society to reconsider so that there is no hysteria on TV: “Parasites!” And pensioners, you know, they are deprived of... Because you really begin to feel, well... a superfluous person. That’s how it is. You are superfluous...!’ (F4).

Similar reflections can be heard from a 46-year-old interlocutor, who also sees the root cause of ageism through the lens of politics: ‘The attitudes towards old age in post-Soviet countries and the West are very different. I have watched people living in America for quite a long time. For us, old age has turned into some kind of phobia. It scares us because we are surrounded by people who are ageing very... not in a good way. Not in a good way, I mean, they are not socially and economically protected and they have to constantly fight for maintaining some decent existence. And this, unfortunately, is a problem of the state’ (M18). The extreme poverty of older people in Belarus, their suffering and deficiency of health care and social assistance create a negative image of old age in the public perception (young generations). According to a research participant, observation of the existence of older people ‘in survival mode’ makes old age a kind of ‘scarecrow’. In this position, he sees the only way out: ‘to be active and stop shifting responsibility to the state, because the state has

withdrawn from solving these problems' (M18). A difference is noted in attitude towards working pensioners who 'need to be cured', so they are prescribed tests and medicines.

In this discourse, we can see the perceived or actually experienced disengagement of both the state and society from older people. Thus, the problem of discrimination by society is brought to the political level, to the level of systemic changes that need to be reconsidered at the highest level.

Important topics in the statements about the relations between the older person and the state are the assessment of the current pension system, the reform carried out (retirement-age increase in the country), as well as reflections on the options for reform. The answers of those who are undecided about the changes made and the potentially possible (desirable) ones stand out. Doubts are expressed concerning their own competence or the desire to improve the situation of older people is expressed without specifying the steps or actions necessary for this: 'I don't know... I think I just don't know' (F13); 'I can't say what is the right thing to do' (F14); 'It makes no difference for us pensioners anymore!' (F15).

Others say that it is necessary to lower the retirement age and speak about the pension system as being discriminatory and putting older people in an unequal, dependent and vulnerable position: 'I retired on time, when I was 55 [laughs], now it probably turns out that a person can't live to retirement if they raise the bar. How can a person live so long? So, the money will remain in the budget and they won't need to spend it [laughs]' (F8). They talk about the decreasing life expectancy of Belarusians recalling the consequences of the Chernobyl accident as an important factor that was not taken into account when raising the retirement age: 'Our country is likened to European countries, to the retirement age there. But living standards here are quite different, Chernobyl affected people's health, so you can't compare us with Europe and other countries. The living standards and everything there is different' (F2); 'Chernobyl still affects people <...> Now people drop like flies, they do not live to retirement, they are waiting for this pension... Whomever you ask – Oh, I wish I could live to retirement! At least to retirement! People want to rest in retirement, you know?' (F12)

However, there are also assurances that it is natural to raise the retirement age due to global demographic problems: 'I do not consider it a tragedy. This is a regular process' (M7). The arguments that such a raise will increase the pension payment rate are also expressed.

Among the options for reforming the pension system, the creation of an additional social insurance system is mentioned: 'I think maybe it would be better to have a state pension plus savings, because, let's say it, people... Wages are so unequal, so someone has to work as cleaners and hospital aides! Why should a person who has

worked as a hospital aide, which is not easy work, let's say, hard work, why should she live even worse in retirement? But, again, I don't imagine any of this in our country, because I don't believe him [Lukashenka]. That's the matter' (F4). Some research participants speak about their awareness of the existence of such a system in other countries and call it fair for older people and their families.

However, there are also quite different views on the potential for reforming the pension system. The very existence of pension as an institution is called into question: 'I am probably going to work till death <...> I do not expect to receive any pension for myself, I do not believe in its concept. At least, in our state, that is, in the current political and economic system' (M18). Observations of the processes of depreciation of pension payments in the post-Soviet states and current trends in the development of the economic system make a participant of the interview question the prospects of the existence of the pension institution in the future, which means that the very idea of reform appears pointless and not fixing anything: 'The state fucked you while you were able to work, and continues to fuck you when you are already retired. And I must say, it fucks ruthlessly! By pensions, opportunities, prices, quality of services, health care, and other realities' (ageingbelarus.org, 05.01.2019).

Another interlocutor speaks about a broader nature of the issue that is not dependent on the sheer change in the pension system: 'Do you want me to say what needs to be changed? Change the government! Just one most important person. Then maybe something will change. This is my opinion' (F4). It is important to note that such opinions were preceded by assurances of the absence of fear to speak openly and truthfully, and these repeated expressions of fearlessness or indifference to the possible consequences of openly expressing one's opinion endow added value to the issue in the mouth of the speaker. They may also indicate that part of the received refusals to participate in the research may not be caused by the psychological sensitivity of the topic, but by fears of touching on a politically charged aspect, which is of particular significance in modern Belarus. It increases the author's gratitude to all those who decided to share their opinions.

4.3.4. Problems and risks associated with 'old age' and 'active ageing'

All of the mentioned issues plus one

First of all, it should be noted that the categorisation of 'problems and risks associated with old age' in this discourse does not contradict, but rather emphasises the belonging or proximity of the themes and codes included in it to other thematic categories (sometimes a few simultaneously). Like the very concept of 'old age', the spheres of an older person's life are problematised within this discourse. Since the roots of these problems and their causes are under discussion (both by scientists and

research participants), it was decided to create a separate thematic category for the problems and risks mentioned in relation to old age.

Among the main problems (or risks) that old age in Belarusian society is identified with, the research participants named the following:

- The problem of physical and intellectual health deterioration;
- The problem of loss of capacity and independence;
- The problem of burdening children (feeling unwanted);
- The problem of financial insolvency or poverty;
- The problem of discrimination;
- Loneliness problem;
- Underdeveloped infrastructure (for those living in rural areas);
- Lack of interest;
- The problem of dependence on the totalitarian state and the lack of freedom.

Old age problematised in the subjects' statements is identified with the loss or deterioration of a person's physical health and cognitive abilities. The problem of health deterioration and loss of control over the mind is mentioned as a barrier (uncontrolled or partly controlled) as is the reason for the negative attitude towards this phenomenon in general.

Another problem directly related to this one is the loss of independence and the risk of falling into a situation of dependence on relatives or state guardianship services. The very loss of legal capacity instils fear, and anxiety about the guardians is added to it: will the family or the state take charge of a person? The latter, identified with 'residential homes' (the interviewee notices that even the name of the institutions is 'faulty' (M22) and causes negative associations or feelings among the participants.

However, the scenario of living under the care of loved ones (relatives) can also be recognised as a problem, because it can put a person in an emotional dependency situation and bring discomfort to an older person who is being taken care of and feels like a burden: 'I don't want to be a burden on loved ones. I want to be reasonable throughout my old age, I don't want to lose my memory or sense' (ageingbelarus.org, 27.12.2018). Thus, even this scenario of living after losing one's legal capacity is interpreted as problematic: 'We are scared of becoming a burden on loved ones' (ageingbelarus.org, 07.01.2019).

The problem of financial insolvency and the loss of a decent (as understood by the individual) living standard is held out as an ever-present and, in some cases, exceptionally relevant issue for either a province as a whole or the country. It is this problem that the research participants mentioned as causing the risk of forced employment and/or marginalisation, including in the labour market. Thus,

working in old age (forced employment, problems in finding and keeping jobs) is also problematic. Particularly vulnerable are those who are not highly trained or do not have higher education: 'Nobody needs them when they have retired, except for cleaning the floor, and it is hard to be employed anyway' (F3).

On the other hand, it is work that can be the solution to another problem – shrinking social bonds and social exclusion. The need to maintain the desired intensity of communication and the risk of losing it may motivate one to continue to work actively: 'An additional reason is seeking to be involved in society so that you don't "fall out" of life and find yourself in the role of the Firs from a Chekhov play who has been "forgotten" ...' (M7). Fear of loss of social connections and loneliness is a social problem that subjects of all ages talk about.

Discriminatory social attitudes, as well as ageist practices that are common in Belarusian society, are also referred to as a problem. The negative impact of society on the individual is noted at different levels: 'Most often I face discrimination at the simple level. In other words, there is a certain attitude towards older people. It's not that negative, but rather intolerant; particularly in government agencies' (M18). The interviewees talk about 'boorishness' and the infringement of older people's rights as a problem in public spaces and institutions (including medical ones). Problems with medical care and the treatment of older people by medics are of concern to those older people who have had negative experiences: 'When a person comes to a day hospital, nobody should look at them like a beast, swoop on them or shout at them. Even if they can't help with some medication, the medics shouldn't throw them a bone as if older people were dogs. In general... they don't think... they don't respect, don't think that the elderly are people, that they've worked all their lives, but on the contrary, they shout: "Why are you coming, why are you bothering us?"' (F1). Others point to systemic problems in the healthcare system, regardless of the patients' age: 'Well, at the appointment with a doctor, the patient says: "Hello, free doctor!" "Hello, hopeless, too far gone patient!"' (M6). In this way, the problem of discrimination translates from age to economic inequality.

Discriminatory attitudes can manifest themselves indirectly – by reducing one's own significance: 'Since I will not be able to perform my functions properly, that is to benefit society and my loved ones, I would like to distance myself from them. The worst thing is to interfere with young people's fresh lives with my senile delirium. I hope to live out of town, away from the hustle and bustle. I hope to be satisfied with the simple joys of life. To devote more time to contemplation of nature and myself' (ageingbelarus.org, 10.01.2019).

The state structure may be perceived as a systemic problem that affects the life of an older person. In the perception of participants, the only obstacle to a fulfilling life in old age other than loss of physical capacity might be the state: 'I live in a state

that has many totalitarian, authoritarian issues, so I do not feel protected by the state. This can be a limiting factor' (M18). Thus, the perceived restriction of freedom (or lack thereof) can problematise the perception of old age, even granting physical health. It is the risk of restriction by the state, the problem of the impossibility of influencing the political (and therefore, economic) processes in the country, that is reflected by the research participants. One of them emphasises that at the time when economically important decisions for older people are made without public debate and where the lives of those who have worked and planned their lives in old age under different conditions of receiving pension benefits change dramatically, the future becomes even riskier (M22).

A separate category of problems is the one related to living outside of large cities, as both the infrastructure and employment opportunities, as well as the rate of pension payments in rural areas, are much worse: 'It is harder in the countryside! No, come on! In the countryside, they work after retirement as much as they did before! That's not the case in the city! Both the vegetable garden and the farm are everything in the countryside! You know it!' (M16). The research participants talk about the inequality in the situation of older people in towns and villages as a perceived injustice: 'It all depends... one pensioner works in manure, and the other one in the city – she wears makeup, receives her pension and lives properly!' (M17).

Others identify manual workers in general as vulnerable and at-risk due to physical labour (M22). The vulnerable group also includes people without higher education, housewives ('husband had a heart attack sniffing cocaine from the butt of a prostitute' (M22), and people without particular life interests and hobbies (F20, F4). However, there is also an opinion that all Belarusian pensioners, except for law enforcement officers and officials (F1, M23), are 'more and less miserable', their pension payments are 'shit' (M23), therefore, they can be classified as vulnerable.

The contributions of the participants of the research have shown that interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' are very diverse. Apart from attempts to define 'old age' by referring to the biological, social, psychological, and other characteristics used by various scientific disciplines, this discourse emphasises reflections of an associative nature as well as discussions of old age as a period experienced by the subject here and now (self-reflections). Old age is defined by the research participants both as an objectively existing reality that is beyond control and influence; it is also viewed as a phenomenon partly or completely controlled by a person or external forces. The interpretations of old age analysed in the discourse can be attributed to traditional, modern, and postmodern approaches.

As far as value judgements are concerned, the range of variation extends from the perception of this period as positive and happy to its complete rejection and

the intention to cease to exist before entering the category of the old. Between the extremes of total negativism, fear of old age and an optimistic vision of later life, many variations could be placed on a hypothetical scale at different distances from the limit values and the mid-neutral ones. Such a neutral variation would be the answer to the perception of old age as nothing remarkable or different from other periods in life, as well as the perception of old age as another stage in life that does not stand out. These kinds of answers were obtained in interviews with older people who noticed that they 'haven't felt it yet', but the reference to temporality ('yet') suggests that these feelings are at odds with a person's view of old age and that such changes are expected.

Old age is problematised due to various internal changes (perceived or expected) and external circumstances that pose risks to an individual in old age. The problems and risks presented in the discourse include physical and mental health deterioration, incapacity and independence, being a burden on children, financial insolvency, loneliness, loss of meaning in life, discrimination, the problem of dependence on the state, and the lack of freedom. It is important that within this discourse, the data received from interviews, the online survey, and focus discussion contain reflections on the state and the existing institutionalised system of social protection for older people as the underlying source of discriminatory attitudes and practices.

None of the research participants mentioned the problem of the loss of youth and beauty in appearance, although it is not as if the aesthetic aspect is not considered significant both by the research participants and by those who, for personal reasons, refused to talk or write on this 'complex', 'sore', 'unpleasant' topic (epithets given by those who refused).

In the expressions of the research participants, the discourse of old age and active ageing is often linked to distinct motives of fear and disbelief as well as mistrust. Fear of old age is closely linked to the perception thereof as a period of mental decline, physical and financial dependence, the incapacity to manage oneself and one's life, and withering, including mental degeneration. Disbelief and mistrust have been expressed primarily in relation to the state and the pension system.

The understanding of active ageing is extremely varied because although the epithet 'active' is preferred for defining one's own old age (or ideal old age), it encompasses quite different meanings. There are many variations: physical activity, all kinds of hobbies, work (if it coincides with a hobby and brings psychological satisfaction rather than being a forced decision dictated by financial circumstances), travel, participation in religious events, active communication with relatives, friends, and other people, as well as civic engagement. Paid labour can be perceived as both a desired activity and a forced necessity that prevents activity. An older person is marginalised, particularly in the labour market.

Obstacles to activity experienced by older subjects are financial problems; illness (physical condition); lack of infrastructure (particularly in rural areas); and family responsibilities (need to care for relatives, help children and grandchildren). On a separate note, household activity and assistance to the family, which are presented as one of the areas of older people's activity in media discourses, can come across and felt by a person in personal interviews with older people as an obstacle to activity preferred by the person.

4.4. Reflections of Belarusian socio-political realities and the usage of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing'

The old-age concept is problematised on an individual and macro-level in each of the discourses analysed. A universal and precise definition of 'old age' and 'active ageing' is absent. The attempts to define and interpret these concepts are based on: a) various theoretical and ideological paradigms — traditional, modern, and postmodern approaches; b) different knowledge systems — religion and philosophy. However, at the level of political decisions, the ideas of postmodern sociology remain marginal, non-widespread, and their impact on contemporary Belarusian media discourse and policy-makers remains insignificant.

There are multiple contradictions: between the rhetoric of individual discourses, between discourse and the context of social reality, as well as between rhetoric (promoted ideas, theses) and meanings, which consist in the use of certain formulations, in the form of narration. Contemporary acute issues of social reality that require the attention of policy makers, journalists, academia and the public could be revealed through these contradictions.

For this research, it is extremely important not only to analyse the definitions and concepts that exist in Belarusian discourses but also to outline social issues specific for contemporary Belarus. That is why attention is paid not just to verbalised discourse but also to ignored, neglected discourses that people avoided showing. Further, we will present those problems that were identified through a comparative analysis of discourses, taking into account the study of the Belarusian political, social, institutional, economic, demographic, and cultural contexts. Thus, the tendencies in the interpretation of old age within separate discourses will be presented, as well as the contradictions between the interpretations and meanings of the concepts within discourses, and the identified inconsistencies between the discourses and the context that reveal the problems of the current social reality.

The idea that the government uses political discourse to confirm its legitimacy and to achieve consensus, especially at the critical moments of the social policy reform (Nye, 1990; Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2014), confirms its relevance

to the Belarusian social and political situation, to the local context of Belarus. The Soviet PAYG pension system has undergone virtually no qualitative changes since the independence of the Republic of Belarus, except for the changes in the age of retirement. The costs of previous pension benefits (except for law enforcement officers and officials) are not displayed outside the consolidated state budget and are now non-transparent. At the same time, the non-democratic and paternalistic political regime of A. Lukashenka negates the roles of the parliament and government, expelling the opposition forces from the political arena. This specific context 'pushes' the researcher to consider the discourse of the Belarusian pro-governmental media as dominant.

However, despite owning a wide range of channels of influence by state media (unlike the opposition publications that are pushed exclusively into the Internet space, state publications are distributed by compulsory subscription), the analysis of official media publications reveals that the ideas transmitted with their help are called upon to counteract 'generally accepted', 'common' stereotypes. In other words, the transmitted ideas are placed by the authors in opposition to the more widespread stereotypes in the society, putting the pro-governmental discourse in the position of a counter-discourse. Not only are the traditional interpretations of old age and ageing patterns (ageing as a 'well-deserved rest' or as a stage of taking care of grandchildren) subject to displacement (replacement), but also modern hedonistic old age living scenarios are problematised by official media discourse.

Considering the discourses from Foucault's (1977; 1991; 2000) theory of dominant discourses (of power), the idea that the pro-government discourse is dominant in this particular context has been challenged. It is not possible to single out the dominant discourse in Belarusian society (this was not the purpose of this research), though, the ideas and theses that are popularised within the framework of official discourse indicate the desire for hegemony in the process of constructing the semantic content of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing'.

However, the research focuses not on the intention and domination itself, but on the content, on the transmitted theses and their correlation with the context and competing interpretations of social reality. As for contradictions, they are observed: between the rhetoric of individual discourses; between rhetoric and the context of social reality; as well as between rhetoric (promoted ideas, theses) and meanings, which consist in the use of certain formulations, in the form of narration. Five main issues of social reality that require the attention of policy makers, journalists, academia, and the public have been revealed through these contradictions.

The problem of normativism and the rigorous nature of the interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing'

First of all, the problem of normativism and the rigorous nature of the interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the official media and often in the alternative media should be noted, creating a binary black and white reality of the 'positive' and 'negative' alternatives.

One of the important results of the analysis of media discourse (especially of the articles from official sources) is the conclusion that the options for interpreting old age that are broadcast to readers are limited. Journalists offer traditional local or foreign interpretations, report on research and academic discussions, and provide expert opinions that are guided by certain criteria for determining old age and old age. Although the range of approaches to defining old age in media discourses is vast, the greatest variety of interpretations is represented by induced discourses. The most limited number of interpretations is offered by official media sources (as noted in Section 4.1, official discourse actually ignores contemporary postmodern sociological approaches to the definition of old age and ageing, closing in on traditional and modern neoliberal concepts).

Neoliberal publicistic rhetoric in the official discourse is dualistic and monochromic. It opposes the image of vulnerable and needy older people to the contrasting image of an active, productive older person who is useful to society. The official discourse combines the motives of objectifying an older person as vulnerable and in need of care, as well as the motives of an older person's activity as a subject of social interactions. Here, an analogy can be drawn with the distinction between the 'deserving poor' and 'undeserving poor' (Trattner, 2007), and productivity and self-sufficiency in the context of the solidarity pension system is the very determining criterion for their separation.

Normativeness permeates the official media discourse, contrasting established social attitudes with new foundations and criteria of age normativeness and new patterns. Studies of foreign physicians and bio-gerontologists, sociologists and economists are used to confirm the irrelevance of outdated and vague criteria. The interpretation of old age as a phenomenon influenced by scientific progress and human will raises the question of the active role of humankind in preventing negative scenarios of ageing. Ageing itself ceases to be natural, normal, and this displaces 'old age' (especially passive, painful old age) from the sphere of the norm to deviant.

Regarding the official Belarusian discourse, despite the loud calls to fight against stereotypes, one can agree that the concept of active ageing within official Belarusian discourse is prescriptive (Victor, 2004) and normative. It is used as a tool

to popularise the prolongation of participation in productive activities and placing responsibility for well-being on the individual. Demographic and economic trends represent the dominant context in which government officials and state-controlled media journalists use the concept of 'active ageing' incorporating the conservative political meanings of combating a parasitic attitude among older people, as well as the liberal meanings to increase the individual's responsibility and efficiency of public spending. However, not only does the repetition of concepts such as 'social parasitism', 'burden', or 'dependency' set the tone but the presentation of older people in connection with the dichotomous oppositions also has an impact: 'healthy' – 'sickly', 'independent' – 'dependent', 'self-sufficient' – 'a burden' (similar conclusions were drawn by Harbison & Morrow, 1998). Within this discourse, old age itself appears to be a deviation and the opposite of activeness, and typical for the language of these materials is the positioning of older people in unequal positions – in the position of objects of care, guardianship, or motivation (external influence). The knowledge about the passivity, inertness of older people and the unfriendly attitude towards them is introduced as a given, which is supposedly shared by society, contrasting with the image of active and successful older people, who are represented as role models to follow.

When studying biographical articles (official media) about older people, a common pattern was noticed – all of them present their subjects as active, optimistic, and positive about the world around them and their place in it, and these qualities distinguish them from the general mass of older people, instead making them role models to be emulated. It is due to this dissimilarity to other older people that they had become the subjects of the publications. Even though these images are exceptionally positive, and the subjects are cheerful, the motive of comparing with the majority brings additional characteristics to the media image of modern older people in general. It is worth emphasising that passive, dependent people do not become the heroes of publications: they are either mentioned as a category in general, or in passing through telling their story extremely briefly or through eulogy interviews designed to promote the rhetoric of a caring state bearing the burden of supporting dependent cohorts.

The motive of contrasting active and positive older people with the passive majority is also characteristic of the discourses found in independent media sources. However, in addition to interviews with or stories about active older people, the alternative media articles offer readers portraits and stories of people who cannot realise the desired ageing scenarios. There is also another dualistic opposition: in the materials of independent media sources and within induced discourses, comparisons and contrasts between typical depictions of 'our' pensioners and 'Western' pensioners are repeated. Older compatriots are portrayed in a less

favourable light when compared to the Western European older people (concerning appearance, activities, the general quality of life, and life expectancy). This contrast is complemented by the publications about the older Belarusians who stand out as different from the local norm, and whose appearance does not indicate that they belong to this age group.

It is noteworthy that when discussing the specific relationship between the society and the cohort of older people, journalists, subjects of the publications, and research participants, all emphasise the importance of the cultural and historical context. They draw attention to the difference in cultural traditions of our region. Such comparisons are made in favour of the indefinite 'East' as the embodiment of a supportive society for the older generation. There are also comparisons with Western countries, and they are also not made in favour of Belarusian society. However, in these analogies, the feeling of inner freedom from judgement inherent to the representatives of Western communities, is brought to the fore. Such relaxedness, together with economic freedom, makes an older person less dependent on social attitudes, which are also more positive in the 'West', according to some respondents. In each of the comparison options, the Belarusian social attitudes towards older people are problematised as negatively different. It should be noted once again that discussions on the impact of differences in living standards in Western Europe and Belarus, the local context on the interpretation of old age and ageing scenarios are not in the official discourse publications, including those that are dedicated to the borrowed concept of 'active ageing'.

Based on the analysis of interpretations obtained during the empirical study of induced discourses, we can say that modern Belarusian society is a mix of traditional ideas about ageing with an accompanying rhetoric of decline and dependence or wisdom and peace, modern approaches to ageing and attempts to implement neoliberal model of ageing, and also postmodern notions with a denial of norms. Normative images of old age and models of ageing, transmitted by media discourses, correspond to some existing definitions and interpretations in society; however, induced discourses reveal a variety of options that go beyond the proposed theoretical framework. The situation is similar with evaluative judgments and approaches to determining old age. Unlike media texts, in the interpretations of the participants of research there are many options between the extrema of full negativism (expressed in the denial of the very possibility and desire to live in old age), fear of old age, and an optimistic vision of later age. Such a neutral option would be the response about the perception of old age as nothing remarkable or different from other periods of life, as well as the perception of older age as just another stage in life, which does not stand out from the others. These response options were obtained during interviews with older people who confessed that they 'have not felt it yet', but the reference to

temporality ('yet') suggests that these feelings run counter to the view of old age, shared by the person, and there is an expectation of such changes.

The invisibility of the marginalisation of older people in the official discourse

The second important issue deduced from the results of empirical research is the promotion of the concept of 'active ageing' combined with the invisibility or even displacement from the official discourse of the problem of the marginalisation of older people, the precarisation of their work, as well as the problems related to their employment.

The results of empirical research show the use of the concept of 'active ageing' for rethinking the definition of old age and its standardisation. In the discourse of the official Belarusian media, normativity is enshrined in dual coordinate systems that are used to promote the idea of keeping older people involved in the labour and consumer markets. The rhetorical theses of responsibility, consciousness, and activity are typical and oft repeated in the official discourse. The state motivates an older person and creates conditions for active longevity, yet only a small proportion of older people are active and energetic. Among the main obstacles to the activity of older people, this discourse mentions their passivity, unwillingness to change their life attitudes and the need for retraining (for work). Diseases and destructive physical processes are not considered in the context of the obstacles to older people's activity.

Despite the exact designation of Belarus as a 'social state' with the 'socially oriented' economy by the Belarusian officials, the official discourse virtually popularises the rhetoric of neoliberalism and personal responsibility for one's own life, especially in one's older years. Publications on preparing for old age and the popularisation of additional old-age insurance programmes support this idea. There is also a neo-traditionalist return to the accentuation of the family role and neoliberalist responsibility for oneself.

It should be emphasised that the official discourse of old age and 'active ageing' not only ignores the standard of living and the marginalisation of older people as a social group but also reinforces it by silencing the problem and explaining the financial disadvantage of older people as a result of negligence and carelessness, as well as by fixing in the discourse the concepts of 'parasitism' and 'burden' towards the older age group. Those in a difficult financial situation are accused of negligence, carelessness, or parasitism during their working years or are depicted as requiring excessive help from their children now they are older. The rhetoric of usefulness and productivity becomes a positive counterposition. At the same time,

the understanding of active old age within the framework of induced discourses is characterised by a qualitatively wider variety of ways of interpretation; paid work in particular can be perceived as both a desired activity and as a forced necessity that hinders older people from their desired activities.

The official discourse completely denies or ignores the problems of employing older people and people of pre-retirement age, the problems of labour migration, the deterioration of the quality of life, the 'traps' of reforming the system of employment record, and the problems of taking care of older relatives by working age persons (the problem of not including the period of taking care of an older relative in the employment record). Sometimes non-labour alternatives for spending leisure time after retirement are devalued. The rhetoric of usefulness, value to the society, and relevance guides and indicates the appropriate way to live in old age. Even after having completed the legally required work experience, an older person is surrounded by normativist attitudes, and the inconsistency with them should encourage them to become exemplary. At the same time, the emphasis on the need to preserve the usefulness of the older person for the community can strengthen inequality and reduce the quality of life (Giorgi, 2005; Walker, 2006).

The evidence provided by the research participants shows that involving older people in paid work may not be a matter of choice, but rather a matter of economic necessity related to pension policy and gender roles throughout life. Here we can see how the current economic situation affects the reality faced by an older person. It is not only the individual living patterns and conditions that are emphasised but also the general economic trends in the country, determining the retirement opportunities and the need to continue paid work. The research participants themselves emphasise the importance of the political and economic context for understanding the experience of ageing and the attitude towards working life in older age. The link between these broader economic contexts and ageing has already been widely accepted in the political economy, which is considered to have an impact on gerontology (Powell, 2005).

In the official discourse, lack of attention to the specific local conditions for realising the concept of 'active ageing' is combined with the revealed distrust of the research participants in the official discourse and statistics. The specific traditions and cultural differences of Belarusians, the originality of the local political, economic, and demographic contexts are clearly articulated in everyday life. The participants of this research and the subjects of the media publications, not being aware of the conclusions by Sidorenko (2016) on the specific type of ageing which is typical for Belarus and other post-Soviet countries, express their confidence in the inconsistency of the comparison between the contexts of reforming the retirement age in the Belarusian and Western European contexts. Appealing to the experience

of close people and acquaintances, they articulate the problem and insist on the injustice of the situation of 'not surviving' until their pensions.

At the same time, the motive of the unfair and desperate condition of the retired older people is a permanent feature of the induced discourses. The increasing inequality of the social and financial situation in older age is noticeable, and this injustice receives wide resentment from the research participants who are forced to do unskilled and low-paid work after retirement, despite their previous experience of working in highly qualified positions. This unfair inequality of older people is presented as an obvious fact of the objective reality of Belarusians, which is well-known and undeniable.

The marginalisation of older people and precarisation of their work is completely ignored by the official media but verbalised both by the alternative media and the participants of the research (it is mentioned also by researchers from different regions of the world: Europe (Ciobanu, Fokkema, & Nedelcu, 2017; Gavanas & Calzada, 2017; Milbourne, 2020), Australia (Dempsey, 1990; Setterlund *et al.*, 2002; Kossen & Pedersen, 2008), USA (Krekula, 2019; Hudson, 2021), South Africa (Ferreira & Lindgren, 2008). In addition to the inadequacy of financial security referred to as a well-known truth, the motive of choosing between poverty in old age and doing a hard and disliked job appears multiple times. The role of such work in the deterioration of the physical condition is emphasised, as well as the lack of social activity outside the workplace and the impossibility of getting free time for favourite activities. Some interviewees draw attention to the differences in working conditions and the specifics of certain professions or positions that they consider to be of primary importance for the conclusion whether working after retirement age is the desired activity or a burden forced by a financial situation.

It should be noted that the problems of marginalisation of gender groups in old age are being ignored even in independent media discourses and induced discourses (Beales & Petersen, 1999; Weinger, 2009) or LGBT older adults (Fredriksen-Goldsen *et al.*, 2017; Brown, 2009), articulated by foreign researchers. The gender aspect of this issue lies beyond the scope of focus for the research participants and the official discourse, and it is only partially addressed in the texts of the independent media.

Inattention to the problems of informal caregivers and families, including the gender profile

The family theme is the least visible in the media discourse: the category of the publications dedicated to this theme is the smallest (17 out of 249 in the official discourse, and 54 out of 502 in the alternative media). The media discourses promote the idea of the dominant role of the family and its responsibility for the quality of

a person's life in old age. The traditional nature of this idea and sharing it by older people themselves are illustrated by numerous interviews with older Belarusians and journalists' articles. The family is not just a social institution, but also valuable for a person, and the narratives of taking care of older relatives by children and grandchildren support the thesis about the dominant role of the family in providing 'enviable old age' (Belarus Segodnya, December 21, 2017). It is the care of relatives that determines the success or well-being of old age. Stories of loneliness and abandonment are complemented by the antitheses of such stories — the particular and stimulating standard of 'good children'. Only one publication on TUT.BY, an independent news, media and service internet portal, raises the problem of the insecurity of those Belarusians taking care of older people or their relatives with disabilities.

At the same time, studying the Belarusian context shows how much the economic, demographic and social conditions have changed, which affects the family's ability and willingness to take care of older people. The experience of other countries with the traditionally dominant role of the family in providing care for older people, as well as the proposals of researchers to develop effective social policies for support and aid to families are not presented in the Belarusian discourses. There is a lack of information about the difficulties and challenges faced by modern families and caregivers (those family members who are directly involved in caregiving), about the peculiarities of home care for older people suffering from cognitive disorders, depression, and other health conditions or diseases, about the options for providing such care, and the psychological difficulties both in terms of the objects and subjects of such care.

The researcher A. Shadrina (2017) notes that the modern ideology of "intensive parenting" prescribes that women are the only ones who are primarily responsible for taking care of their children (p. 56), as well as for the continuous professional performance of their caring responsibilities. Analysing Belarusian media discourses, one can say that the official discourse transmits the rhetoric of an adult family member's responsibility for older relatives. However, none of the discourses raises the issue of the care hierarchy within the family. The official discourse suggests that older citizens should stop thinking about helping their children, while still transmitting the ideology of 'social usefulness' and the rhetoric of the economic burden on both society and the state budget by an increasing cohort of older people. A 'burden' has become an essential concept among older people, and this research confirms its intensive transmission and accentuation by the Belarusian official discourse, as well as its significance for the research participants of different ages.

The analysis of the older Belarusians' traditional images presented in the framework of the sociocultural context research offers a limited number of

cultural codes. The definition of old age in Belarusian folklore as a whole can be reconstructed from two critical concepts: various types of dysfunctionality (social, physical, and mental) and the handing down of traditions, life experience, and wisdom (Cherniavskaya, 2010). With the first of these – the gloomy, negative view of old age – the official discourse calls older people to fight, from the pages of the pro-governmental media; it also manifests itself in other discourses analysed in the research. Another popular motive of the Belarusian traditional discourse mentioned by the researcher Cherniavskaya (2010) is the motive of loneliness and social exclusion, which is also found. These images of a lonely man and a lonely woman can be seen in the contemporary Belarusian media discourses.

The author's empirical research reveals all the motives of the Belarusian traditional discourse described by the researchers, as well as the manifestations of gender patterns and differences in ageing scenarios. However, the range of the alternatives for the interpretation of the phenomenon of 'old age' and the approaches to understanding 'active ageing' presented to the research are more variable, going beyond the traditional approaches.

While the loss of independence in old age is recognised as one of the most critical problems of the individual, the analysed discourses do not virtually recognise (do not mention as significant and do not reflect on) the problems of the so-called 'sandwich generation' (DeRigne & Ferrante, 2012; Van Houtven & Norton, 2004; Zhang & Goza, 2006). Indirect references to the problems related to taking care of older relatives or providing the home care for close people do not transfer to the discussions about the problems of the individual's multiple care responsibilities. Only once within intentionally provoked discourse is the problem of stigmatisation of the people who cannot provide home care for their parents raised. There are only fragmented reflections on gender issues, in particular, on the feminisation of care.

The transmission and retransmission of ageist attitudes, including gender sensitivity

The fourth issue is ageism (both as exposed and retransmitted in the discourses that are called upon and claimed to combat discrimination), and in particular the issue of gender discrimination. Even though the discriminatory social attitudes and ageist practices are deemed unacceptable and harmful, both the official and independent media discourses reveal and transmit them. Such discriminatory attitudes permeate the statements of both the journalists and subjects of the publications. The manifestation of the same discriminatory attitudes in the oral and written statements of the research participants emphasises the urgency of this problem in the contemporary Belarusian reality and its hidden nature.

The vulnerability of older people is emphasised by their symbolic isolation and rejection caused by the loss of the meaningful and valued attributed characteristics: 'For society, an older person is like a suitcase without a handle; it is impossible to use it, but it is a pity to throw it away' (F20). On the other hand, the emphasis is placed on the special status of older people, which accentuates their importance and implies the respect shown by the society to the representatives of this group. In the analysed discourses, between the poles of intolerance and piety towards older people from society, one can also highlight the assurance that there are no specific features in the interaction between society and older people. It should be noted that this research has revealed not only the awareness of ageist attitudes in Belarusian society but also the ageist attitudes themselves (both negative and positive).

The concept of 'social isolation', never mentioned in this discourse, goes with the feelings of the interviewees about being a superfluous person rejected by society: 'The worst part of this is not even the material aspect; it is not about the fact that I have not got enough, but that nobody needs you. When you go to a medical centre, it is one thing... I want to live on TV because we have a very good life shown there! When you go to an outpatients' clinic, they do not need you out there and kick you away. What is more, when I go to my summerhouse – and, naturally, many pensioners go that way – the bus drivers openly say, "We hate you, we would kill all of you!"; that happened literally a week ago. The attitude towards pensioners... It is like I am taking someone else's place and interfering with someone's life, everywhere, in all areas of life. And this feeling of your own... You know, that you've lived your life, you seemed to have been needed... I also hold a university degree, but here you are a flawed person, you are not useful to anyone, you are just interfering with everyone. And this worthlessness or uselessness is what kills you morally; this is what kills you morally most of all, as well as the idea that you do not deserve a decent old age' (F4).

The problem of loneliness and the reduced intensity of social communication in the life of an older person is felt like an important and specifically significant issue by the research participants. Noting the high value of communication for themselves, some of the research participants talk about the expected or perceived change in this area with the transition to the category of older people, on attaining middle age (a similar situation is typical for Lithuanian society – see Mikulionienė, Jurkevits, & Rapolienė, 2019). It is the lack of communication that is spoken of as a possible risk after retirement. A sharp reduction in social ties can be perceived as a reason for psychological discomfort and depression that cannot always be handled individually.

Following Cavan (1962), it can be noted that as a reason for decreasing ties, retirement is not a mandatory ground to feel a decrease in the communication

intensity. Some interviewees note the high value of communication in the circle of relatives and close friends, which is maintained even after the end of the employment period; therefore, it does not change and sometimes even increases in intensity.

However, some research participants insist that the importance of social interactions is overestimated and that leaving the labour market (real or potential) has no negative impact on their lives. For instance, one of the interviewees admits that with retirement in this area of his life, nothing can change for the worse due to the nature of his personality. In another case, a decline in the value of communication is mentioned, which is not permanently inherent in the interviewee's personality, but it has developed with age, and this feeling is growing, which could be an illustration for the theory of disengagement within this discourse (Cumming & Henry, 1961).

Some of the younger research participants have demonstrated their willingness to withdraw from society, dictated by the perceived necessity. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the source of such self-removal from society, but one of the reasons may be self-ageism as a reaction to the discriminatory stereotypes about older people and the practice of discrimination against them, which an older person has witnessed. Such stereotypes can also be a result of older people's preference for communicating with younger people and their emphasis on having a younger social circle, which contradicts the subculture theory (Rose, 1964).

One of the issues directly related to the ageist attitudes is the loss of attractiveness, actualised by the media discourses, and it is exclusively gender-specific. Journalists show how aggressive society is against ageing women concerning their appearance and behaviour, citing popular comments on social networks under the photographs of middle-aged celebrities. The focus is on society's denial of an ageing woman's right to choose her style of clothes or behaviour. Journalists show that ageing celebrities also share the feelings of 'ordinary' women about ageing. However, they do not offer any reflections about the unnaturalness or naturalness of such a race for youth or about the problems of employment for certain age categories. Instead, women get a sense of solidarity and kinship in their problems and also recipes for a more successful fight.

In Belarusian discourses, women's old age is associated not only with a decline in strength and productivity, with fragility and dependence, but also with a loss of attractiveness and the risk of losing their male partner, or related this, of losing their husband or strongly diminishing the chances of finding a partner (which is also characteristic of foreign discourses: Silver, 2003; Sandberg, 2013). For men, the discourse of old age is actualised in connection with retirement or reaching this age. However, the rhetoric of old age and the loss of feminine beauty and youth is associated with the age bracket of 40-50 years. This age is associated with getting old for women in Belarusian society, which does not correspond to any of the modern

age classifications. Nevertheless, on the one hand, it is a reflection of traditional ideas. On the other hand, it is an expression of the contemporary body accentuation (Foucault, 1979). It seems significant that the media discourses do not discuss the beauty of the male body and the loss of male attractiveness due to ageing.

Although the praise of youthfulness and the inconsistency with age in appearance (the inconsistency in appearance with the age group of older people) is used by journalists in the official and independent media as a compliment to both men and women; nevertheless, the concepts of 'beauty' and 'attractiveness' are considered exclusively in relation to older women. Older men are described as being strong, physically resilient, and active.

At the same time, it should be noted that none of the female research participants raised this sensitive topic. It can only be assumed whether this was due to the sensitivity of the issue, or the fact that this factor was one of the decisive reasons for the people who refused the invitation to participate in the research. It seems significant to conduct an additional study to analyse women's perception of the ageing processes of their body (like Furman, 1999; Hurd, 1999; Ogle & Damhorst, 2005; Sanberg, 2013) and sexuality (Hinchiff & Gott, 2008; Vares, 2009).

Ignorance of the voice of older people and non-participation in the formation of the policy on ageing

The analysis of the contradictions between the rhetoric of certain Belarusian discourses, between rhetoric and the context of social reality, as well as between rhetoric and the formal content of discourses, shows the existence of a number of problems that require the attention of the Belarusian community and policy makers. It is important to note once again that there is a noticeable discrepancy between the perceptions of the problems and risks in media discourses with people experienced or perceived by them as inherent in old age and ageing. What is more, some issues are completely ignored in Belarusian discourses, and older people remain excluded from participation in all stages of policy discussions, development, implementation, and monitoring. Further research and work with the public is needed to give voice to those who are today ousted from the Belarusian public discourse.

Within the alternative discourses, it is older people who are given subjectivity and are called the starting point for positive changes in the perception of this age group by society. It is not external forces but the reflections and aspirations of particular individuals to change the patterns of living in old age that are called the driving force of the changes. Only the research participants raise the issue of the responsibility of the state for the discriminatory attitudes within society towards older people, which are called the consequence of the marginalisation of this social group. They also

voice the problem of not being free in their choices and being dependent on the state system that is uncontrolled by its citizens and which reduces the opportunities for the realisation of one's alternative ways of living in old age.

The normativist official media discourse focuses on the crisis and macro-level challenges and problematises passive old age which is contrasted with the successful norm of being useful in 'active' old age. The demographic ageing of the population and the economic challenges for the state in the alternative media discourses and the intentionally provoked discourses are complemented by the accentuation of the micro-level problems, *i.e.* the issues of an older person, which include financial, psychological, and social problems. Another problem that one research participant felt to be essential and basic was the problem of dependence on the totalitarian state that limits the freedom of the citizen and prevents the implementation of the desired scenario of ageing. It is the state and the existing institutionalised system of social protection for older people that is called by some interviewees or participants in the online research or focus discussion as the original source of the discriminatory norms and practices.

That is why the lack of broad academic and public discussion on important social policy adjustments and changes, as well as the lack of attention to modern sociological research and criticism of theories are becoming a key problem. While the normativeness of ageing began to lose its positions, and the dual coordinate systems are being destroyed, however Belarusian media discourses do not broadcast this kaleidoscope of variations and trajectories. It is this departure from the normativeness of ageing that contributes to the development of institutions and legislation, as well as social attitudes in society (Beck, 2007; Liang & Luo, 2012; Grigoryeva & Bogdanova, 2020; Chazan, 2020).

As for today, Belarus is far from the bottom-up participatory approach endorsed by the Madrid Plan of Action (2003) according to which empowering older people has a direct and indirect impact on their quality of life and on the effectiveness of social policies. Nevertheless, its ideals and appeals to create opportunities for older persons to include their voices and to contribute into the processes of local and national decision-making processes, objectives and actions are not recognized on the local level.

To sum up, we should highlight once again the problems of the current social reality that were revealed through analysis of contradictions between the Belarusian context and discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing':

- 1) Normativism and the rigoristic prescriptive nature of the interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in the official media and partially in the alternative media, creating a binary black and white reality of the 'positive' and 'negative' alternatives.

- 2) The invisibility or even displacement from the official 'active ageing' discourse, the problem of the marginalisation of older people, the precarisation of their work, as well as the problems related to their employment.
- 3) The transmission and retransmission of the ageist attitudes and stereotypes (especially gender stereotypes) in the discourses that are called upon and claimed to combat discrimination.
- 4) Inattention of the Belarusian discourses to the problems of certain vulnerable societal categories (such as the chronically ill, disabled, or caregivers of disabled relatives, single parents with chronically ill old age relatives, politically powerless individuals, people living in rural areas, *etc.*) noted by the researchers and some research participants.
- 5) Ignorance of the voice of older people and non-participation in the formation of policy on ageing. The official discourse contains no broad discussion on social policy changes and the problems perceived by older people as important and individually significant.

CHAPTER 5. Discussion of findings

This chapter attempts to ‘glance over’ what has been planned and carried out in the course of the research and to reflect the results in the context of existing theories and sociological research. While the researcher’s reflections on the choice of theoretical approach, methodology, tools and data, their merits and limitations, as well as research design, are detailed in Chapter 1 and 2, the final observations, as well as reflections on observed gaps and prospects for further research from the height of the research performed will be presented below.

Is there a universal approach or generally pervasive theory? Discussions on the choice of a theoretical approach

Although the category of age in the broad perception is inextricably linked to biology and chronological frameworks, understanding old age and ageing is inextricably linked to the analysis of social and socio-cultural phenomena. Ageing as a social construct has been studied by researchers for decades, but there is no universal approach to understanding this phenomenon. It is difficult to classify all the existing theories on old age and ageing, but each attempt is valuable. Proper sociological theories of ageing are characterised by variability and an unusually eclectic combination of approaches to the study of old age and ageing. The Handbook of Theories of ageing said: ‘In contrast to theory development in the biological and behavioural sciences, theoretical progress has been more challenging in social gerontology. In part, this is because social phenomena over the course of life are extraordinarily complex and fluid but also because researchers approach their topics with different epistemologies.’ (Silverstein, *et al.* (Eds.), 2008, p. 14). The author ‘kept these approaches in mind’, were mindful of their advantages and limitations, although it was not the aim of this doctoral thesis.

Functionalist (*i.e.* Cavan & Havighurst, 1949; Cumming & Henry, 1961; Havinghurst, 1963; Maddox, 1968; Merton, 1968; Laslett, 1989; Neugarten, *et al.*, 1996; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Kelly, 1993; Atchley, 1993) approaches have polarised the field of interpretations for ageing, but have overlooked the impact of social structures on the lives of older people as well as their intentions. On the other hand, political economy theory (conflict theory, *i.e.* Phillipson & Walker, 1986; Walker, 1982; Townsend, 1981, 1986; Walker, 1981, 1990; Phillipson, 1991, 1994; Estes, 1993, 1996; Guillemard, 1983) and feminist theories (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1985; Arber & Ginn, 1991; Allen & Walker, 2006), while attending to social structures and context as extraneous determinants, do not pay sufficient attention to the subjective agents’ capacity to change and adapt to their environment (Estes, 2003). Followers

of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1913, 1934, 1964; Cavan, 1962) seek to understand how society affects the lives of specific older people, and how specific people and their goals, plans, and actions affect social processes. Phenomenology (Schutz, 1972), ethnomethodology, and interactionism are united by their attention to the way the members of society understand, define, and classify their social activities, as well as their attention to the high significance of social activities for individuals.

Every of sociological approach to ageing, mentioned in the first chapter, finds its illustrative expression in the interpretations of old age identified in Belarusian discourses, although this list doesn't pretend to be an exhaustive one. Simultaneously interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' within induced discourses refute every scientific approach mentioned above, thereby confirming the impossibility of creating a single, universal approach. For instance, some narratives support the theory of subcultures (Rose, 1964), but at the same time some informants or subjects of the publications insist that their social circle has either changed in general or has become 'younger'. It cannot be said what caused such preferences in the choice of their social circle or its changes (one of the options could be a latent reluctance to associate oneself with the older generation and an attempt to 'leave' the discriminated group: 'Well, I am often surrounded by people who are younger than me. It turned out to be this way for my acquaintances; I am still young at heart, even though I am already old...' (F9); however, we can state that each theory finds both its confirmation and refutation within the Belarusian discourses.

Postmodernism challenges traditional approaches and formulates more individual attempts and multiple possibilities to understand ageing and old age (e.g., Featherstone & Hepworth, 1995a). This research highlights approaches that find their illustrative expression in the interpretations of old age identified in Belarusian discourses. However, this thesis confirms that at the level of political decisions, the ideas of postmodern sociology remain marginal, non-widespread, and their impact on contemporary Belarusian media discourse and policy-makers remains insignificant.

Discussions on the role of the media and discourse analysis

The analysis of discursive practices, especially in the mass media, is a relevant and popular research tool all over the world, as well as in the post-soviet countries. These studies, especially those based on data from the Russian media (Romashova, 2015; Bautina, 2008; Dyachenko, 2009; Chernyshkova, 2010; Parfenova, 2016) are very useful for the research of Belarussian discourses, because in many respects we have a common historical trajectory, and it is difficult to overestimate the impact of the media in Russia in modern times (Potrebina, 2019; Szostek, 2015). Unfortunately, such

in-depth research based on Belarusian material does not exist still, so it is impossible to discuss our results in the light of similar studies done on Belarusian material. However, familiarity with the approaches of foreign studies, their methodology and research design, shows both alternative ways of solving problems and directions of further research. For example, research into the image of old age proposed as part of the official educational discourse based on the literature offered within the school curriculum, such as the Russian research 'An older person in the educational space of modern society' (Yelutina & Chekanova, 2003).

Since the media play a huge role in today's technogenic or information society, the analysis of media discourse is relevant and essential. These are exactly the discourses ('dominant' to use Foucault's term, 1981) that create the reality of a modern human. However, despite the influence and wide use of media discourses analysis, work with secondary data (studies of the Belarusian context: historical and political, institutional, economic, demographic, and socio-cultural), as well as with empiric materials, contributed to strengthening the author's resolve in choosing discursive institutionalism as the main methodological framework of the research. Thus, following van Dijk (1989a, 1989b, 1993, 2008), Fairclough (1992), and Schmidt (2002, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2015), the author insists that the analysis of contemporary discourses of old age would be incomplete without an exploration of the local contexts in which these discourses emerge, as well as discourses of perception – *i.e.* the voices of ordinary people who feel the impact of macro discourses and, in turn, influence them. However, in each case, the problem setting and the selection of methodological tools for carefully examining the specifics of context and discourses are important. This research shows how useful the study of context is for in-depth analysis of not only verbal discourse, but also hidden, non-articulated problems by comparing contradictions between discourses, as well as discourses and context. This is a kind of mixed analysis that can reveal problems that require the consideration of policy-makers and additional large-scale quantitative research.

The author finds it important that discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary theoretical approach combining micro-, meso-, and macro-level interpretation. Discourse analysis, like other social constructivist approaches, is crucial as regards the possibility of cognition of the world. This research has been based on the fact that our knowledge of the world and ourselves is not an objective reality, but it does reflect our ideas about the world that are built through social interactions. Following Jørgensen and Phillips (1999), the author is sure that differences in social relations lead to differences in social actions. As a result, the social structure of knowledge and truth has a social result (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999).

Following P. Nikander (2009), the author relies on the importance of language as a powerful channel for presenting and constructing social reality. Discourse

analysis makes it possible to distinguish both the essential characteristics of social communication and secondary informative and formal indicators (e.g. trends in the dispersion of verbal expressions or the construction of statements). The critical discourse analysis explores all verbal phenomena and can reveal how specific descriptions or versions of reality are being presented as 'correct' versions and how they reduce any possible alternatives. Within the sociolinguistic tradition, the discursive analysis attempts to simulate many theoretical and practical aspects of concept functioning in social communication processes (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). Van Dijk's research was carried out in the same way: he studied the way language functions in the media given social factors such as the background of the speaker and the listener, their social status, ethnicity, etc. (van Dijk, 1989, 1993, 1999). Despite the ethnic homogeneity of Belarusian society, the bilingualism of discourses could provide a separate topic for studying the discourses of old age and ageing. Although this research analysed data in both Russian and Belarusian languages, part of the empirical study did not include quantitative methods, so the author refrains from any generalisations in this matter. The displacement by the official discourse of the Belarusian-language community to the margins, giving it the symbolic status of political dissidence and opposition, raises questions of the substantive difference of discourses; however, in the case of a specialised research on this topic, the sample of texts should obey additional criteria, which was not done in this work. For example, in this research, the main criterion for selecting media was audience coverage (general), and not the linguistic factor; therefore, the sample included both bilingual publications and Russian-language (branches of the media published in Russian), with all materials published exclusively in Belarusian in the original version. The research did not include a single sample of Belarusian-language media,

Although Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Model (2010) and van Dijk's approach (van Dijk, 1989, 1993, 1999) served as guidelines, they were not the only to determine the use of tools. As noted previously, the focus of the research is on both public discourse (official and media discourse) and the individual voices of people each bringing their life stories and contexts. This is why discursive institutionalism was chosen as the most appropriate theoretical approach (Schmidt, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010; Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004). Its focus is not only on institutions, the social protection system, and the relationship between social agents but also on ideas that are inseparably connected with the context in which they exist. The choice of research techniques and tools is the author's prerogative and subjective decision. This breadth of variations gives rise to many questions and internal discussions about the feasibility of using each of the possible methods. However, the results of the research confirmed the author's opinion that the selected methodological tools

are consistent with the research objectives and materials (data), which limit the impact and enhance the strengths (Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

That is why one of the important tasks of this research was to study the specific Belarusian context: socio-cultural, institutional, political, economic, and demographic. It was this part of the research that proved the importance of media discourses for the Belarusian social reality, as well as the opposition of independent media discourses to the official media discourse. The global media scene and the spread of internet media endue alternative subjects of the Belarusian media discourse with influence. In the process of developing and reforming social policies, various agents interested in conveying their arguments and attracting as many supporters as possible need to 'embellish' the choice of facts and specific stories offered to the audience (Nye, 2006). Media outlets are important channels through which individuals receive factual information and a certain image of social reality. The separate research of the government-favoured media discourse has proved to be worthwhile, allowing a comparative analysis of this discourse with that of the independent media and induced discourses. While a split into the ruling and opposition parts of the political field in Belarus — with the dominant position of the president as the main subject that determines the institutional design of the entire political system and the content of the ruling narrative (Chulitskaya, 2014, p. 145) — is considered the main characteristic of this field by researchers, the same split seems relevant for the field of media discourses as well.

Discussions on interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' that are either revealed through analysis, or are neglected by the media or omitted by research participants

An in-depth research of old age discourses broadcast by educational institutions and Belarusian fiction, in particular, was not among the research objectives of this thesis; however, this became an idea for future research. The analysis of traditional, passed down (including within mainstream education) generation-to-generation interpretations of old age and older people could deepen the understanding of modern variations and interpretations, as well as show options for working out the most problematic aspects and overcoming negative trends. Interpretations of old age in folklore and classical Belarusian literature are part of the grim negative view which official discourse calls to fend off. This research is based on the analysis of these traditional interpretations of old age that Chernyavskaya (2010) treats as a part of the Belarusian mentality; moreover, the analysis of empirical material provides a lot of evidence for the topicality of these interpretations in contemporary Belarusian discourses. Loneliness and social exclusion as a popular motive of this

Belarusian discourse are consonant with Beck's (2000) vision of a single man and a single woman as the main figures of modernity in general (p. 182). In this discourse, the image of an older woman, inseparable from her social roles as a mother and grandmother is exceptionally simplified. Of all the possible social roles in this discourse, the older woman performs just one 'expressive' role (the term used in T. Parsons' role differentiation in 1996), 'prescribed' to her by biological origin and community. In general, the cultural discourse under analysis offers a limited number of cultural codes to represent the traditional image of older Belarusians. Its definition can be generally reconstructed from two important concepts: different types of dysfunctionality (social, physical, and mental) and passing on traditions, life experience, and wisdom.

Despite the prevalence of modern approaches to the definition of old age and interpretations of ageing, the analysis shows a wider variability of the approaches that exist in Belarusian discourses. Borrowing from Akudovich (2000) the metaphorical image of the 'swamp' to describe the Belarusian field of the studied discourses, it can be argued that the Belarusian discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing' are an excellent illustration of the postmodern (or according to Giddens (1991), 'late modern' space which combines many semantic layers and approaches to interpreting old age in synchrony and diachrony. Along with the manifestations of the traditional interpretations of old age and habitual patterns of ageing, modern and postmodern approaches to their interpretation have been revealed in the discourses. The research participants, who belong to different generations and are involved to varying degrees in the local and global information discourses (from active Internet users to those who receive information mainly in the process of communication with their closest people; from the residents of large cities to the dwellers of villages with limited infrastructure), illustrate the ambiguity of the understanding both 'old age' and 'active ageing'.

The postmodern reflexivity of self, mentioned by Giddens (1991), manifests itself most clearly in the induced discourses – in the narratives by some research participants who reflect on their biography in accordance with the surrounding contexts and build new scenarios and new models that differ from the normativism of the official discourse or the models offered by the media. It is the intentionally provoked discourses that tend to agree with Rose (2001, 2007) and M. Schermer & W. Pinxten (2014) that normativism is not relevant to the post-modern reality. However, the research shows that Belarusian media discourses (and especially from official sources) broadcast in line with a normative and prescriptive approach. Even while declaring their intention to eradicate stereotypes about old age, journalists impose new ones that approve rather than propose and do not consider alternative options.

The analysis of existing theories has shown both the lack of agreement on the most important concepts and ongoing efforts in different areas and the development of existing approaches. The theory of 'active ageing' is just one of the options for understanding ageing, but the relevance of its postulates to the needs of modern social and economic reality makes it popular among politicians and policy-makers. Challengers of this approach argue that the loud calls for the destruction of stereotypes and the demythologisation of old age often lead to the emergence of new stereotypes that are equally discriminatory towards older people (Rose, 2001; Victor, 2004; Katz, 2013). The normativist approach does not imply consideration for natural variations in the understanding of 'the norm', and idealism is often at odds with reality. For example, this research confirmed the thesis of M.H. Schafer and K.F. Ferraro (2012; see also Ferraro, Shippee, & Schafer, 2009) that perceptions of success and failure can differ dramatically among people with experiences of marginalisation. When implementing the idea of activating older citizens, both the individual's way of life, physical abilities, psychological characteristics, and social status and their understanding of 'activity', 'productivity', and 'success' are sometimes not taken into account.

Studying identity in old age, Rapolienė (2012) insists on the difference in the relations between its two aspects: between an ageing body and the inner 'self'. While the Western European researchers talk about the conflict between an ageing body and a young heart, she sees the reaction of older people to the social stigmatisation and their attempts to conform to the social norms. This research also confirms that the narratives by the Belarusian research participants do not mention wrinkles or grey hair as a characteristic sign of old age, although some media discourse narratives (in particular on the maintenance of youth by famous figures or the worries of ageing celebrities) transmit the idea of the conflict between an ageing body (as an 'old age mask' Foucault) and self-perception. The Belarusian induced discourses also show the manifestations of Giddens when individuals create their own reflexive narratives and construct their own ageing models or projects of ageing for the future. Unfortunately, without quantitative research on this topic, it is impossible to say how widely this kind of self-reflection is shared in the society and among which generation; however, it can be argued that it is practically not represented in the normativist discourse of the official media. In the discourse of the independent media, reflexive self-project manifestations find a fragmented presentation.

Following Giddens (1991), Bauman (2001), Beck (2002), and Rose (2001, 2007), the author insists on the need for individual reflection on one's own identity and on the importance of avoiding normality in presenting old age and ageing in media discourses. Attempts to narrow down variability, create a binary metanarrative and define 'normal' ageing make it difficult to live one's way and to implement an

individually significant and acceptable ageing scenario, while the absence of a broad public debate on pension reform deprives citizens of their subjective position and the position of agents in the process of improving social policies (political development).

The analysis of the Belarusian discourse shows what stereotypes the strategy of 'active ageing' under development is to fend off. The very concept of 'active ageing' adopted at the official level is a euphemism of the concept accepted in foreign literature and additionally emphasises the desire to avoid the negatively perceived notion of 'old age'. However, placing older people in an unequal position, in the position of objects of care, guardianship, motivation (external influence) is typical for the language of these materials. It is the official discourse, with its growing attention to the concept of 'active ageing', that illustrates the distortions and problems A. Walker (2006) talks about: the skewed nature and parochialism of understanding 'active ageing' without creating conditions in society for the implementation of these activities and without the participation of older people in the reflection. This study suggests that this interpretation of active ageing is used as a tool to prolong the participation of older people in productive activities and to assign responsibility for wellbeing to the individual. In turn, the emphasis on definitions of old age as a phenomenon controlled by an individual or by the achievements of scientific and technological progress supports the idea of 'active ageing' in the official discourse as a matter of an individual's choice.

Despite the popularised in the official discourse neoliberal economic vision of active ageing as 'productive' and valuable to the community, we can not talk about any trends without a representative quantitative research. Nevertheless, this research shows that the understanding of the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' is not limited to the suggested official and alternative media discourses, but demonstrates the ultimate heterogeneity of both the group of older participants and society as a whole. The activity of working in old age can be both desirable and acceptable under financial hardships, or forced and hated (Walker, 2006; Walker & Foster, 2013). The limited research toolset does not make it possible to draw conclusions from the extent of forced productivity in old age, but even the data received during qualitative research suggests the need for a quantitative survey at the national level. Along with this emphasis on the controllability of the phenomenon and on individual responsibility, the rhetoric of official discourse is close to neoliberal ideology, but normativism, accentuation on authorities, Soviet traditions and the role of the state allow us to attribute it to a kind of mix of traditional conservatism with Soviet ideology. In the presentation of social policy towards the old age adults, an extreme liberal position (with an emphasis on individual responsibility and targeted assistance) is noted; there is also a clear conservative emphasis on the leading role of the family in caring for old aged people.

Reflexions on the problems of social reality and issues neglected by the media or omitted by research participants. Perspectives and directions for future studies

It is necessary to find out how widespread the activity of older people in the labour market is after reaching retirement age, and what causes it. Social policy-makers need to understand whether the marginalisation of older people and their work is a national trend or an isolated incident lacking a systematic pattern. An additional important aspect from the perspective of 2020 is the research of the special needs of older people (Hebblethwaite, Young, & Rubio, 2020; Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Smith, Steinman, & Casey, 2020) and their rights to social isolation, which are discussed in the context of a pandemic and should be comprehensively studied and reflected (Ayalon et.al., 2020; Bogdanova & Grigoryeva, 2020). Otherwise, popularising the ideas of 'activity' of older people in the normativist paradigm, as well as the motives of dependency and value in the Belarusian discourse, will only increase the vulnerability of older people in society and intensify their discrimination. Thus, the work to reform the pension system and develop a national strategy for 'active ageing' should be based on extensive multidisciplinary research. Some quantitative research would be useful and significant to answer the question about differences or similarities in the understanding of 'old age' and 'active ageing' among citizens of different age and social groups: gender, professional, religious, urban, and rural residents. Research is also needed on the reinterpretation of older people's work and raising awareness of the problems they face both in employment (the aspect of the marginalisation of older people in the labour market deserves special attention) and in the workplace or working collectives. Otherwise, the activation of older people to work becomes coercive without providing equal conditions and taking important factors into account (Walker & Foster, 2013; Brazienė & Mikutavičienė, 2015; Brazienė, 2017). At the same time, the importance of narratives of social inclusion of older people and the possibilities for their positive impact (Rudman, 2014) that are broadcast to the public can be used to counteract modern discriminatory attitudes and practices (Ayalon & Tesch-Romer, 2018).

The problems of social exclusion directly or indirectly articulated in contemporary Belarusian discourses call for special attention of Belarusian researchers. The exploration of individual risks for exclusion in later life (socio-economic status, quality and quantity of relationships, individual and social norms and values, migration, etc.) would adjust social policies to the needs and requirements of older people and reduce social exclusion (Burholt *et al.*, 2017). While working on the research, the author revealed a vast gap of knowledge and statistical data. And this gap has become even more pronounced in connection with the new global

challenges of 2020. The very concept of social exclusion and social participation is subject to rethinking, which is still to be done by gerontologists around the world in the near future.

Also importantly, a lack of data and research on economic exclusion (Myck *et al.*, 2017), which research participants and independent media discourses perceive as a significant problem for older people in Belarus. In this thesis, we can only rely on (nominally reliable) statistical data on the level and quality of life, living conditions, and on the work of independent researchers (Chubrik & Shimanovich, 2013). The findings of this research, based on subjective assessments of research participants and independent media journalists, confirm the need for careful measuring material conditions in old age (wellbeing and living conditions).

Throughout the analysis, the gap in the discussion of the problem of social exclusion of older people in Belarusian discourses, including the scientific discourse, becomes noticeable. The lack of attention (Torres *et al.*, 2017) to this problem among Belarusian researchers is complemented by the non-articulation of the issue of political participation of older people in the discourses under analysis. According to K. Walsh, T. Scharf, & N. Keating (2017), it is the lack of involvement of older people in political activity and social policy-making processes that is a fundamental challenge for ageing societies and sets the stage for strengthening other forms of exclusion. Significantly, the perception of the importance of political participation of older people is also comprehended by some research participants, and the lack of opportunities for such participation is perceived by them as a barrier to the proper practice of 'active ageing'. This leads us to the conclusion that political exclusion can be perceived by an individual as an obstacle to the implementation of the model of 'active ageing' in its desired intensity and may provoke social exclusion.

Innovative and new insights into work and unpaid activities have been identified by researchers as an important condition for the development of social policies regarding old age and older people (Pitt-Catsouphes *et al.*, 2017; Costa & Milia, 2008; Smith, 2010). The Belarusian discourses illustrate the close connection between age perceptions and the concept of retirement or, more precisely, the termination of paid employment. However, some of the research participants draw similar conclusions to FuturAge (2011) that it is necessary to move beyond an approach to ageing that focuses on the distinction between education, work, and retirement. A separate problem for extending the labour activity of people of retirement age is discrimination in the labour market and the precarisation of the old age adults. According to the findings of Russian researchers, the exception is conservative employment spheres and the public sector: education, medicine, industrial production (Grigoryeva & Bogdanova, 2020; Zdravomyslova & Tkach, 2016).

Following van Dijk (2008), and based on the analysis of Belarusian discourses,

it can be stated that members of the social group who quit the labour market feel deprived of leverage, constrained in defending their views through inequalities in access to public discourse and communication. This is why research is needed to identify and broadcast a wide range of opinions and ideas about facts of reality, social and political issues that are relevant to society as a whole and to the cohort of older people in particular, especially in the process of reforming social policies and in times of global challenges (such as a pandemic).

The problem of ageism, explicit and implicit, deserves a separate discussion. Despite criticism of discriminatory social attitudes and ageist practices, Belarusian discourses both reveal and transmit them. And although the problem of age discrimination is not central to this research, in the course of the analysis, it became clear that this aspect of the Belarusian social reality deserves special consideration of sociologists. There is a need for a detailed study of all forms and spheres of discrimination, both institutionalised and broadcast in Belarusian discourses, including through negative and positive stereotypes (a systematic review of existing ageism scales is provided in the research of Ayalon, Dolberg, Mikulioniene *et al.*, 2019).

The Belarusian media discourses of ageing and active longevity articulate the aesthetic aspect of ageing, combining it as attempts to aestheticise the 'proper' old age and formulating the expectations regarding appearance that society directs at older people. Youthfulness and the ability to conceal one's age are presented as encouraged and achieved by the efforts of an active person. Here the concept of a 'mask' used by sociologists (Featherstone *et al.*, 1991; Biggs, 1997; Hepworth, 2004; Casauo Gual, 2009; Katz, 2010) and the metaphorical description of this phenomenon made by Woodward (1988) in his 'Youthfulness as a Masquerade' can be recalled. Youthfulness in appearance and physical activity is held out in Belarusian media discourses as 'accomplishable' and should be enforced despite age by means accessible to all. It is imperative to be and remain a woman or a man 'despite' one's age.

The results of the research confirm that modern Belarusian discourses instruct an older person to balance between looking young enough and concealing their real age and at the same time be 'proud' of it; to accept it, but also strive for 'youthfulness' and activity at the same level; take care of their health, but also be aware that destructive changes are inevitable. Thus, the modern Belarusian media discourse is becoming a field in which an older person is called for a constant balancing between 1) self-awareness, awareness of their body, significance and usefulness, and 2) ways of silencing the new self, the older self through self-activation and self-motivation. This prescriptive and categorical approach can be a source of discriminatory social attitudes, including self-ageism of older people (Gilleard & Higgs, 2001; Faircloth,

2003; Lelwica, 2017, 2019). Nevertheless, the research participants both demonstrate a desire for age-resistant activities and youthful appearance (confirming the symbolic value of youth mentioned by Biggs, 1997) and verbalise indifference to external manifestations of age, emphasising the desire to move away from socially acceptable to individually comfortable appearance (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990; Hepworth, 2003).

While sharing their interpretations of old age, the research participants both touched upon the physical aspect of body ageing and relied on changing social roles in their reflections. The importance of these role transformations is emphasised by the high occurrence of the term 'pensioner' and 'grandfather'/'grandmother' in media discourses, as well as their use as synonyms to the term 'older person'. Researchers emphasise the importance of role identity in the ageing process (Phillips, 1957; Turner, 1990, 2001; Siebert, Mutran, & Reitzes, 1999), however, based on the interpretations of the research participants, the author would like to point out both the change of roles and the mismatch between the expectations of older people's roles and changing realities. Expectations about the role of the older person remain intact for some time following social and economic conditions change (Turner, 1990, 2001), and this difference is not always realised by the research participants. Qualitative research does not allow making far-reaching conclusions about the role identity of older Belarusians; however, some research participants demonstrate the desire to expand the scope of role expectations (including roles in the family) or to go beyond them.

Even though family problems in the context of ageing (at the macro and micro levels) were not the focus of this research, the analysis revealed a discrepancy between the current demographic and economic conditions of older people and their relatives and the traditional and currently broadcast social attitudes, as well as scenarios of living old age perceived by the research participants as desirable. These discrepancies and contradictions in the current Belarusian situation are not obvious to officials, journalists, or some research participants. Both modern sociologists and psychologists (Brody, 1985; Janzen, 2001; Roberto & Jarrott, 2008) write about the difficulties and challenges faced by contemporary families and caregivers (family members directly involved in caregiving). Special attention is paid to the problems of home care of older people suffering from cognitive disorders, depression, and other diseases (George & Gwyther, 1986; Hinrichsen, Hernandez, & Pollack, 1992; Schulz & Martire, 2004; Given & Sherwood, 2006). In the Belarusian context, research into older people's views on family care is lacking but is considered demandable (e.g., 'You Don't Want to Burden Them': Older Adults' Views on Family Involvement in Care' by Cahill *et al.*, 2009). The findings of this research, without qualifying for the

far-reaching conclusions, show the existence of rejection and phobias of being an object of care, a 'burden' on the family.

We can agree with Fisher (1984, 1989) that the choice of a certain type of narrative for translating theses in favour of specific ideas makes other options invisible. This neglect and disregard of other viewpoints and perspectives for the interpretation by authoritative discourses reinforces (various) inequalities (Ferree, 2009; Zhu & Kramsch, 2016; Brook, O'Brien, & Taylor, 2021), and thus discriminates against both older people as an age group and gender, class, and ethnicity rooted groups (Rozanova, 2010). That is why this thesis analysed what was obvious, as well as the implied and unarticulated (Stochetti, 2014). For example, the official discourse completely ignores the considerations of forced continuation of working activity after retirement, as well as the obstacles to activity that research participants articulate as significant or essential. In the future, it would be useful to analyse the visibility of older people in the discourses: how often older people, in general, are covered in the media (following Raycheva *et al.*, 2018), and in particular how much attention is paid to the needs of specific groups within the cohort of older people: different financial situations (Zaidi, 2010; Zaidi, Frick, & Buchel, 2004; Lachs & Han, 2015; Bierman, 2014), sexual orientation (Brown, 2009; Goldsen *et al.*, 2017; Loverde, 2017; Kimmel, Rose, & David, 2006; Kimmel, 2015; Concannon, 2009), gender (Gibson, 1996; Krekula, 2007; Calasanti, 2008; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Richardson, 2007; Bataille, Le Feuvre, & Kradolfer Morales, 2017), place of birth (Mishra, 1992; Phillipson & Scharf, 2005; Clarke & Gallagher, 2013; Van Hoof, Kazak, Perek-Białas, & Peek, 2018). This study shows that attention to these problems in Belarusian discourses is insignificant (the problems of the LGBT community are generally invisible).

In this regard, it is important and relevant to develop research in Belarus on economic, social, and psychological problems of home care, on the difficulties of caring for older people with various mental and physiological disorders, on the problems of the 'sandwich generation' that combines caring for children with caring for older relatives, and on the feminisation of care, among other things. Among the limitations of this research, the author mentions the fact that the category of older people who have lost interest in social interaction is not brought into the picture. This 'apathy' may be one of the alleged reasons for unwillingness to participate in any research. Given that the voices of the most vulnerable and the least active are most often left unheard (Baumann, 1998), it can be assumed that not all problems were heard or identified in this research either.

The development and popularity of social networks make this discursive platform an increasingly important and promising area of investigation and analysis. This is especially true now, when large sections of the population have undergone social isolation and the transition mainly to online communication. According to

O. Shapiro (2017), to shape public opinion, social networks use various methods of persuasion and hostile rhetoric provoked by anonymity, irresponsibility, contagion, and increased emotionality in the perception of reality. Given the extreme negativity and sensibility of perception of old age and ageing revealed in the process of participants recruitment, as well as by the user comments left under some topic-related publications on the Internet, it would be useful to analyse online comments to specific news publications regarding pension legislation or publications that touch on the topic of ageing. It should not be treated as public opinion (it is not possible to say with certainty whether each comment is a reaction of different people or a replication of one person' opinion under different accounts; another obstacle is pre-moderation, which tweaks user statements), but rather as a discourse that surrounds and potentially influences the audience by shaping public opinion.

However, changes in political and social discourses that took place globally and locally in Belarus in 2020 increase the relevance of research on the concepts of 'old age' and 'active ageing' and additional discussion by academic communities with the participation of policy makers. Although it seemed that the return of older people to the labour market could potentially reduce the pressure on the economy, the state and society should take responsibility for providing a medical and social structure, as well as fully assess the costs of such decisions, given the provision of special conditions for this age group. The question is again raised about the controllability of the phenomenon itself and processes of ageing. The pandemic also raised the issue of social isolation in a new dimension, adding to the discussion the issue of the right to refuse social and economic activity and to provide conditions for self-isolation for the old age adults, which is especially important in Belarus, where the political regime denies the very existence of the threat of Covid-19, and therefore the very need to create special conditions or infrastructure for certain vulnerable groups.

CONCLUSIONS

1. This research demonstrates the variability of approaches to understanding old age, ageing and the theories of 'active ageing' both at the global level and within the Belarusian context and local discourses. Despite the increasing interest in this topic due to demographic pressure, further scientific research is needed to better understand the social, economic, political, and cultural factors that influence perceptions of old age and the social status of members of this age group. The problem of ageing in the current context is relevant at both the individual and macro levels. The very heterogeneity of this group, the changing global context, and the risk of normalisation and strict framing of a limited number of interpretation variations hinder the creation of a comprehensive and universal theory.
2. In the absence of extensive quantitative research and a lack of confidence in government statistics in general, qualitative research methods are becoming an available and valuable alternative. The theoretical contribution of this work consists in the creation of an empirical research model that uses the potential of the CDA and Discursive Institutionalism approach to studying the emergence, development, and change of social policies, analysing social and political problems through the study of interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing' in a specific context.
3. The populist nature of political power in the country, as well as the possibility of sharp adverse public reaction to changes in the pension system, increase the role of media discourses as a soft power tool. The official discourse (state-run media) has taken on the function of explanatory work to reduce discontent and popularise social policy at the time when crisis trends in the economy remain intact.
4. Although definitions of old age in Belarusian media discourses are controversial and varied, contributions of participants of research have shown more extensive diversity of interpretations of 'old age' and 'active ageing'. The definitions are based on biological, conventional social, chronological, psychological, or multiple factors, and can be attributed to traditional, modern, and post-modern (alternative media discourse and induced discourses) approaches. However, this thesis confirms that at the level of political decisions, the ideas of postmodern sociology remain marginal, non-widespread, and their impact

on contemporary Belarusian media discourse and policy-makers remains insignificant.

5. The legislative retirement-age increase entailed the adaptation of the foreign concept of 'active ageing' in the form of 'active ageing' and the promotion of ideas to activate the older population. The concept has a prescriptive normative character and is used as a tool to popularise the prolongation of participation in productive activities and assigning responsibility for wellbeing to the individual. In this case, the official discourse may be seen as a counter-discourse to the supposedly dominant discourse in society, but the declared positive liberating message is combined with the rigoristic and normative nature of the ideas being broadcast.
6. The official discourse avoids focusing on social and economic inequalities. The official discourse of old age and 'active ageing' both ignore the living standard and marginalisation of older people as a social group and reinforces it through silencing, concealment, and passing off the financial disadvantage of older people as the result of their imprudence and carelessness, as well as through reinforcing the concepts of 'dependency' and 'burden' in relation to the older age group in the discourse.
7. The official discourse promotes the rhetoric of neoliberalism and personal responsibility for one' life, especially in old age. All media discourses also feature a neo-traditionalist reversion to emphasis on the role of the family and neo-liberal responsibility for oneself. The thesis about the dominant role of the family in caring for older people prevails in all the discourses studied, although the problems associated with providing such support appear fragmented, and the gender aspect of caring for older relatives remains unaddressed.
8. Both official and alternative media discourses problematise 'old age' at the individual and macro levels; however, independent media discourses and those of the research participants, besides traditional and modern 'layers' (paradigms) of interpretation, offer post-modern variations of approaches to defining old age to the audience, calling for an individual reconsideration of established norms and scenarios. Alternative (independent) media discourses and induced discourses also provide additional interpretation options for 'active ageing', offering a release from normativism rhetoric as a substitute for the official discourse' rigoristic rhetoric.

9. The discrimination and self-incrimination of older people are characteristic of all the discourses analysed. On the one hand, it is spoken of as an actual negative fact of social reality, and on the other hand, it is demonstrated by ageist social attitudes, practices, and statements. One can talk of the stigma of old age, but the official Belarusian media discourse distinguishes the stigma of passive old age in the first place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author identified evidence of socio-political problems in the Belarusian discourses of 'old age' and 'active ageing' (2017-2019), and therefore, made recommendations to various subjects involved in the creation, development, and modification of social policies.

Recommendations to researchers

More research is needed to make informed decisions about social policy-making, as well as its adjustment and change, including:

1. Research into the living standard and welfare of Belarusian older citizens, as well as into certain categories of its older citizens (ethnic, gender, professional, *etc.*). Research on the factors that may affect all spheres of older people's lives (political, social, economic, demographic, socio-cultural, psychological, *etc.*).
2. Analysis of the infrastructure and needs of various groups of older people, including the need for activities, their types and barriers to the desired scenario of active ageing.
3. Research into the perception of various forms of care for older people by themselves and their relatives. Identification of the factors that positively affect the quality of life of both older persons who need care and their caregivers. Examination of the care hierarchy within the family and its gender dimension.
4. Extensive research into the social participation and loneliness of older people in Belarus.
5. Methods for a comprehensive assessment of ageing policy and existing social programmes for the support of older people need to be developed. There is also a need for additional sociological research reflecting people's perceptions of the actualities and their value-based attitude to programmes under implementation.

Recommendations to policy-makers:

1. With the implementation of pension reform, there is a need for broad public participation in the discussion of strategically important documents related to the reform, as well as the concept of 'active ageing', which is being implemented as part of the state strategy in response to older citizens' needs. It is critical to consolidate the subjective position of citizens as agents in the process of social policy development and to increase the role of older people in the process of policy-making and policy adjustment.
2. Programmes aimed at stimulating intergenerational communication and overcoming barriers between generations should be introduced.

3. There is a need for the creation and implementation of educational programmes for different age groups to overcome ageist attitudes. The research findings show that special attention should be paid to overcoming ageist attitudes towards older women.
4. Mechanisms should be created to overcome the problems of employment and precarious work of older people.
5. Attention to family policy and the introduction of programmes to help family members who take care of older relatives at home, reforming the system of keeping employment records are vital.
6. The research has revealed a very negative attitude towards nursing homes for older people, so home care support programmes are needed, as well as programmes to reorganise care institutions (research into them).
7. A study of economic indicators, adequacy and equity of pension payments for different categories of citizens is crucial.

Recommendations to statistical data producers

Since a descriptive analysis of the social context in Belarus has revealed lack of reliable statistical data in the country, the following is recommended:

1. Monitoring the processes and trends in the implementation of ageing policies, and the factors that harm these processes.
2. Producing and making data and methods of information collection and processing publicly available, and revealing their compliance with international standards.
3. Using universal international instruments and expanding databases (see Recommendations to researchers)

Recommendations to journalists

Since this thesis has revealed broadcasting rigoristic and normativistic rhetoric, ageing stereotypes and ageist attitudes, the author recommends the following:

1. Deconstructing binarity and normativity of media discourses through broad coverage of the variability of interpretations of old age and scenarios of living it, including the variability of interpretations of 'active ageing'.
2. Demonstration of respect for individuals of all age groups and the destigmatisation of older people, along with a positive assessment of the contribution they have already made to the country's economic well-being. There should be a refusal to problematise hedonistic old age scenarios.
3. Overcoming the image of older people as helpless victims who are bizarre and comical, and viewed as an economic burden on society for being technologically impaired, mentally challenged, and aesthetically unattractive:

avoiding stereotyping older people and portraying monochromatic portraits of them; instead they should be presented and given a voice as individuals rather than a unified cohort. There should be a departure from the retransmission of ageist social attitudes and use of ethical language (accuracy of wording, precision of terms).

4. Awareness of responsibility for the reliability of the information broadcast, as well as understanding the potential impact of images and interpretations of old age created in the media on social practices.
5. Focusing publications on:
 - Releasing a woman from the race for youth and age concealment. Defending the right to age and the right to the joy of being natural.
 - Informing older people about the opportunities to participate in social life, the infrastructure, and options for active leisure time.
 - Open discussion of the marginalisation of older people, their precarious work, the problems of employment of older people and people of pre-retirement age, *etc.* Discussion of the problems of vulnerable groups.
 - Discussion about helping families to care for older relatives, and meeting the needs and opportunities for home care.

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ANNEXES

Annex I. List of questions for employed seniors

[Здравствуйте, меня зовут Анастасия Юркевич! Я провожу исследование понятий «старость» и «активное долголетие» в современных белорусских дискурсах. В исследовательских целях я хотела бы записать это интервью, в иных целях оно использоваться не будет. Ваши личные данные (включая имена, адрес) будут скрыты. Если вам неудобно или тяжело отвечать на какой-либо вопрос, игнорируйте его. Также в любой момент вы можете прервать интервью и отказаться от участия в исследовании без объяснения причин. Пожалуйста, задавайте вопросы в любой момент, когда что-то покажется вам неясным, или если вам будет необходима дополнительная информация. Благодарю за участие!]

1. Вышли ли вы на пенсию официально?
2. Почему вы продолжаете работать? (Какова основная и дополнительные причины, повлиявшие на ваше решение? И было ли это вашим решением?)
3. Если бы вы не чувствовали давления внешних сил/условий, продолжали бы работать?
4. Чего вам наиболее не хватает после выхода на пенсию или будет не хватать после прекращения трудовой деятельности?
5. Чувствуете ли вы изменения в отношении к себе с выходом на пенсию со стороны других людей? На работе?
6. Как ваши более молодые коллеги относятся к сотрудникам, которые продолжают работать после выхода на пенсию?
7. Трудно ли найти работу человеку пенсионного возраста?
8. Трудно ли найти активность/деятельность по душе/для души человеку на пенсии?
9. Чем вы любите заниматься? Что вам нравится делать?
10. Участвуете ли в деятельности каких-либо общественных, религиозных, волонтерских организаций или клубов? Участвовали бы, если бы вас пригласили?
11. Что для вас самое важное в жизни?
12. Какие изменения (наиболее существенные) вы чувствуете с достижением пенсионного возраста?

13. Что изменилось в вашем восприятии себя вместе с достижением пенсионного возраста? Как вы думаете, изменилось восприятие вас другими?
14. Как вы думаете/ощущаете, какие плюсы и минусы пожилого возраста?
15. Что для вас означает «старость»? Какого человека можно назвать пожилым или старым? (По вашему мнению)
16. Как вы думаете, что для общества означает «старость», и каким видит пожилого человека общество?
18. Какой вы представляете полноценную жизнь человека? Каковы основные препятствия этому?
19. С кем вы больше всего общаетесь? Как часто? Чувствуете ли недостаток общения?
20. Как изменился круг вашего общения с выходом на пенсию?
21. Интересуетесь ли тем, что происходит вокруг? Откуда узнаете о новостях?
22. Как вы думаете, изменилось ли отношение к пожилым людям со времени вашей юности? (Основываясь на том, что вы видите и слышите в СМИ, а также исходя из собственного опыта)
23. Как вы думаете, какого рода активность необходима пожилым людям?
24. Как вы думаете, какой активности ждет от пожилого человека государство? Общество?
25. Какие препятствия для активности пожилых людей существуют? Ощущаются вами?
26. Какой поддержки пожилым людям не хватает? Чьей поддержки недостает (со стороны государства, семьи, органов самоуправления и т.д.)?
27. Изменилось ли ваше благосостояние (ваше финансовое положение) с выходом на пенсию?
28. Довольны ли вы уровнем медицинского обслуживания? Чувствуете ли разницу в отношении к пациентам разных возрастных категорий?
29. Чувствовали ли вы на себе/были ли свидетелем дискриминации людей старшего возраста?
30. Чувствуете ли вы наличие конфликтов между поколениями в обществе? Напряжения?
31. Как вы относитесь к повышению пенсионного возраста в стране?
32. Как вы считаете, нужна ли пенсионная реформа? Если да, то какие изменения вы бы хотели видеть?
33. Как вы думаете, отличается ли положение пожилых мужчин и женщин?
34. Какая социальная группа (возрастная, профессиональная, гендерная и т.д.) является наиболее уязвимой?
35. Что могло бы быть «гарантией» счастливой старости?

- Сколько вам лет?
- Какой вы национальности?
- Какова ваша профессия? (+кем работаете сейчас)
- Ваше образование?
- Во сколько лет вы вышли на пенсию?
- С кем вы проживаете?
- Есть ли у вас какие-то серьезные заболевания? (да/нет)
- Были ли неудобные для вас вопросы во время интервью, на которые не хотелось отвечать?
- Есть ли у вас вопросы по поводу этого интервью и исследования в целом? Вы хотели бы получить больше информации о нем?

Annex II. List of questions for unemployed seniors

[Здравствуйте, меня зовут Анастасия Юркевич! Я провожу исследование понятий «старость» и «активное долголетие» в современных белорусских дискурсах. В исследовательских целях я хотела бы записать это интервью, в иных целях оно использоваться не будет. Ваши личные данные (включая имена, адрес) будут скрыты. Если вам неудобно или тяжело отвечать на какой-либо вопрос, игнорируйте его. Также в любой момент вы можете прервать интервью и отказаться от участия в исследовании без объяснения причин. Пожалуйста, задавайте вопросы в любой момент, когда что-то покажется вам неясным, или если вам будет необходима дополнительная информация. Благодарю за участие!]

1. Вышли ли вы на пенсию официально?
2. Почему вы прекратили работать? Было ли это вашим решением?
3. Чего вам наиболее не хватает после выхода на пенсию?
4. Чувствуете ли вы изменения в отношении к себе с выходом на пенсию со стороны других людей?
5. Трудно ли найти работу человеку пенсионного возраста?
6. Трудно ли найти активность/деятельность по душе/для души человеку на пенсии?
7. Чем вы любите заниматься? Что вам нравится делать?
8. Участвуете ли в деятельности каких-либо общественных, религиозных, волонтерских организаций или клубов? Участвовали бы, если бы вас пригласили?
9. Что для вас самое важное в жизни?
10. Какие изменения (наиболее существенные) вы чувствуете с достижением пенсионного возраста?
11. Что изменилось в вашем восприятии себя вместе с достижением пенсионного возраста? Как вы думаете, изменилось восприятие вас другими?
12. Как вы думаете/ощущаете, какие плюсы и минусы пожилого возраста?
13. Что для вас означает «старость»? Какого человека можно назвать пожилым или старым? (По вашему мнению)
14. Как вы думаете, что для общества означает «старость», и каким видит пожилого человека общество?
16. Какой вы представляете полноценную жизнь человека? Каковы основные препятствия этому?

17. С кем вы больше всего общаетесь? Как часто? Чувствуете ли недостаток общения?
18. Как изменился круг вашего общения с выходом на пенсию?
19. Интересуетесь ли тем, что происходит вокруг? Откуда узнаете о новостях?
20. Как вы думаете, изменилось ли отношение к пожилым людям со времени вашей юности? (Основываясь на том, что вы видите и слышите в СМИ, а также исходя из собственного опыта)
21. Как вы думаете, какого рода активность необходима пожилым людям?
22. Как вы думаете, какой активности ждет от пожилого человека государство? Общество?
23. Какие препятствия для активности пожилых людей существуют? Ощущаются вами?
24. Какой поддержки пожилым людям не хватает? Чьей поддержки недостает (со стороны государства, семьи, органов самоуправления и т.д.)?
25. Изменилось ли ваше благосостояние (ваше финансовое положение) с выходом на пенсию?
26. Довольны ли вы уровнем медицинского обслуживания? Чувствуете ли разницу в отношении к пациентам разных возрастных категорий?
27. Чувствовали ли вы на себе/были ли свидетелем дискриминации людей старшего возраста?
28. Чувствуете ли вы наличие конфликтов между поколениями в обществе? Напряжения?
29. Как вы относитесь к повышению пенсионного возраста в стране?
30. Как вы считаете, нужна ли пенсионная реформа? Если да, то какие изменения вы бы хотели видеть?
31. Как вы думаете, отличается ли положение пожилых мужчин и женщин?
32. Какая социальная группа (возрастная, профессиональная, гендерная и т.д.) является наиболее уязвимой?
33. Что могло бы быть «гарантией» счастливой старости?
 - Сколько вам лет?
 - Какой вы национальности?
 - Какова ваша профессия?
 - Ваше образование?
 - Во сколько лет вы вышли на пенсию?
 - С кем вы проживаете?
 - Есть ли у вас какие-то серьезные заболевания? (да/нет)

- Были ли неудобные для вас вопросы во время интервью, на которые не хотелось отвечать?
- Есть ли у вас вопросы по поводу этого интервью и исследования в целом? Вы хотели бы получить больше информации о нем?

Annex III. List of questions for people of working age

[Здравствуйте, меня зовут Анастасия Юркевич! Я провожу исследование понятий «старость» и «активное долголетие» в современных белорусских дискурсах. В исследовательских целях я хотела бы записать это интервью, в иных целях оно использоваться не будет. Ваши личные данные (включая имена, адрес) будут скрыты. Если вам неудобно или тяжело отвечать на какой-либо вопрос, игнорируйте его. Также в любой момент вы можете прервать интервью и отказаться от участия в исследовании без объяснения причин. Пожалуйста, задавайте вопросы в любой момент, когда что-то покажется вам неясным, или если вам будет необходима дополнительная информация. Благодарю за участие!]

1. Работаете ли вы в данный момент и как долго собираетесь работать? От чего будет зависеть продолжительность вашего трудового стажа? (основная и дополнительные причины ухода с рынка труда). При каких условиях вы бы продолжили трудовую активность после достижения пенсионного возраста?
2. Чего вам наиболее будет не хватать после прекращения трудовой деятельности?
3. Работают ли в вашем коллективе люди пожилого возраста? Чувствуете ли вы отличия в отношении к коллегам пожилого возраста, пенсионерам?
4. Как вы относитесь к сотрудникам, которые продолжают работать после выхода на пенсию?
5. Трудно ли найти работу человеку пенсионного возраста?
6. Трудно ли найти активность/деятельность по душе/для души человеку на пенсии?
7. Чем вы любите заниматься? Собираетесь ли изменить привычки или виды активности после достижения пожилого возраста?
8. Что для вас самое важное в жизни?
9. Что для вас означает старость? Что меняется в человеке вместе с достижением пожилого возраста?
10. Какого человека вы бы назвали пожилым, а какого старым?
11. Как вы думаете, какие плюсы и минусы пожилого возраста?
12. Как вы думаете, что для общества означает «старость», и каким видит пожилого человека общество?
14. Какой вы представляете полноценную жизнь человека? Каковы основные препятствия этому?
15. Как вы думаете, какого рода активность необходима пожилым людям?

16. Как вы думаете, какой активности ждет от пожилого человека государство? Общество?
17. Какие препятствия для активности пожилых людей существуют?
18. Какой поддержки пожилым людям не хватает? Чьей поддержки недостает (со стороны государства, семьи, органов самоуправления и т.д.)?
19. Были ли свидетелем дискриминации людей старшего возраста?
20. Чувствуете ли вы наличие конфликтов между поколениями в обществе? Напряжения?
21. Как вы относитесь к повышению пенсионного возраста в стране?
22. Как вы считаете, нужна ли пенсионная реформа? Если да, то какие изменения вы бы хотели видеть?
23. Как вы думаете, отличается ли положение пожилых мужчин и женщин?
24. Какая социальная группа (возрастная, профессиональная, гендерная и т.д.) является наиболее уязвимой?
25. Что могло бы быть «гарантией» счастливой старости?

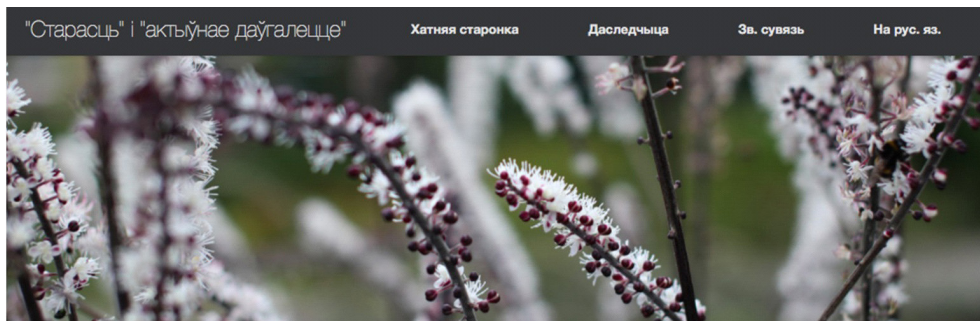
- Сколько вам лет?
- Какой вы национальности?
- Какова ваша профессия? (+кем работаете сейчас)
- Ваше образование?
- Были ли неудобные для вас вопросы во время интервью, на которые не хотелось отвечать?
- Есть ли у вас вопросы по поводу этого интервью и исследования в целом? Вы хотели бы получить больше информации о нем?

Annex IV. Information about the interviewees

Code	Age	Gender (M or F)	Place of residence	Education	Occupation	Source of income	Marital status	Household
F1	58 лет	F	Town	Specialised secondary	Commodity expert	Salary + pension benefits	Divorced, with children	1
F2	60 лет	F	Town	Secondary	Worker	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F3	57	F	Town	Specialised secondary	Technician, now cashier	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F4	57	F	Town	Higher	Software engineer, now a salesperson	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	1
F5	59	F	Town	Specialised secondary	Commodity expert, now a salesperson	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
M6	63	M	Town/village	Specialised secondary	Food shop manager, now a plumber	Salary + pension benefits	Divorced, with children	2 and more
M7	59	M	Town	Specialised secondary	Worker	Salary + pension benefits	Divorced, with children	2 and more
F8	64	F	Town	Specialised secondary	Construction technician, now a cleaning lady	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F9	57	F	Town	Secondary	Worker	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F10	66	F	Town	Higher	Teacher	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	1
F11	60	F	Town	Higher	Teacher	Salary + pension benefits	Divorced, with children	2 and more
F12	56	F	Town	Specialized secondary	Nurse	Salary + pension benefits	Single, with children	2 and more

Code	Age	Gender (M or F)	Place of residence	Education	Occupation	Source of income	Marital status	House- hold
F13	60	F	Town	Specialized secondary.	Midwife	Salary + pension benefits	Single, with children	1
M14	65	M	Town	Secondary	Welder	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F15	64	F	Town	Secondary	Worker	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
F16	54	XF	Town	Secondary	Weaver, now a cleaning lady	Salary + pension benefits	Single	1
M17	64	M	Village	Secondary	Driver	Salary + pension benefits	Married with children	2 and more
M18	46	M	Town	Higher	Writer	Salary	Married with children	2 and more
M19	34	M	City	Higher	Student	Scholar- ship	Single	2 and more
F20	37	F	Town	Higher	Housewife	-	Married with children	2 and more
F21	36	F	City	Higher	Housewife	-	Married with children	2 and more
M22	34	M	City	Higher	Host of events	Salary	Married with children	2 and more
M23	46	M	Town	Higher	Engineer	Salary	Married with children	2 and more
M24	42	M	Town	Specialized secondary	Driver	Salary	Married with children	2 and more
F25	38	F	Village	Specialized secondary	Worker	Salary	Married with children	2 and more
F26	19	F	Town	Unfinished Higher	Student	Scholar- ship	Single	2 and more
M27	45	M	Town	Unfinished Higher	Welder	Salary	Married with children	2 and more

Annex V. Website created to conduct online survey (home page <http://ageingbelarus.org>)



Канцэпцыя "актыўнага даўгалецця" ("active ageing") шырока выкарыстоўваецца ў дыскурсе пенсійнай рэформы як сацыёлагамі, так і палітыкамі. Аднак, адсутнасць універсальнага/адзначнага разумення таго, што з'яўляецца «актыўным даўгалеццем», можа ствараць перадумовы для непаразумення паміж асобнымі суб'ектамі ў працэсе рэфармавання/развіцця сацыяльных палітык.

Менавіта таму ў межах сацыялагічнага даследавання я прашу грамадзян і рэзідэнтаў Беларусі выказацца на гэтую тэму і прадставіць свой варыянт, сваё разуменне "актыўнага даўгалецця".

Напішыце, калі ласка:

- Што такое старасць? Калі чалавек пераходзіць у катэгорыю пажылых? старых?
- Якім вы ўяўляеце сябе і сваё жыццё ў сталых гадах?
- Чым вы будзеце займацца? Чаго б вам хацелася, або чаго вы дакладна не хацелі б для сябе ў пажылым узросце?
- Ці будзе гэты перыяд вызначацца актыўнасцю, і, калі так, ў якіх сферах?

Магчыма, вы маеце нейкі ўзор перад сабою, або прыклад з літаратуры, кіно, песні, якая найбольш дакладна магла б перадаць вашу чаканні і уяўленні пра ідэальную старасць.

Аб'ём адказу не мае аніякага значэння, мне важна атрымаць вашае меркаванне!

**Annex VI. The text of the invitation to participate
in the online survey published on the website
<http://ageingbelarus.org>**

Концепция “активного долголетия” (‘active ageing’) широко используется в дискурсе пенсионной реформы как социологами, так и политиками. Однако, отсутствие универсального/однозначного понимания того, что является «активным долголетием», может создавать предпосылки для недопонимания между различными субъектами в процессе реформирования/развития социальных политик.

Именно поэтому в рамках социологического исследования я прошу граждан и резидентов Беларуси высказаться на эту тему и представить свой вариант, свое понимание “активного долголетия”.

Напишите, пожалуйста:

- **Что такое старость? Когда человек переходит в категорию пожилых? старых?**
- **Какой вы представляете свою жизнь и себя в этот период?**
- **Чем вы будете заниматься? Чего бы вам хотелось, или чего вы точно не хотели бы для себя в пожилом возрасте?**
- **Будет ли этот период определяться активностью, и, если да, в каких сферах?**

Возможно, есть какой-нибудь образец перед собой, или пример из литературы, кино, песни, которая наиболее точно могла бы передать ваши ожидания и представления об идеальной старости.

Объем ответа не имеет никакого значения, важно лишь ваше мнение!


Пожалуйста, используйте хэштеги #When_I_m_64, #AgeingBelarus, а также не забывайте оставлять копии своего ответа не только у себя на странице, но и на сайте ageingbelarus.org.

Annex VII. Example of the participants' response of the online survey


"Старасць" і "актыўнае даўгалецце" Хатняя старонка Даследчыца Зв. сувязь На рус. яз.

Nina L. 3 дні таму 21:14

На мой погляд, узроставыя катэгорыі ў сучасным свеце даволі ўмоўныя, таму мне цяжка даць вызначэнне тым сталым гадам, і што я буду рабіць у свой позні час. На сённяшні, калі не браць пад увагу страхі, звязаныя з магчымай стратай здароўя і фінансавай нястачай, я адчуваю старасць як нешта пазітыўнае, як час поўнай свабоды. Свабода - першае, што прыходзіць у галаву ў сувязі з гэтым паняццем, таму для мяне непрымальнае ўжыванне катэгорыі "карыснасці" побач з ім. Я лічу, што кожны ўзрост мае сваю прыгажосць, свае радасці, і не грамадству вырашаць, што прыгожа і што радуе кожную канкрэтную асобу. Спадзяюся, я буду мець час, здароўе і фінансавыя магчымасці для чытання, паходаў у кіно і ў кавярню з сябрамі і сям'ёй, для паездак і для нейкіх малых прыемнасцяў. Канешне, хочацца быць з блізкімі людзьмі побач, рухавай, крышку зморшчанай, свой са зручным камплектам устаўных сквіцаў і з прыгожай стрыжкай (думаю, мне будзе пасаваць смарагдавы зялёны). Мне б хацелася запрашаць у госці ўнукаў і плячы пірагі з імлі, арганізоўваць вялікія сямейныя святы, рэгулярна наведваць сваякоў і запрашаць іх да сябе, а яшчэ мець шчасце сысць хутка і галоўнае - раней за дзяцей. У гэтым узросце мне хацелася б мінімізаваць кантакты з дзяржавай, а актыўнасці я падбіру сабе сама ў залежнасці ад сілаў, настрою і шмат якіх іншых умоў.



Адказаць


Nasta Jurkevits  Дзякуй! Nina L. 3 дні таму 21:16


Адказаць

Таня Товкач 5 дзён таму 19:22

Старость как таковую с связываю в основном с физическим состоянием человека, его здоровьем и изношенностью организма. Иногда человека в 70 лет язык не поворачивается назвать старым, а иногда - в 55 износ органов и организма составляет все 75%. В позднем возрасте я хочу видеть себя активной, физически здоровой, вести активный образ жизни и стараться не "выпадать" из

Annex VIII. Example of the participants' response of the online survey

"Старасць" і "актыўнае даўгаліццё" [Хатняя старонка](#) [Даследчыца](#) [За сувязь](#) [На рус. яз.](#) 

 **Рыгор Крушына** 7 дзён таму 22:10
Когда человек переходит в категорию пожилых/старых?
Калі яго душэўны і фізічны стан не дазваляе ў дастатковай меры якасна выконваць бялагічныя і сацыяльныя функцыі



Какой вы представляете свою жизнь в этот период?
Паколькі я не змагу якасна выконваць свае функцыі, т.б. прыносіць карысць грамадству і сваім блізкім, то хацеў бы дыстанцыявацца ад іх. Самае страшнае, гэта перашкаджаць маладому свежаму жыццю сваім старым трызненнем. Спадзяюся, што буду жыць за горадам, удалены ад мітусні. Задавальвацца простымі радасцямі жыцця. Больш часу прысвячаць сузіранню прыроды і сябе.


Каким/какой вы хотели бы видеть себя в этом возрасте?
Нехворым, самастойным, заможным, спакойным і мудрым.


Чем вы будете заниматься? Чего бы вам хотелось, или чего вы точно не хотели бы для себя в пожилом возрасте?
Дакладна не хацелася б займацца працай, грамадскай дзейнасцю, сямейнымі справамі. Не чытаць газеты. Прываблівае знайсці сабе творчае хобі мастацкага кшталту: музыка, выяўленчае мастацтва, літаратура. Спознаваць новае, запаўняць лакуны ў адукацыі, кругаглядзе, тым больш, што ў сталым веку ёсць рызыка све-тое запамятаваць. Хочацца распрыгоніцца і разняволіцца душой і целам. Дазваляць сабе ужываць і часам злоўжываць алкаголем і іншымі атрутамі.

Будет ли этот период определяться активностью, и, если да, в каких сферах?
Спадзяюся, што гэта будзе перыяд пасіўнасці, спакою і сузірання

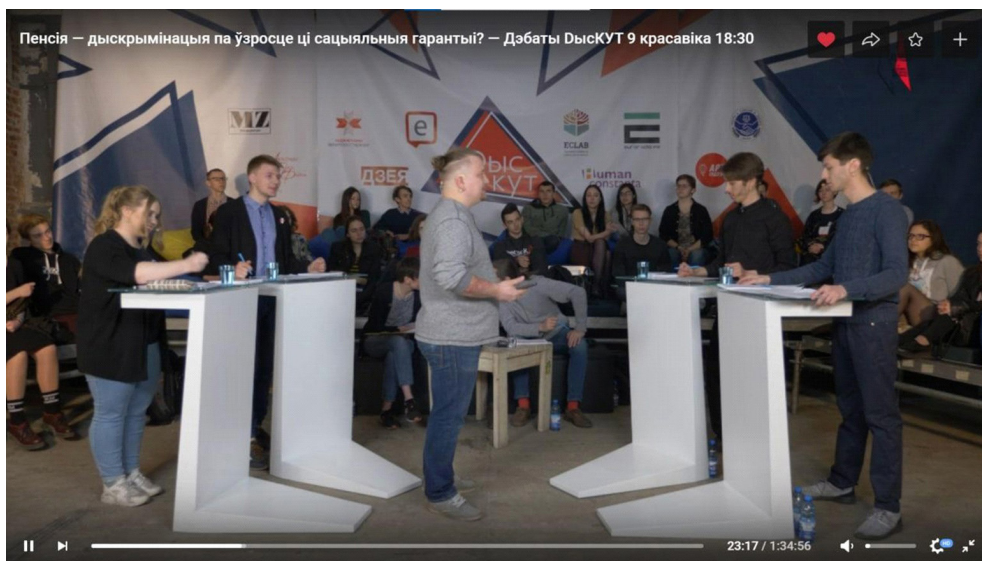
Адказаць

 **Ageing Belarus** [Адказаць](#)  Рыгор Крушына 7 дзён таму 08:23
Дзякую!
Адказаць

 **Elena Pozdnyakova** 10 дзён таму 17:47
Когда человек переходит в категорию пожилых/старых?
Когда общество вешает этот ярлык - пенсия, вам пора на покой, он уже не тот и т.п Когда физически не вывозишь сам - это старость.



Annex IX. Photos from the focus group discussion



Annex X. Thematic categories identified in the publications of the analysed media discourses

Intensity of coverage of certain topics in the analysed materials of the official media

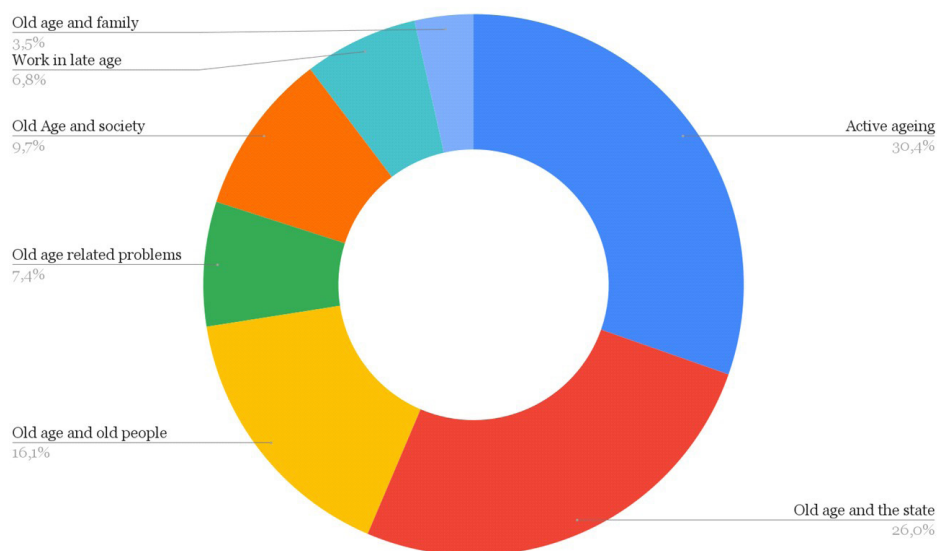
№	Thematic categories	Coded segments	Documents (Texts)
1.	Active ageing	390	147
2.	Old age and the state	236	126
3.	Old age and old people	117	78
4.	Old age related problems and risks	73	36
5.	Old Age and society	70	47
6.	Work in late age	80	33
7.	Old age and family	28	17

Annex XI. Thematic categories identified in the publications of the analysed media discourses

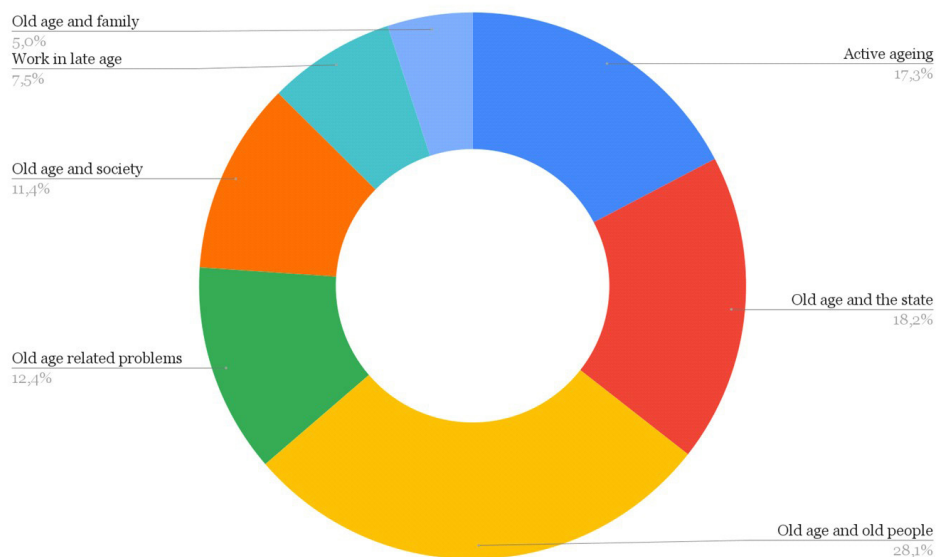
Intensity of coverage of certain topics in the analysed materials of independent media

№	Thematic categories	Coded segments	Documents (Texts)
1.	Active ageing	487	186
2.	Old age and the state	357	196
3.	Old age and old people	671	302
4.	Old age related problems and risks	275	133
5.	Old age and society	236	122
6.	Work in late age	219	81
7.	Old age and family	87	54

Annex XII. Thematic categories identified in the analysis of publications of the official media



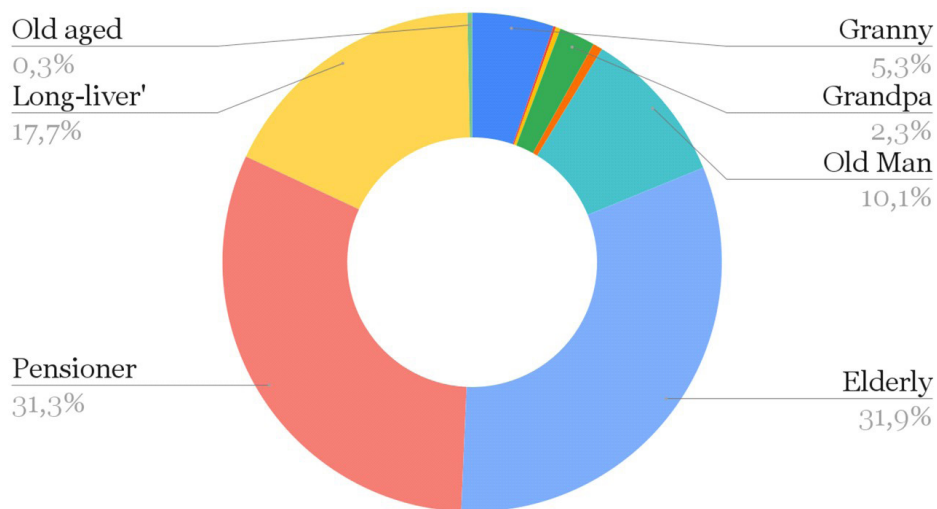
Annex XIII. Thematic categories identified in the analysis of publications of the independent media



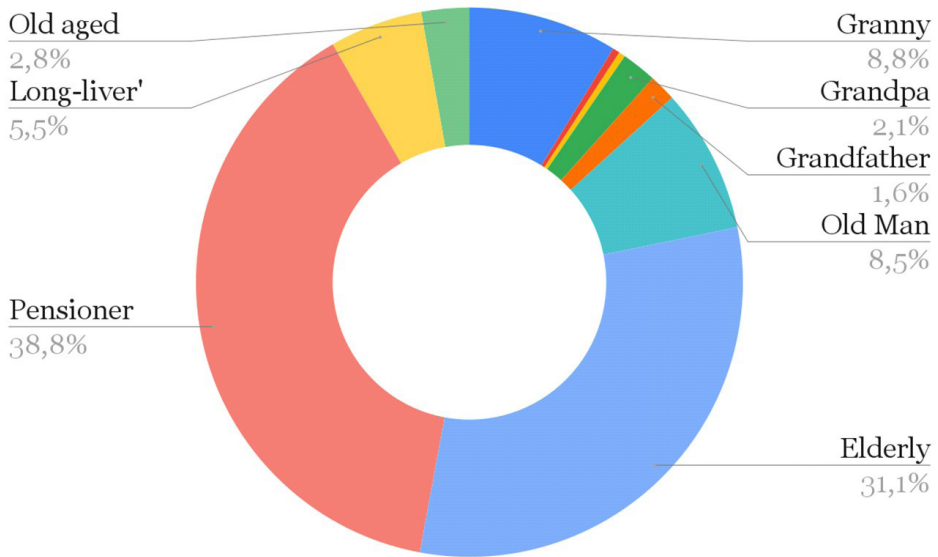
**Annex XIV. The frequency of using words
denoting old age people in the texts
of media discourses**

	Keyword	Official discourse (frequency)	Official discourse (percentage)	Alternative discourses (frequency)	Alternative discourses (percentage)
1.	Бабушк*	34	5.29	255	8.82
2.	Баба	1	0.16	12	0.41
3.	Старух*	2	0.31	11	0.38
4.	Дедушк*	15	2.33	60	2.07
5.	Дед*	4	0.62	46	1.59
6.	Старик*	65	10.11	246	8.51
7.	Пожил*	205	31.88	900	31.12
8.	Пенсионер*	201	31.26	1121	38.76
9.	Долгожитель*	114	17.73	159	5.50
10.	Престарел*	2	0.31	82	2.84
	Total:	643	100.00	2892	100.00

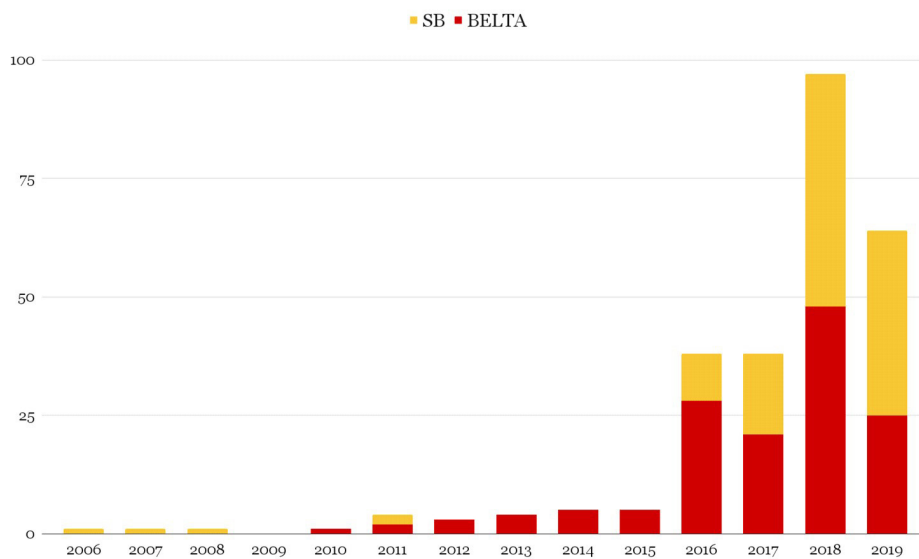
Annex XV. The frequency of occurrence of words denoting men and women of the older age group in the analysed publications of the official media



Annex XVI. The frequency of occurrence of words denoting men and women of the older age group in the analysed publications of the independent media



Annex XVII. Increase in the frequency of appearance of the concept of 'active ageing' in the official discourse



Annex XVIII. Theses broadcasted within the framework of the official media discourse and arguments in their defense

Arguments	Theses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age limits and norms have always been conditional • Old age is a partially controlled biological process, a disease. • Old age is an uncontrolled biological process, however, the state takes care of the infirm • Old age is a person’s inner self-awareness, subjective and individual. • The standard and quality of life in the modern world has improved significantly • The nature of work has changed • Activity (and work) is good for humans and slows down the ageing process • People want to stay active themselves • Passive seniors suffer • Passive seniors increase the burden of demographic and economic challenges • There are almost no barriers to activity • The main factor for the activity of the elderly is motivation • The state has created conditions for activity • The state stimulates the labour market to be flexible • The inability to continue to work discriminates against a person • Medicine removes all barriers to active ageing • Taking care of your relatives is a human responsibility • Family is the main value • Dependency and passivity negatively affect the entire society and human life • Demographic challenges are global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age limits and retirement ages need to be revised. • Older people should be encouraged to contribute to public well-being. • Man himself is responsible for his life and his old age. • The state is doing everything possible to provide for the elderly. • The family has a responsibility to take care of the elderly. • The elderly should not provide financial support to children. • The dominant stereotypes in society about old age and the elderly are erroneous and harmful both for a person and for the country’s economy. • A person can hide their age (look and feel younger)

Annex XIX. Theses broadcasted within the framework of the independent media discourse and arguments in their defense

Arguments	Theses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old age is a phenomenon partially controlled by humans • Old age is a disease that must be fought • Old age is a biological error and a removable obstacle to immortality • Old age is a natural biological process that must be learned to accept • Old age is a subjective feeling • Diseases are treatable, and therefore old age can be overcome • Medicine offers different ways to combat ageing • Mutations can be controlled by medicine • There are different views on old age • A person may not want to fight old age • Man has the right to fight old age • Medicine can overcome diseases, and with them the phobias of old age • Diseases are not obligatory companions of old age • People are not informed about how a person ages and why • Activity is not always helpful • Seniors may suffer from isolation and loneliness • The elderly are prone to depression • The elderly are vulnerable to social attitudes and stereotypes • The elderly are vulnerable as a social group • Old age scenarios can be different • In developed countries, older people live with dignified old age • In developed countries, older people lead an active lifestyle • In developed countries, seniors themselves choose boarding houses as an option for living • Old age can be a personal choice • Old age can be noble and elegant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person has a right to its own attitude towards old age • Old age shouldn't be a phobia • The most important thing is to prolong youth • Menopause is not a disease • It is necessary to inform about the processes associated with old age • It is necessary to overcome the social isolation of the elderly • Discrimination and stereotyping of the elderly must be countered • Seniors need to be activated and motivated • Age norms are conditional • It is necessary to think about old age already in youth • Care for a dignified old age for the elderly • A woman needs to take care of beauty in old age • A woman should be well-groomed • "You need to practice the figure at any age" • A woman should not be discriminated against because of her age • Age is not important, but the ability to relearn • You can grow old beautifully • See how you can live in old age • Find something you like and a social circle • An elderly person can find a life partner • See How You Can Hide Age • It is the duty of children to take care of their parents • Family should be a value for a person

Arguments	Theses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-groomed old age evokes positive emotions • Society favors elegant older women • Society discriminates against older women • Belarusian elderly women do not take care of themselves • Society pushes older people out and doesn't see them • Demographic trends are changing norms • Population ageing could be an impetus for economic development • Old age can be addiction and worthless • Older people are used to saving • The quality of life of the elderly is poor • Seniors burden society • The elderly do not burden society • A person's personality changes with age • Seniors are moody • Elderly Brides / Wives Have Benefits • Passive people age faster • Older people are like children • Moderate physical activity is beneficial • Intellectual activity is useful • Involvement in work prolongs youth and improves a person's well-being • Financial well-being has a beneficial effect on life expectancy • Household chores can be a hindrance to being active • A new reform of the pension system is possible • The change in the retirement age has affected the vulnerable • State support is insufficient • State support is sufficient • Pensioners are marginalized • Some retirees live below the poverty line • Nursing home - worst case scenario for old age living • Rural old age requires additional support • Sexual life in old age can be a problem • Sexual life in old age can be fun • Ageism is a social problem • Young people should be brought up to respect old age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers for elderly relatives should receive government support • Seniors must stop being passive recipients of care • Older people need additional financial support • Everyone should think about ensuring old age now • Pension reform is needed • Another increase in the retirement age is needed • Seniors should not help children financially

Arguments	Theses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family is a value • Family support is highly valued by the elderly • Elderly people support children • Caring for the elderly is hard work • Nursing work is not paid properly • The state saves on its citizens • The state does not pay attention to the needs of the elderly and their relatives • Belarusians are accustomed to counting on help from elderly parents • Helping adult children hurts • Older parents are used to helping older children • Some seniors want to continue working after retirement • Some seniors do not want to continue working after retirement • Seniors have problems with employment • Seniors have no problem with employment 	

Annex XX. List of publications analysed in the research

BELTA - The Belarusian Telegraph Agency

- 2017.04.04. Участие в жизни общества способствует здоровому долголетию пожилых людей - исследование
- 2017.04.17. Школы здоровья и междисциплинарная реабилитация - кто и как помогает делать нашу жизнь полноценной
- 2017.05.06. В Беларуси нужно улучшать условия для достойного старения - Щеткина
- 2017.05.16. Выставка-ярмарка в Витебске раскроет секреты здоровья и долголетия
- 2017.05.18. Около 70 площадок с уличными тренажерами планируют обустроить в Витебске до конца года
- 2017.06.13. В Беларуси пора приступать к созданию серебряной экономики
- 2017.06.21. Специалисты из Беларуси, Италии и Испании на Сардинии совместно изучат секреты долголетия
- 2017.07.18. В Японии умер проработавший до 105 лет врач
- 2017.08.12. Белорусы больше всего ценят здоровье и понимание в семье - Белстат
- 2017.09.21. Потенциал третьего возраста
- 2017.09.23. Ученые назвали легкий и эффективный способ продлить жизнь
- 2017.09.27. Проблемы старения и качества жизни старшего поколения обсудят на конференции в Минске
- 2017.10.23. Школа ухода за пожилыми и тяжелобольными людьми открылась в Минске
- 2017.10.27. Семья Петрушко из Гомельской области стала обладателем звания «Семья года - 2017»
- 2017.11.20. Ученые рассказали, почему полезно мыть посуду
- 2017.12.22. Минчанке вручили медаль Джослина за 50 лет жизни с диабетом
- 2017.12.31. Клуб активного долголетия появился в Витебске
- 2018.01.30. Активный здоровый образ жизни ведут 8% белорусов, приверженность ЗОЖ имеют почти 40%
- 2018.02.07. Центр активного долголетия откроется в Минске 12 февраля
- 2018.03.08. РЕПОРТАЖ: Возраст не помеха: минские пенсионерки активно занимаются йогой и индийскими танцами
- 2018.03.13. Минчанка в 85 лет побеждает в марафонах и собирается на шоу к Галкину

- 2018.03.30. Руководство Швейцарского Красного Креста посетит Беларусь 3-5 апреля
- 2018.04.05. Куда сходить в Минске в выходные: «Поиск пасхальных сокровищ», лекция в планетарии и утренняя медитация в музее
- 2018.04.07. Белорусский Красный Крест участвует в мировой кампании ВОЗ «Здоровье для всех»
- 2018.04.20. Минские пенсионеры станцуют зумбу и сыграют в женский футбол
- 2018.05.07. Первый белорусский форум университетов третьего возраста пройдет 25-27 мая в Минске
- 2018.05.07. Центр активного долголетия откроет в историческом здании Минска клуб для пожилых
- 2018.05.15. Беларусь и Сардиния проведут семинар по генетике долголетия
- 2018.05.25. НИИ труда займется разработкой национальной стратегии действий в интересах пожилых
- 2018.06.06. Научный потенциал Беларуси презентован на Сардинии
- 2018.06.27. Республика Корея подарила пять микроавтобусов соцучреждениям Беларуси
- 2018.09.07. Секретами долголетия поделятся с бобруйчанами гости с острова Сардиния
- 2018.09.19. Стратегию активного долголетия разработают в Беларуси
- 2018.09.20. Минчан приглашают стать участниками фотоконкурса об активном долголетии
- 2018.09.26. Акцию «С заботой о здоровье пожилых людей» проведут в Минске 1 октября
- 2018.09.27. Конференция по вопросам активного долголетия пройдет под Минском 1 октября
- 2018.09.28. Неделю пожилых людей в Минске откроет фотовыставка
- 2018.10.01.a. Каждый пятый житель Беларуси считается пожилым
- 2018.10.01.b. Количество бригад скорой помощи планируется увеличить в Беларуси
- 2018.10.01.c. Службу гериатрической помощи в Беларуси планируется расширять
- 2018.10.01.d. Спектр оказываемых на дому соцуслуг будет расширяться - Румак
- 2018.10.01.e. Стратегия активного долголетия важна для экономического развития Беларуси - Костевич
- 2018.10.01.f. Тема активного долголетия в Беларуси приобретает все большее значение

- 2018.10.02. Человек - в центре любой стратегии государства
- 2018.10.03. Личные приемы граждан позволяют чувствовать настроения людей
- 2018.10.16. Ученые Беларуси и Болгарии будут развивать сотрудничество в сфере биотехнологий для пищевой отрасли
- 2018.10.16. Ученые Беларуси и Сардинии проводят совместные исследования по генетике долголетия
- 2018.11.01. Волонтерство пожилых станет важным компонентом Национальной стратегии активного долголетия
- 2019.01.03.a. Белорусский музыкальный театр привезет в Могилев «Свадьбу в стиле ретро»
- 2019.01.03.b. Пять объектов соцслужбы откроются в Минске в 2019 году
- 2019.01.04. В Беларуси действуют 82 договора государственного социального заказа - Минтруда
- 2019.01.04.a. Минтруда прогнозирует темп роста реальной зарплаты в 2019 году на уровне 103,8%
- 2019.01.04.b. Около 770 пожилых людей объединились в домах зимовки и совместного проживания
- 2019.01.04.c. Отделение дневного пребывания пожилых граждан открылось в Заводском районе Минска
- 2019.01.04.d. Пенсии по возрасту в Беларуси в 2019 году согласно прогнозу вырастут на 10,8% - Минтруда
- 2019.01.05.a. Ассистенты для инвалидов и замещающие семьи: в Гомельской области развивают новые соцслужбы
- 2019.01.05.b. Извещатель спас пенсионерку и ее сына на пожаре в Молодечно
- 2019.01.05.c. Лукашенко поздравил соцработников с 100- летием системы органов по труду и социальной защите
- 2019.01.05.d. РЕПОРТАЖ: Как зимние дни становятся теплее от заботы о старшем поколении
- 2019.01.06. РЕПОРТАЖ: Как в гомельском центре соцобслуживания превращают работу в творчество
- 2019.01.08.a. В Беларуси разработали прибор с речевым сопровождением измерения уровня глюкозы в крови
- 2019.01.08.b. Лукашенко присудил премии «За духовное возрождение» и спецпремии деятелям культуры и искусства
- 2019.01.10. «Свята на Святкі» организовали для постояльцев больницы сестринского ухода Добрушского района
- 2019.01.10. Помощь волонтеров БРСМ востребована зимой у одиноких пожилых людей

- 2019.01.11.a. Более 72 тыс. пожилых жителей Гродненской области получают помощь от молодых волонтеров
- 2019.01.11.b. Лучших соцработников Минской области наградят в Молодечно
- 2019.01.11.c. РЕПОРТАЖ: Санаторий на дому, соцэкспресс и турслеты - поставские соцработники отдаются делу на все сто
- 2019.01.11.d. Участниками акции «Чудеса на Рождество» стали более 17 тыс. Детей
- 2019.01.11.e. Ученики Острошицко-Городокской школы подарили жителям дома-интерната «Рождественские фантазии» и козочек
- 2019.01.11.f. Число пожаров в Гродненской области за 15 лет сократилось более чем в 2 раза
- 2019.01.13. В Гродненской области во время акции «Наши дети» проведено свыше 6 тыс. мероприятий
- 2019.01.14. РЕПОРТАЖ: Щодра в хату - год богатый!
- 2019.01.17. Мобильный навигатор для людей с ограниченными возможностями разрабатывают в Минске
- 2019.01.24.a. Концепция в интересах пожилых людей должна быть разработана в Беларуси в этом году
- 2019.01.24.b. ООН высоко оценивает опыт Беларуси в достижении ЦУР
- 2019.01.24.c. В III квартале 2018 года только 5,6% белорусов считались малообеспеченными - Минтруда
- 2019.01.25.a. В Беларуси по проекту с ЕС систематизируют работу с волонтерами при реагировании на ЧС
- 2019.01.25.b. Картина дня: форум по ЦУР, ужесточение антитабачного законодательства и вопросы капремонта жилья
- 2019.01.31. Шесть ветеранов Витебска получили персональную медицинскую сигнализацию
- 2019.02.05.a. Apple Watch спасли потерявшего сознание пожилого норвежца
- 2019.02.05.b. Три города Гомельской области подключились к проекту БОКК по здоровому старению
- 2019.02.06. Кравцов: в Гродненской области поддерживают инициативы по развитию органического земледелия
- 2019.02.12. В Азербайджане изучили родственников долгожителей на predisположенность к долголетию
- 2019.02.13. В Беларуси проживают почти 24,4 тыс. бывших воинов-интернационалистов
- 2019.02.21. Государственную адресную социальную помощь в 2018 году получили 42 тыс. жителей Минской области

- 2019.02.25.a. Костевич: жилье является главным условием роста рождаемости для семей с детьми
- 2019.02.25.b. Порядок начисления зарплаты бюджетникам будет упрощен в ближайшее время – Костевич
- 2019.02.25.c. Проект стратегии активного долголетия будет внесен в Совмин в октябре
- 2019.03.01. «Прежде всего жилье» - Лукашенко пообещал беспрецедентные меры по поддержке семьи
- 2019.03.01. ЕЭК готовит рекомендации по защите детей, пожилых и инвалидов при онлайн-покупках
- 2019.03.06. Анатолий Лис поручил создать при ТЦСОНах области отделения круглосуточного пребывания для пожилых и инвалидов
- 2019.03.12. Более 40 объектов Гомельской области приведут в порядок после зимы волонтеры БРСМ
- 2019.03.14. РЕПОРТАЖ: Точно пава: в Бездеже воссоздали технику плетения уникального свадебного венка
- 2019.03.16. БСЖ объявил о старте акции «Женское лицо Победы»
- 2019.03.18. Важно интегрировать в европейскую культуру памяти историю о концлагерях в Беларуси - Астрид Зам
- 2019.03.20. Поступления в ФСЗН в 2018 году возросли на 17,4%
- 2019.03.22. Лукашенко обсудил с жителями Барановичей цены, зарплаты и пенсии
- 2019.03.27. Проекты по профилактике онкозаболеваний и болезней системы кровообращения запустили в Гомельской области
- 2019.03.28. Старейший британский полицейский догнал и задержал преступника на 45 лет моложе его
- 2019.04.01. Лукашенко обещает вернуться к вопросу дополнительной поддержки пенсионеров
- 2019.04.02. РЕПОРТАЖ: Штраф до 50 базовых - рейд по первоцветам провели в Минске
- 2019.04.03.a. ВОЗ: 70-80% потребностей населения в медуслугах может быть разрешено на первичном уровне
- 2019.04.03.b. Фотовыставка о II Европейских играх открылась в штаб-квартире ООН в Нью-Йорке
- 2019.04.04. ЮНФПА высоко оценивает усилия Беларуси по стимулированию рождаемости и поддержке семьи
- 2019.04.08. Предложения ФПБ о максимальном продлении контрактов добросовестным работникам учли в проекте ТК
- 2019.04.11.a. Память жертв нацистских концлагерей почтили в Витебске

- 2019.04.11.b. Правовые консультации для жителей Светлогорского района проводят представители Союза следователей
- 2019.04.12.a. Пенсионерам и инвалидам выделяют бесплатные торговые места на рынках Минска с началом сезона
- 2019.04.12.b. Юрий Куклачев отмечает 70-летие
- 2019.04.13. Танцплощадка открывается в минском парке Челюскинцев
- 2019.04.16. МХАТ поставил спектакль «Последний герой» по пьесе брестского драматурга
- 2019.04.19.a. Лукашенко: жители малых населенных пунктов должны иметь возможность быстро и качественно получать медпомощь
- 2019.04.19.b. Послание Президента к народу и парламенту – мнения
- 2019.04.20.a. Костевич: достойная жизнь для каждого - главный ориентир социальной политики
- 2019.04.20.b. Костевич: строительство храма - достойный вклад в общереспубликанский субботник
- 2019.04.22. Центр активного долголетия Минска планирует стартап по трудоустройству пенсионеров
- 2019.04.30. Фестиваль экскурсий по значимым местам региона проведут к 75-летию Гродненской области
- 2019.05.01. Пожилые гродненцы открыли сезон танцев на свежем воздухе
- 2019.05.02.a. В Беларуси на 1 апреля проживают 6250 ветеранов Великой Отечественной войны
- 2019.05.02.b. Ветеранам войны в Минске выдадут GPS-кулоны с круглосуточным сопровождением операторов колл-центра
- 2019.05.02.c. Лукашенко нацелил профсоюзы более активно вести контроль за ценообразованием
- 2019.05.02.d. Эксперты из 14 стран обсудят проблемы медицины и охраны труда на форуме в Полоцке и Новополоцке
- 2019.05.09. РЕПОРТАЖ: История Победы на азбуке Морзе: война глазами 18-летней радистки
- 2019.05.13.a. БОКК проведет в Витебске мастер-классы по скандинавской ходьбе
- 2019.05.13.b. Основой геронтологической службы в Беларуси станут врачи общей практики – Минздрав
- 2019.05.19. РЕПОРТАЖ: Как в агрогородке Жиличи делают жизнь комфортной и привлекательной
- 2019.05.20. Турчин: почта играет большую роль в создании комфорта на селе

- 2019.05.21. Малашко: белорусское здравоохранение нацелено на доступность и высокое качество медпомощи
- 2019.05.22. В ЕАЭС примут особые меры защиты потребительских прав инвалидов, детей и пожилых людей
- 2019.05.29. Беларусь считает важным обеспечить защиту женщин старшего возраста в условиях цифровизации – МИД
- 2019.06.02. ФОТОРЕПОРТАЖ: Экстремальный забег с препятствиями Alfa Run VIRUS прошел под Вильнюсом
- 2019.06.05. В домах-интернатах Гомельской области трудотерапией занимаются более 1,2 тыс. пожилых и инвалидов
- 2019.06.06. В Витебской области проживают 212 человек старше 100 лет
- 2019.06.12. Беларусь и Эстония урегулируют вопросы пенсионного обеспечения
- 2019.06.12. Все меньше минчан страдают хроническими недугами - Малышко
- 2019.06.14.a. Минздрав рассказал о развитии офтальмологической помощи в Минске и поддержке доноров
- 2019.06.14.b. При подборе кадров прежде всего ценятся знания и опыт, а не возраст - эксперт
- 2019.06.24. Первая в Брестской области социальная дача для пожилых открылась в Ляховичском районе
- 2019.06.26. В Минске проживают 1732 ветерана Великой Отечественной войны
- 2019.07.09. Пожилые волонтеры в Гомельской области подключаются к патрунажу одиноких пенсионеров на дому
- 2019.07.11. В Минске стали чаще воровать электросамокаты
- 2019.07.29. В Беларуси на 1 июля проживают чуть менее 6 тыс. ветеранов ВОВ
- 2019.08.01. Этнологи БГУ обнаружили в Гродненской области 300-летнее Евангелие

SB. Belarus Segodnya Publishing House

- 2017.01.03. Старость дома не застанет — уверены наиболее взрослые жители агрогоро Оршанского района
- 2017.01.09. «Перестройка Горбачева была непродуманной»
- 2017.01.27. Жизнь — полоса желтая, полоса черная
- 2017.01.31. Без рецепта. “Каких правил должен придерживаться человек, чтобы замедлить приход старости?”

- 2017.02.09. На светлой стороне демографии
- 2017.02.17. Каж жизнь (и смерть) берет свое начало из неупорядоченности
- 2017.02.24. Ученые совершили прорыв в борьбе со старением
- 2017.03.03. Уволена по старости. Сорок семь лет назад
- 2017.04.28. Карлсон не прилетит.
- 2017.05.05. Virtuoz сердечных дел
- 2017.05.30. 106-летняя британка рассказала свой секрет долголетия
- 2017.06.08.a. Сто лет в движении
- 2017.06.08.b. В Брестском институте для пенсионеров прошел выпускной вечер
- 2017.06.26. Старики умнеют от секса
- 2017.07.04. Предполагалось, что предел человеческой жизни - Оказывается, гораздо больше
- 2017.07.19. Социальный заказ
- 2017.08.04. Не стать Дон Жуаном
- 2017.09.27. На все сто. У долгожителей свои секреты
- 2017.10.02. В Беларуси хотят расширить службу гериатрической
- 2017.10.03. Ученые раскрыли влияние секса на старение
- 2017.10.17. Ученые выяснили, от чего зависит сексуальное удовлетворение
- 2017.10.26. В ритме жизни
- 2017.10.27. Ген сельского долголетия. Белорусские ученые выяснили, в каком регионе больше всего долгожителей
- 2017.10.28. Старость в радость. Нужно ли гнаться за вечной молодостью?
- 2017.10.29. В Беларуси будет разработана Стратегия активного долголетия
- 2017.11.01. Терапевтический парк для пожилых минчан создадут в Партизанском районе
- 2017.11.15. Боритесь за разумную старость. Болезнь Альцгеймера можно отсрочить
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- 2017.12.13. Без рецепта. Как пожилым людям справиться с простудой и гриппом
- 2017.12.19. Рынок требует новых кадров
- 2017.12.21. Не к старости идем, а золотой жатвы ждем
- 2018.01.12. Старение населения: плюс на минус
- 2018.02.10. Сто лет под микроскопом. В чем секрет долголетия: наши ученые обследуют 400 долгожителей страны, ответ на этот вопрос
- 2018.03.07. «Тогда все рвались в прессу, я – не исключение»

- 2018.03.16. Матрица наступает. Почему эйджизм завоёвывает мир, но обречен на гибель
- 2018.04.06. Ученые раскрыли 6 способов избежать слабоумия в старости
- 2018.04.14. Главный внештатный гериатр Минздрава Людмила «Старость может наступить и в 40 лет, если вы разуч смотреть на мир позитивно»
- 2018.05.03. Хотите похудеть? Тогда ешьте, а не голодайте!
- 2018.05.26. Какие наши годы? В России предлагают считать детьми до 25–30 лет
- 2018.06.02.a. Как жить долго и счастливо
- 2018.06.02.b. Трудный отдых от труда
- 2018.06.18. 100 лет любви и доброты
- 2018.06.26. В чем секрет долголетия
- 2018.06.27. Ученые обнаружили продлевающее жизнь вещество
- 2018.06.28. Фронтальная закалка Николая Сидского
- 2018.07.06. Деньги любят счет. Пенсия размером в среднюю зарплату: как обеспечить себе безбедную старость
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- 2018.09.19. Для кого министр труда и соцзащиты Ирина Костевич привезла скворечник?
- 2018.09.20. Плюсы третьего возраста
- 2018.09.22. Пять событий недели глазами художественного рук Гомельского областного драматического театра Сер Лагутенко
- 2018.10.01. Каждый пятый житель Беларуси считается пожилым
- 2018.10.03.a. Счастье? В гормонах!
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- 2018.10.17. Скажи-ка, ген
- 2018.10.22. Как сегодня разрабатывается национальная стратегия интересах пожилых граждан
- 2018.10.26. Пицца Макропулоса
- 2018.10.30. Встреча Лукашенко с активом БРСМ и Программа деятельности Правительства.
- 2018.10.30. Ученые назвали самый полезный витамин для сердца и сосудов

- 2018.11.03. “Мир перевернула бы!”
- 2018.11.06. Такие наши годы.
- 2018.11.16. Мужское долголетие - миф или реальность?
- 2018.11.16. Поиск талантов
- 2018.11.26. Возраст значения не имеет
- 2018.11.27. Меньше есть, меньше врать. В чем секрет долгой и счастливой жизни?
- 2018.11.28. Перспективы «третьего возраста». В январе 2019 года социальная служба отметит 100-летний юбилей
- 2018.11.28. Не доживать
- 2018.11.29. Просто иное состояние души. День пожилых людей: как соцработники помогают одиноким пенсионерам
- 2018.11.29. Седые легенды
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- 2019.01.05. Социальная служба отмечает 100-летие
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- 2019.01.12. Почему пожилые люди чаще всего становятся жертвами мошенников
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- 2019.01.24. Рост и вес влияют на продолжительность жизни женщины
- 2019.01.29. Прожившие вместе 70 лет супруги умерли в один день
- 2019.01.31. В Витебске пожилые люди смогут воспользоваться персональной медсигнализацией
- 2019.02.06. Музыка вылечила Михаила Турецкого от неизбывной тоски по ушедшей жене
- 2019.02.07. И пандус вдруг прогнется под нас
- 2019.02.12. Как бороться с феноменом сверхсмертности мужчин. Берегите мужчин
- 2019.02.21. Экстремальное закалывание объединило людей разных возрастов в Гомельском районе
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- 2019.03.15. Сто лет не предел: к каким выводам пришли ученые исследовав генетику 170 долгожителей
- 2019.03.17. В Лошицком парке прошел 12 международный легкоатлетический пробег, посвященный 101-ой годовщине дня образования внутренних войск МВД
- 2019.03.19. Как жирная еда в пожилом возрасте влияет на сердце
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- 2019.03.23. Расписание движения автобусов изменят в пользу ж агрогородка Коммунар после «Большого разговора Президентом»
- 2019.03.26. Не скорая помощь, но все же: КГК помог пожилым п получить медицинскую помощь
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- 2019.03.28. Незадача с дачами
- 2019.04.03. Быстро и доступно — из агрогородка Коммунар Буда Кошелевского района сегодня отправился первый р Гомель после «Большого разговора с Президентом»
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- 2019.04.04.c. В Беларуси пенсии получают более 2,5 млн человек
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- 2018.02.11. «Мало стран с таким уровнем поддержки». Костевич — о пособиях, страховом стаже и пенсионном возрасте
- 2018.02.19. «Опускать руки и ныть — не хочу». Женщины старше 50 — о возрасте, моде и красоте
- 2018.02.28. «Сначала это было шоком». Как пенсионер случайно прославился в интернете
- 2018.03.02. «С компьютером на «ты» с 1988 года». Как тренер фристайлистов-чемпионов Козеко не признает возраст
- 2018.03.12. «Может, вам, бабушка, кофе принести?» 71-летний студент окончил Институт журналистики БГУ
- 2018.03.29. В Беларуси каждый четвертый пенсионер продолжает работать на отдыхе, но их число сокращается
- 2018.03.29. Монолог пенсионерки, которая заработала на хорошую жизнь. Но так ее и не получила
- 2018.04.11. «Не надо отправлять нас на лавочку или в огород». Как минчанка помогает нашим пенсионерам увидеть мир
- 2018.04.14. «Не из-за денег работаю». 89-летний фельдшер более полувека трудится в одном ФАПе
- 2018.04.20. В Минске растет число работающих пенсионеров
- 2018.04.25. Пенсионеров в Минске зовут на бесплатные занятия зумбой и фитнесом. И научат ездить на велосипеде
- 2018.04.28. «Я была в Венесуэле, Испании, Греции». Минские пенсионеры — о старости, которой позавидуют молодые
- 2018.05.07. «Растерялась и отдала деньги». Пенсионерке установили ненужный ей фильтр для воды за 340 рублей
- 2018.05.07. Средняя пенсия — 550 рублей. Какие доплаты и льготы могут получить ветераны ВОВ
- 2018.05.10. «Как на эти деньги можно прожить?» Число белорусов, которые получают соцпенсию, превысило 70 тысяч
- 2018.05.11. Сколько белорусов попало в «пенсионную ловушку»
- 2018.05.22. В Минске сокращается число работающих пенсионеров. Сколько человек трудится на заслуженном отдыхе
- 2018.06.05.a. «Молодежь воспринимает нас как некий прикол». Как в Гродно пенсионеры отплясывают на танцплощадке

- 2018.06.05.b. Боятся не дожить до пенсии. Большинство россиян выступали против повышения пенсионного возраста
- 2018.06.08.a. В Беларуси могут снова поднять пенсионный возраст. Во сколько выходят на отдых в странах-соседах
- 2018.06.08.b. Когда столетие — позади. Что помогает белорусским пенсионерам жить дольше века
- 2018.06.08.c. СМИ: Власти допускают новое повышение пенсионного возраста в Беларуси и урезание больничных
- 2018.06.11. «Поднимать нужно, женщины помолодели». Экс-чиновник, депутат и политик — о пенсионном возрасте
- 2018.06.13. Самый жесткий из всех вариантов. В России правительство определилось с повышением пенсионного возраста
- 2018.06.15.a. «Живут на 10 лет дольше мужчин». Почему в Беларуси задумались поднять пенсионный возраст для женщин
- 2018.06.15.b. В России профсоюзы раскритиковали планы поднять пенсионный возраст и запустили петицию против реформы
- 2018.06.15.c. Сергей Шнуров опубликовал стихотворение про повышение пенсионного возраста в России
- 2018.06.18. Эксперты оценили шансы россиян дожить до пенсии в будущем». Почему не стоит надеяться на пенсию от государства
- 2018.06.19. Петиция против повышения пенсионного возраста в России набрала два миллиона подписей
- 2018.06.20. «Молодежи нужно рабочие места уступать». Что думают минчане о повышении пенсионного возраста
- 2018.06.21.a. В Минтруда рассказали, будут ли еще повышать пенсионный возраст для женщин
- 2018.06.21.b. В прошлом году на тысячу работающих приходилось около 600 пенсионеров
- 2018.06.27. Министр труда о повышении пенсионного возраста: «Для мужчины 60 лет — это не возраст»
- 2018.06.29. «Надо рассчитывать на себя, а не на пенсию».Власти и эксперты оценили эффект от нового повышения пенсионного возраста
- 2018.06.30. «Фигурой надо заниматься в любом возрасте».Как пенсионерки меняют грядки на латиноамериканские ритмы
- 2018.07.03. В России подсчитали срок жизни на пенсии после повышения пенсионного возраста
- 2018.07.04. «Мы экспортируем пенсии». Сколько денег тратит Беларусь на пенсии уехавшим из страны и иностранцам

- 2018.07.10. Женщина продолжила работать на пенсии. Теперь ей нужно выплатить государству больше 1700 рублей
- 2018.07.19. Госдума одобрила повышение пенсионного возраста для россиян
- 2018.07.24. «Как быстро это все пролетело». Трое витеблян встретились у старого дома и отметили 70-летие дружбы
- 2018.07.25. В Беларуси поднимают минимальные трудовые и социальные пенсии. На сколько вырастут выплаты
- 2018.07.27. Где в Беларуси получают самые большие пенсии, а где — самые низкие
- 2018.07.30. Эксперт: Нужно снизить взносы в ФСЗН, чтобы иметь возможность повышать пенсии
- 2018.08.03.a. «В кабине бывает и плюс 50». История эстонца, который путешествует по миру на старом УАЗе
- 2018.08.03.b. Неважно, какая у тебя зарплата — пенсии у всех будут почти одинаковыми. Объясняем, что можно сделать
- 2018.08.04. Истощенного грибника нашли в Витебской области: он провел в лесу почти неделю
- 2018.08.06.a. В ФРГ пенсионеры сбежали из дома престарелых на рок-фестиваль
- 2018.08.06.b. На сколько выросли пенсии белорусов после августовского повышения
- 2018.08.13. Кому в Минске выплачивают пенсии больше 1100 рублей, а кому — в 10 раз меньше
- 2018.08.15. Председатель Госдумы пригрозил отменой пенсий в России. Он это всерьез?
- 2018.08.16. «Если умрешь, то деньги получают родственники». Когда и как уходят на пенсию в разных странах
- 2018.08.19. Как повышали пенсионный возраст в странах бывшего СССР. И сколько получают пенсионеры
- 2018.08.22. Пенсии вчера и сегодня: солдаты Цезаря, няня Черчилля и счастливые швейцарцы
- 2018.08.25. Минфин предлагает сделать пенсионное накопительное страхование добровольно-принудительным и урезать льготы
- 2018.08.27. Белорусов могут обязать самостоятельно откладывать на пенсию. Эксперты — про плюсы и минусы этой идеи
- 2018.08.28.a. «Трудно представить, что на эти деньги можно прожить». Соцработник — о зарплате и нагрузках

- 2018.08.28.b. Правительство России решило не повышать пенсионный возраст для силовиков
- 2018.08.29.a. «В одиночку я его вырубил». Как 73-летний «Шварценеггер» задержал и связал вора
- 2018.08.29.b. В России изменят пенсионную систему. В чем схожесть и отличия с реформой в Беларуси
- 2018.08.29.c. Путин предложил свой план пенсионной реформы. Кто выиграет и кто проиграет?
- 2018.08.29.d. Путин рассказал, во сколько лет россияне все-таки будут выходить на пенсию
- 2018.08.30. Белорусы, которые копят на пенсию: «Государство не обеспечит меня в старости»
- 2018.08.30. Средняя пенсия в Германии превышает 1300 евро. Немцам обещают сохранить такие выплаты до 2025 года
- 2018.09.02. Во сколько лет выходят на пенсию и какие суммы получают на заслуженном отдыхе в разных странах мира
- 2018.09.05. На пенсию после 70. Стареющая Япония хочет повысить пенсионный возраст
- 2018.09.12. Десять трудоспособных белорусов содержат семь нетрудоспособных. Как снизить демографическую нагрузку
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- 2018.09.14. Турчин — о росте тарифов на ЖКУ, повышении пенсионного возраста и пенсий белорусов
- 2018.09.16. Банк России подсчитал плюсы повышения пенсионного возраста
- 2018.09.18. В Беларуси хотят пересмотреть взносы в ФСЗН. Как различаются отчисления в нашей и других странах
- 2018.09.21. Цель — 100. Как 82-летний атлет из Речицы убегает от болезней и старости
- 2018.09.28. «Мы продвинутые». Минчанки ездят на трехколесных великах и наслаждаются жизнью после 65
- 2018.10.01. Чем живут пожилые белорусы: каждый третий пользуется интернетом, 70% — горожане
- 2018.10.03. Путин утвердил пенсионную реформу
- 2018.10.06. Белорусам хотят рекордно повысить пенсии. Как сейчас отличаются выплаты у нас и в других странах
- 2018.10.12. Минтруда — про пенсионный возраст для женщин, пособия на детей и страховую ловушку

- 2018.10.18. «Вот это дед». 81-летний минчанин занимается воркаутом и удивляет молодых
- 2018.10.20. Как выглядят дома для пожилых в Германии и почему пенсия в 850 евро — это немного
- 2018.10.22. В Борисовском районе пропавшую из больницы пенсионерку нашли с помощью тепловизора в поле
- 2018.10.24. «Мясо я позволить себе не могу». Пожилые люди про повышение пенсии и свою жизнь
- 2018.10.25. Больше всего долгожителей Беларуси живет на Витебщине
- 2018.10.29. Пенсионер из США решил переехать в Гродно: «Здесь можно хорошо жить на пенсию в две тысячи долларов»
- 2018.11.02. Почему у госслужащих пенсии выше средних и сколько белорусов попали в пенсионную ловушку
- 2018.11.07. Почему молодежи не стоит надеяться на пенсию от государства и надо как можно раньше начинать копить на старость
- 2018.11.08. Голландский пенсионер требует через суд официальной смены возраста. Так больше шансов в «Тиндере»
- 2018.11.09. В Минтруда рассказали, на сколько выросли пенсии белорусов после рекордного повышения
- 2018.11.11. В Минске сократилось число пенсионеров, которые продолжают работать на заслуженном отдыхе
- 2018.11.12. Выбирают отдых. В Беларуси второй год сокращается число работающих пенсионеров
- 2018.11.13. Сколько белорусских пенсионеров живет в Германии, США и Испании, а пенсии получают на родине
- 2018.11.20. «Чтобы не отбросить коньки». Как 89-летний гомельчанин выходит на лед — и побеждает старость
- 2018.11.22. Власти Японии хотят повысить пенсионный возраст до 70 лет
- 2018.11.24. Больше 220 тысяч белорусов получают минимальную пенсию по возрасту. Почему у них низкие выплаты?
- 2018.11.26. «Толичек — наше спасение». Как в глухие деревушки с одинокими стариками ездит частная автолавка
- 2019.01.01.a. «Кислотный сезон». 10 бюджетных пилингов для домашнего использования
- 2019.01.01.b. «Это будет год тяжелого труда, побед и поражений». Президент поздравил белорусов с 2019 годом
- 2019.01.02.a. «Выделять время на отдых и не винить себя за это». Психиатр — о том, как спастись от душевных болезней

- 2019.01.02.b. Фильм, от которого вам станет плохо. И еще 7 премьер января в минских кинотеатрах
- 2019.01.04.a. Взносы в ФСЗН снижать не будут, а пенсионное накопительное страхование пока останется добровольным
- 2019.01.04.b. Всех литовцев до 40 лет автоматически включили в систему пенсионного накопления. Зато им урезали налоги
- 2019.01.06. В психушке имелаась самодеятельность, включая «хор невменяемых убийц». Рассказываем о Киме Хадееве
- 2019.01.10. За одну ночь — минус полдеревни. Как в Западной Беларуси избавлялись от «враждебных элементов»
- 2019.01.11. Сходите на «Хрусталь» за 4 рубля или бесплатно возьмите себе котика. Как провести уикенд в Минске
- 2019.01.15. Восемь главных ошибок, которые допускают окунающиеся на Крещение
- 2019.01.16. 6 тиражируемых мифов о косметике. Откройте глаза, прежде чем сделать покупку, которая навредит
- 2019.01.17.a. «Мою жизнь изменила девушка». Белорусы рассказывают, чем гордятся
- 2019.01.17.b. Бродячие артисты. Как «клуб на колесах»веселит одиноких стариков там, где нет никаких развлечений
- 2019.01.17.c. 40 лет революции в Иране. Как радикальный ислам бросил вызов биполярному миру
- 2019.01.20. «Переживаю, что муж уйдет к молоденькой». Как женщине побороть страх старости, отвечает психолог
- 2019.01.23. «Не хочу жениться, трястись над каждой копеечкой и плодить нищету». Крик души холостяка из райцентра
- 2019.01.25. Отпуск на личную жизнь: как в Китае пытаются выдать замуж 30-летних
- 2019.01.31. Старики-рецидивисты. Почему японские пенсионеры стремятся за решетку
- 2019.02.01. Почему нет оргазма? Точки над G расставляет гинеколог-эндокринолог
- 2019.02.02. «Попицкот», но не у всех, не пьют и даже почти не курят. Как живет «деревня будущего» под Витебском
- 2019.02.04. Бесплатное ЭКО, Н&М в Беларуси, «плюшки»армии, матери-одиночки и смерть Децла — все за выходные
- 2019.02.04. Безопасно ли есть рис и макароны,приготовленные несколько дней назад
- 2019.02.05.a. 20 самых здоровых продуктов, польза которых доказана наукой

- 2019.02.05.b. Ученые выяснили, в чем разница между мозгом женщин и мужчин
- 2019.02.07.a. «Россияне искренне удивляются нашим ровным дорогам». Белорусы — о том, чем гордятся
- 2019.02.07.b. Старость занимает третью строчку в списке причин смерти в Минской области
- 2019.02.07.c. Японская бабушка села на скутер и устроила пробку. Посмотрите, как она наслаждается жизнью
- 2019.02.10. Ученый, живший в семье волков: «Человек всегда перекладывает на кого-то свои гадостные качества»
- 2019.02.12. Виктор Прокопеня: «Все просто: будете молчать — будете страдать». Про СИЗО, страх и деньги
- 2019.02.13. Покажите эту статью своему любимому, если хотите идеальный подарок к 14 февраля
- 2019.02.16. Каждому из вас — по фильму. На этой неделе прокат в Минске особенно разнообразен. Проверьте сами
- 2019.02.17. «После удара машины собака не видела и не могла ходить». Истории спасения животных, от которых все отказались
- 2019.02.18.a. 10 косметических суперсредств для возрастной кожи, которые пригодятся вам этой весной
- 2019.02.18.b. Хотели бы такую маму? Как 38-летняя минчанка приняла себя и советует это сделать другим
- 2019.02.19.a. Лукашенко обсудил демографию: Ни одна страна в мире не поддерживает так семьи с детьми, как мы
- 2019.02.19.b. Самой пожилой минчанке — 106 лет
- 2019.02.20.a. «Ломаем стереотип, что это плохо и стыдно». Под Речицей открывается частный пансионат для пожилых
- 2019.02.20.b. Американцы борются со старением, переливая себе кровь молодых. Это работает?
- 2019.02.22. «Серьезный вызов — старение кадров». В какой сфере работает больше всего пенсионеров
- 2019.02.27. «Земля накормит каждого». Нашли семью, которая живет на 100 рублей в месяц — и всем довольна
- 2019.02.28. «Я „московский піп“, а в Москве ни разу не был». Как живет Украина с томосом и что будет с лаврой
- 2019.02.28.a. В Минске открыли необычную остановку, с которой никуда нельзя уехать
- 2019.02.28.b. Модная российская певица выпустила клип о домашнем насилии

- 2019.02.28.c. Что несет 2019 год в оценке соответствия продукции в странах ЕАЭС
- 2019.03.06. История уцелевшего. На месте «деревни» посреди Витебска остался один дом, вокруг — «элитная» стройка
- 2019.03.01. Эстония побила рекорд на выборах через интернет
- 2019.03.04.a. О президенте, личном вертолете, трагедии в Столбцах и смертной казни. Интервью с протоиереем Федором Повным
- 2019.03.04.b. Что подарить на 8 Марта? Выбираем нужные подарки
- 2019.03.06.a. 90-летняя женщина живет с сыновьями в сгоревшей квартире. А что говорят соседи и местная власть?
- 2019.03.06.b. Это есть в косметике или нет? Пройдите сложный тест
- 2019.03.07.a. «Возраст меня не пугает». Женщины 50+ в яркой фотосессии представили наряды белорусских дизайнеров
- 2019.03.07.b. «Охраняют, каб нас нэ укралы». Как живут люди на самом краю Беларуси за пограничной сеткой
- 2019.03.08.a. Пять сомнительных достижений, которых требуют от нас родители (но на самом деле это не круто)
- 2019.03.08.b. Фотограф о женской красоте: «Хочется, чтобы женщины качали не попу, а мышцу любви к себе самой»
- 2019.03.09. В Испании много полупустых деревень. В них живут одинокие мужчины. «Караваны любви» несут им надежду
- 2019.03.11. «Жизнь у меня какая-то безалаберная». О чем писали женские журналы 50 лет назад и сейчас
- 2019.03.12.a. Вернулись — и живут. Как на Витебщине местные сами делают из старой деревни место, где им хорошо
- 2019.03.12.b. Выяснен возраст, когда белорусы чувствуют себя на 65 лет
- 2019.03.13. «Я ушла от мужа. А мужчина, ради которого я это сделала, остался с женой». Психолог отвечает читательнице
- 2019.03.18. «Может понадобится двойная или тройная подстраховка». Криушенко — о том, как белорусам попасть на Евро
- 2019.03.18. «Это особенные люди». Ученые о том, в чем секрет долголетия белорусов, где они живут и что едят
- 2019.03.21. «Мама укладывала нас на трупы». Как немцы делали живой щит из белорусов
- 2019.03.22.a. «Уже залазят в карманы». Лукашенко рассказал о ценах, пенсиях и зарплатах
- 2019.03.22.b. 71-летний американец стоял в планке так долго, что побил мировой рекорд
- 2019.03.22.c. Ученый объяснил, почему с возрастом время «летит» быстрее

- 2019.03.23. «Если твой ребенок так орет, то, может, ты посидишь дома?» Мнение о том, почему «я же мать» стало оскорблением
- 2019.03.25.a. «Женщина с маленькой грудью смотрится изящно до старости» и другие мысли звезд Instagram
- 2019.03.25.b. «Не Шерстнев виноват». Что про выговор губернатору думают его земляки, которым тоже не платят
- 2019.03.25.c. Неплательщиков страховых взносов предлагают привлекать к уголовной ответственности
- 2019.03.26. «Верю во все хорошее». Как живет столетняя минчанка, которую не поздравил город
- 2019.03.27.a. «Это же Валя Катастрофа!»: кассовый хит и шутки Воланда в зрительном зале. За кулисами Театра кукол
- 2019.03.27.b. Бегом от инфаркта: как стать здоровее без лекарств
- 2019.03.28. Витамин С в ампулах и белорусские патчи. 15 косметических новинок марта
- 2019.04.01. Подсолнечное или оливковое? Эксперт объясняет, какое масло полезнее
- 2019.04.02.a. «Если бы президент знал, помог бы, да?» В Щучинском районе 135 строителей боятся остаться без работы
- 2019.04.02.b. «Не я сбил, другая машина». Через три года 72-летнего пенсионера осудили за смертельное ДТП
- 2019.04.02.c. На планете живет 7,7 млрд человек. Сколько нас будет через 30 лет?
- 2019.04.03. «Мы все умрем» и не устроимся на работу после 45. Что такое эйджизм и как с ним бороться
- 2019.04.03. Bloomberg: миллиардеры сталкиваются с проблемами из-за долгой жизни
- 2019.04.05.a. Жизнь на 200 рублей в месяц. В Беларуси выросло число тех, кто получает социальные пенсии
- 2019.04.05.b. Оттепель не закончится. Памяти Георгия Данелии
- 2019.04.06.a. «Если закроются заводы — накроются города». Репортаж из Новополоцка, где горит и коптит большая труба
- 2019.04.06.b. 5 книг, которые изменят ваше представление о сексе и собственном теле
- 2019.04.08. «Почему нас так раздражают и бесят наши собственные родители, наша плоть и кровь?» Мужской взгляд
- 2019.04.09.a. «Ментальность такая: кажется, что секса у 70-летних нет». Геронтологи — о том, как отодвинуть старость

- 2019.04.09.b. В Беларуси хотят повысить пенсии на 14%. Как отличаются выплаты у нас и в других странах
- 2019.04.09.c. Ученые разобрались, продлевает ли жизнь прием витаминов
- 2019.04.10.a. «Было ощущение, что я стою на краю могилы». Как жить, если у твоего близкого — деменция? Личный опыт
- 2019.04.10.b. Врач объясняет, можно ли женщине сохранить грудь упругой
- 2019.04.10.c. Пора успокоиться. 10 классных средств, которые подойдут для самой чувствительной и требовательной кожи
- 2019.04.10.d. Ученые выяснили, что может повернуть вспять старение мозга
- 2019.04.11. Для жизни, а не дожития. Как инвестировать в пенсию?
- 2019.04.12. Виноват мужчина? Врач о том, из-за чего возникает боль во время секса и почему терпеть ее опасно
- 2019.04.15.a. «То, что в 20 казалось извращениями, в 40 перешло в категорию «почему бы и нет». Мнение о сексе после 40
- 2019.04.15.b. «Шпаги звон, как звон бокалов». Чего ждать от выборов президента США в будущем году
- 2019.04.15.c. Так сколько же воды надо выпивать ежедневно? И зачем?
- 2019.04.16.a. 70 рублей при средней зарплате 170. Как обеспечивали пенсионеров в СССР?
- 2019.04.16.b. Вонь за сто километров и нерешительность. Девушки — о том, что их бесит в парнях
- 2019.04.17. Какие анализы сдать весной: советы врача
- 2019.04.18. И 20-летние позавидуют. Вот как выглядит в бикини 53-летняя актриса Элизабет Херли
- 2019.04.19.a. «Испанский муж в доску расшибется, чтобы угодить своей сеньоре». Белоруска о жизни в каталонской Таррагоне
- 2019.04.19.b. История одной старости. Родные забрали из дома престарелых 90-летнюю женщину - и теперь должны оправдываться
- 2019.04.21. Толстой — это отстой? Ничего такого: вот 10 отрывков классики, и они похожи на нас сегодня
- 2019.04.23.a. Ампульный уход за кожей: находка или миф?
- 2019.04.23.b. Пенсионерам обещают прибавку с 1 мая. Как отличаются пенсии в Беларуси и в соседних странах
- 2019.04.24. «Атмосфера была как в морге». Джефф Платт — о пердиве, Беларуси и обстановке в сборной
- 2019.04.25.a. Будущее секса, работы и смерти — программа конференции EMERGE
- 2019.04.25.b. Осветляют пигментацию, устраняют акне и морщины. 10 отличных средств с витамином С на лето

- 2019.04.25.c. Сберкасса в вашем телефоне
- 2019.04.26. Забывчивость: как понять, что с памятью что-то не так
- 2019.04.27. «Можна, так і трэба?»: как устраняют проблемы на бумаге и почему люди пишут на «Доску позора»
- 2019.04.29. Парень уже оформил квартиру на себя, но суд вернул 90-летней минчанке жилье в центре
- 2019.04.30. «Нашли в хостеле, паспорта не было». В Испании умер 26-летний белорусский турист
- 2019.05.02.a. «А хто там ідзе». Французские проблемы сквозь призму белорусской реальности
- 2019.05.02.b. Власти уже думают о новой пенсионной реформе
- 2019.05.02.c. Дефицит кадров и рост зарплат под вопросом. Институт экономики НАН — про угрозы на рынке труда
- 2019.05.03.a. «Доведенные до отчаяния, целовали мою обувь». История подвига японского дипломата, спасшего тысячи евреев
- 2019.05.03.b. «Кайрат» в опасности, он стал игрушкой в руках «ребенка». Молодой белорусский тренер — под огнем критики в Казахстане
- 2019.05.05. Количество детей в Японии сократилось до рекордного исторического минимума
- 2019.05.09.a. «Главное — не умереть в мужских трусах». Как женщины выжили и справлялись с бытом во время войны
- 2019.05.09.b. Выглядит на 25. Шикарная модель 50+ из Австралии поделилась секретами молодости
- 2019.05.10.c. Бабушке из деревни Ферма, о которой писал TUT.BY, все же дали первую группу инвалидности
- 2019.05.10. Госдолг Японии впервые в истории превысил 10 трлн долларов
- 2019.05.11. «Я им говорю: будет лужа — а они не верят». Способы обмануть законы физики на «Доске позора»
- 2019.05.14. На работу в Германию: из-за нехватки рабочей силы в стране меняют миграционное законодательство
- 2019.05.15.a. «Кидают на окраины, в халупы». Как живут люди, чьи дома снесут из-за «стройки No 1» в Витебске
- 2019.05.15.b. В Логойском районе старики после пожара переселились в сарай. Другого жилья у них нет
- 2019.05.16. Занавоженность коров, благодарности врачам, квартиры по-новому и жизнь в сарае — все за вчера
- 2019.05.17. «Нытье подтолкнуло к действию». Какие идеи меценаты поддержали почти на 80 тысяч рублей

- 2019.05.18.a. Как оставаться молодым и не стареть душой? Рассказывает психолог
- 2019.05.18.b. Пять важных фактов о сыре
- 2019.05.18.c. Район на район. «Прощаюсь со своей родиной». Каким был «деревянный» Минск в квартале Уборки
- 2019.05.20.a. «Дорога — ладно, главное — кладбище». Жители умирающей деревни в Горецком районе жалуются на погост
- 2019.05.20.b. Жаңдармерия против вермахта и советские девушки в плену. Война глазами немецкого солдата
- 2019.05.21. «Недержание мочи появляется у каждой второй». Гинеколог о «стыдных проблемах», про которые нельзя молчать
- 2019.05.22.a. «Вы проиграете пустоголовым женственным бездельницам». Почему успешные женщины одиноки, объясняет психолог
- 2019.05.22.b. Покупателям запретили заходить в магазин с коляской. Это законно?
- 2019.05.23. «Попробуйте поработать с людьми старше 55 лет». Сеть аптек обучила пенсионеров и готова дать им работу
- 2019.05.24. «Муж ругался, что много покупаю!» Жительница Гродно выиграла 100 000!
- 2019.05.25. «Моя кожа больше не подходит мне, так же, как моя жизнь». Деми Мур не может смириться со старостью
- 2019.05.29. «Важно укрепиться в вере». Минчане пришли поклониться мощам святой Елисаветы
- 2019.05.30. «Минус 50 долларов сейчас ради 400
- 2019.05.31. «Старушки крестятся, когда видят». Пенсионерке из Рогачева подарили самокат — и вот что из этого вышло
- 2019.06.01.a. 81-летняя Джейн Фонда: «Современное общество не любит, когда женщины с морщинами говорят о сексе»
- 2019.06.01.b. Не чапай, бо лясне. Неприкрытая ирония читателей на «Доске позора»
- 2019.06.01.c. Румяна под названием «Оргазм» и коллекция в честь «Аладдина». 15 интересных косметических новинок мая
- 2019.06.02. Мнение: «Нормально — жить активно, хоть тебе не 18 и даже не 50. С морщинами, сединой и оргазмами»
- 2019.06.03.a. «Лишают не развлечений — смысла жизни». В Гомеле у незрячих хотят забрать единственный досуговый центр
- 2019.06.03.b. Кому подходит отдых в «Плиссе»? (Ответим сразу: всем!)
- 2019.06.06.a. «Нашу одежду носить не стану». Что жители райцентра и Минска думают о регулировании рынка секонд-хенда

- 2019.06.06.b. Лучший тест на возраст? Соцсети против дверных звонков
- 2019.06.06.c. Отпуск на родине. Где на Нарочи хорошо отдохнуть, за сколько и чем заняться на этом курорте
- 2019.06.07. Не сериалом «Чернобыль» единым. Какие фильмы о катастрофе на АЭС снимались в Беларуси
- 2019.06.10. «Похоже, мне придется прятаться еще больше». Как прошел самый масштабный гей- парад в Вильнюсе
- 2019.06.11. Трудовые мигранты из Беларуси смогут зарабатывать пенсии в странах ЕАЭС
- 2019.06.12.a. «Дети бегали с веревочкой и ключом на шее». Читатели — о своем детстве и родных местах
- 2019.06.12.b. Как добиться прогресса в тренировках: с чем завязывать и за что браться
- 2019.06.12.c. Почувствуйте себя старыми! Тест: в каком возрасте наши спортсмены завоевали значимые медали
- 2019.06.13.a. «Боль и слава»: 8 из 10. Новый (возможно, последний) фильм легендарного режиссера
- 2019.06.13.b. Даст фору молодым. Посмотрите на 67- летнюю маму Наоми Кэмпбелл, которая рекламирует купальники
- 2019.06.14. Достойная пенсия Грибаускайте: такие деньги большинству жителей Литвы могут только снится
- 2019.06.15. «На Купалье не считали грехом секс с чужими мужчинами». Читаем книгу «В постели с белорусом»
- 2019.06.16. Я живу в Лынтупах. Как фермер Владимир в поселке, который уже скорее деревня, пашет землю предков
- 2019.06.18.a. «Не знала, как много в ней жизни». Фотоистория о том, как дочь ухаживает за мамой с болезнью Альцгеймера
- 2019.06.18.b. Прогнозы ООН. Как изменится население Беларуси в ближайшие 80 лет
- 2019.06.18.c. Старейшая жительница Европы умерла в Италии
- 2019.06.19. У Минтруда спросили, реально ли прожить на пенсию в 400 рублей. Что ответили в ведомстве
- 2019.06.21.a. «И решетка нашлась, и ямы засыпали». У нас новые герои на «Доске почета»
- 2019.06.21.b. «На Зыбицкой много нетрезвых и не слишком взрослых людей». Кто и почему тусуется на Октябрьской
- 2019.06.21.c. Солигорчанка больше десятка раз выигрывала денежные призы
- 2019.06.22. «Я полностью себя обеспечиваю». 80-летняя айтишница отдыхает в Европе и Азии и обожает сауну

- 2019.06.23.a. Для Минска купят 10 новых трамваев
- 2019.06.23.b. Я живу в Канаве. Как в деревне, умирающей после развала колхоза, не осталось ни работы, ни людей
- 2019.06.23.c. Как мошенники оформляют кредиты без ведома граждан: топ банковских новостей за неделю
- 2019.06.23.d. От белорусского Робин Гуда до главы номенклатуры. Что стало с электоратом Лукашенко за 25 лет
- 2019.06.24. «У меня 35 детей». Японский способ борьбы с одиночеством
- 2019.06.25. Куда в Минске отдать ненужные вещи. Список адресов
- 2019.06.27.a. «Его интересуют только мази для суставов». Почему еще не старые мужья превращаются в унылых пенсионеров?
- 2019.06.27.b. С ажиотажем и очередями. В Гродно открыли крупный магазин «Санта»
- 2019.07.01.a. Как государство экономит за счет белорусов, которые рискуют оказаться без пенсии
- 2019.07.01.b. Что такое «ферма трупов» и зачем она нужна науке
- 2019.07.02.a. И никаких диет! 113-летний пенсионер из Германии — о том, как дожил до своего возраста
- 2019.07.02.b. Без мужа, без детей... И счастлива? Парадоксы жизни звезды «Покровских ворот»
- 2019.07.03.a. «25 лет я была волонтером, а сейчас помощь понадобилась мне». История дружбы волонтера и пенсионерки
- 2019.07.03.b. «Оператор нас заснимет, и мы навсегда останемся живыми!» Как снимали Великую Отечественную войну
- 2019.07.03.c. Дядь Вася и сирота. Как сельский Печкин почти 8 лет ухаживает за чужим сыном, который не может ходить
- 2019.07.05. Как тренируется 79-летняя жительница Жлобина, гибкости которой можно позавидовать
- 2019.07.07. Я живу в Демьянках. Как в отселенной деревне остались волки, рысь, Пальма и один Николай Иванович
- 2019.07.08. «Больное старое чучело». Как новый образ Селин Дион показал, сколько агрессии в социуме к женщинам 50+
- 2019.07.09.a. «Государственная пенсия станет пособием по выживанию». Что эксперты думают о пенсионной реформе
- 2019.07.09.b. «Ох уж эта шея. Как у курицы. Нет, как у индюка!» О ненависти к шее, которая выдает наш возраст
- 2019.07.09.c. Откручивал цены, отменил льготы и дал «по пиццот». Как Лукашенко влиял на кошельки белорусов

- 2019.07.10.a. «Могу сделать макияж на полном ходу в машине и даже без зеркала». «Одно утро» с Тамарой Лисицкой
- 2019.07.10.b. Мужчины — 1095 евро, женщины — 622. Сколько получают немецкие пенсионеры — и откуда берутся деньги
- 2019.07.11.a. «Как сюда попал, так и начал рисовать». Репортаж из дома-интерната для стариков под Гомелем
- 2019.07.11.b. За экстремизм судят газету «Вечерний Могилев», на которую жаловались за оскорбление ЛГБТ-сообщества
- 2019.07.11.c. Как жительница глухого белорусского хутора побывала во Франции, где родилась 88 лет назад
- 2019.07.11.d. Семь случаев за 2 дня: в Минске участились случаи хищения прокатных электросамокатов
- 2019.07.13. Рекорд за рекордом. Откуда в Беларуси за два месяца появилось больше 10 тысяч вакансий
- 2019.07.14. Я живу во Вселюбе. Как молодой ксендз восстанавливает древний храм и учит местных любить свое
- 2019.07.15.a. «Я что, некрасивая что ли?» Показываем читательниц, которые согласились на съемку без грамма косметики
- 2019.07.15.b. В Минске не хватает уже больше 19 тысяч работников. Какие специалисты нужны больше всего
- 2019.07.15.c. МВФ советует властям Беларуси повысить пенсионный возраст и взяться за занятость тех, кто старше 55 лет
- 2019.07.16. Ученые выяснили, как защитить мозг от возрастных нарушений
- 2019.07.19. «На дорогу тратю больше 5 часов в день». Истории минчан, которые ездят на работу в регионы
- 2019.07.20. «Разваливающиеся 20-летние старики». Минчанка рассказывает, зачем и как жить по принципу zero waste
- 2019.07.22. С начала года в МВД поступило около 50 заявлений о пропаже людей в лесах, розыск четырех продолжается
- 2019.07.24.a. Жара в Европе продолжает бить рекорды
- 2019.07.24.b. «Если пожарим, польза уйдет». Главный внештатный диетолог Минздрава — о том, как готовить грибы
- 2019.07.26.a. Фактическая безработица превышает 220 тысяч человек. Кому сложнее всего трудоустроиться
- 2019.07.26.b. Без прыщей, порезов и угрей. Визажист советует актуальную косметику для парня
- 2019.07.27. «Это — жэкэхашный экстремизм». Все, что нам не нравится в наших дворах, — на «Доске позора»

- 2019.07.28.a. Хирург показала, как старели бы актрисы Голливуда, если бы были обычными людьми
- 2019.07.28.b. Я живу в Столице. Как выживает деревня, которую прославил спорткомплекс, но его так и не достроили
- 2019.07.29.a. «В жизни я любила и мужчин, и женщин».Интервью со Светланой Алексиевич
- 2019.07.29.b. Нельзя примерять туфли на босую ногу
- 2019.07.30. В Витебске квартирантка украла боевые награды ветеранов, чтобы пропить их
- 2018..04.27. Ветеранам ВОВ к 9 Мая пообещали скидки на стрижку, поход в баню и ремонт одежды или обуви
- 2017.08.04. «Моя пенсия в два раза больше зарплаты». 97-летний доцент кафедры гимнастики о работе и долголетию

Komsomolskaya Pravda

- 2019. Новые научные данные: счастье не в деньгах, а в спортзале
- 2017.01.10. В столице хотят создать сеть ретро-кафе для пожилых людей
- 2017.01.24. «Если доживу до 65, буду получать такую же пенсию, как какой-нибудь бомж»
- 2017.02.02. Ученые рассказали, как продлить жизнь и молодость силой мысли
- 2017.02.10. Сотрудники Борисоглебского приборостроительного завода стали клиентами ВТБ Пенсионный фонд
- 2017.03.26. 7 лучших видов спорта для пожилых
- 2017.03.27. Молодежь с жиру бунтует
- 2017.03.28. Каждый четвертый пенсионер в Беларуси продолжает работать
- 2017.03.29. Старость как стартап
- 2017.05.11. Физнагрузки для омоложения: два главных правила и один опасный миф
- 2017.06.05. Названы 10 главных продуктов для молодости кожи: среди них мясо и пиво
- 2017.06.06. Пигментация страшнее, чем морщины! Крем с SPF-фактором в Беларуси нужен круглый год
- 2017.07.19. Чтобы дольше жить и выглядеть молодо, надо меньше есть - доказано на макаках
- 2017.08.03. Пять доказанных способов отдалить старость
- 2017.08.13. Старость не радость - умер самый старый житель планеты
- 2017.09.11. Пять причин старения

- 2017.09.19. Как не остаться без пенсии, если уехал работать в другую страну?
- 2017.09.21. Минтруда: Пенсии пересчитают в этом году, но на сколько - пока не решено
- 2017.10.12. Параспартакиада для пожилых и инвалидов впервые прошла в Елецком районе
- 2017.10.16. Биологи нашли способ остановить старение
- 2017.10.24. Профессор Петер Акст: Ленивые живут дольше!
- 2017.11.02. Ключ к счастливой старости таят ваши... школьные сочинения
- 2017.11.05. Биохакер Серж Фаге: «К 2085 году люди, наконец, обретут бессмертие!»
- 2017.11.24. Попав в больницу две недели назад, Николай Годовиков жаловался на одинокую старость
- 2017.11.24. Старость в радость: в шиловском доме-интернате для престарелых сыграли свадьбу
- 2018.01.03. С 1 января пенсионный возраст увеличился еще на полгода
- 2018.01.03. Советы нобелевского лауреата – 5 простых способов замедлить старение
- 2018.01.19. Подари улыбку близким!
- 2018.02.18. Новый проект для пенсионеров в Москве: Музеи, спорт и рок-н-ролл
- 2018.02.23. Они победили старость
- 2018.03.07.a. В стране есть все необходимые ресурсы, чтобы россияне жили еще дольше
- 2018.03.07.b. Зрелые мамы: кто решился на малыша в возрасте «за 50»
- 2018.03.16. 23 способа достичь долголетия
- 2018.03.20. «Король Эфириума» Виталик Бутерин: лучшее, на что стоит жертвовать деньги — это борьба со старением
- 2018.03.26. «Мы проникли в тайны ДНК, чтобы понять, с какой скоростью стареют люди», - генетик Стив Хорват
- 2018.04.02. Хочешь достойно встретить старость?
- 2018.04.16. Названы главные признаки старения: 50 важных симптомов
- 2018.04.18. Продлить молодость возможно!
- 2018.04.19. От чего на самом деле зависит старение и сохранение молодости человека, расскажут ведущие мировые исследователи
- 2018.04.25. Отремонтировать розетку, считать без калькулятора: 40 вещей, которые пожилые делают лучше молодых
- 2018.04.29. Мamma mia! Группа АББА объединилась, придумав, как победить старость

- 2018.05.05. «Я жалею, что дожил до такого возраста»: 104-летний ученый заплатил 15 тысяч долларов за собственную смерть
- 2018.05.14. «Не соревнуйтесь - русские переблюют вас под столом!»: английским болельщикам написали памятку перед Чемпионатом мира
- 2018.05.17. Исследователи рассказали, как обновляется наш организм: нервные клетки действительно не восстанавливаются, а жировые живут 7 лет
- 2018.05.19. Наталья Краско: «С каждым годом молодеет вся планета. И только бедная Краско стареет...»
- 2018.06.08.a. «В моде сейчас какой-то ЗОЖ»: эксперты назвали главные ошибки в борьбе за долголетие
- 2018.06.08.b. Пенсионный возраст для женщин вырастет до 63 лет?
- 2018.06.11. Если ЗОЖ невтерпех: бег, силовые нагрузки и витаминные добавки могут снизить шансы на здоровое долголетие
- 2018.06.19. Зачем нам повышают пенсионный возраст
- 2018.06.22. Минтруда о пенсионном возрасте для женщин: Многое будет определяться финансовыми возможностями
- 2018.06.25. Максим Топилин: «Квот для пожилых сотрудников не будет»
- 2018.06.26. «Пенсионный возраст - это случайно выбранная цифра. Однажды мы вообще от него откажемся»
- 2018.07.05. Цифровая старость: приморская пенсионерка зарабатывает в Instagram
- 2018.07.10. Баста - женщинам, сделавшим пластику: «Встретьте старость благородно»
- 2018.07.11. Война, старость и высота: чего боятся минчане
- 2018.07.13. В Псковской области волонтеры помогают пожилым людям и инвалидам почувствовать себя счастливыми
- 2018.07.16. Как убедить компании нанимать на работу пожилых
- 2018.07.23. Один стакан свекольного сока ежедневно – и старость постучится к кому-то другому #сочныенности
- 2018.07.26. Проверенные способы накопить на активную старость
- 2018.08.02. Нас учит Сеть, как молодеть: эксперты рассказали, работают ли самые популярные антивозрастные лайфхаки из Интернета
- 2018.08.02. Ученые просчитали цену «таблетки от старости»: Чего стоит в наше время продлить молодость?
- 2018.08.21. Шахтеры, стюардессы, многодетные мамы, следователи: кто может уйти на пенсию на пять лет раньше?
- 2018.08.22. «Еще чуть-чуть, и понятие «пожилой человек» уйдет из обихода»

- 2018.08.30. Увеличение пенсионного возраста в России и Беларуси: кому дольше работать, а кому больше льгот?
- 2018.09.04.a. Почему детей надо водить в дома престарелых
- 2018.09.04.b. Ученые: чтобы дольше жить, нужно распределить приемы пищи в 10-часовом дневном интервале #сочныености
- 2018.09.08. В Дагестане предложили ввести льготы для пожилых людей
- 2018.09.10. Врач-гериатр о профилактике деменции: Не заменяйте живое общение с родителями телефоном или скайпом!
- 2018.09.11. Налоговые льготы для пожилых: Что изменится с повышением пенсионного возраста
- 2018.09.14. Почему на Западе компании держатся за пожилых работников, а у нас - выталкивают
- 2018.09.26. Александр Румак: в Беларуси 17 приемных семей для пожилых людей
- 2018.09.29. Систему ухода за пожилыми и инвалидами создадут в Удмуртии
- 2018.10.01. В «День пожилого человека» можно будет получить скидки
- 2018.10.02. Работа для мужчин старше 50 лет в Москве: Я бы в дворники пошел...
- 2018.10.06. Россияне ответили — старость наступает в 63 года
- 2018.10.08. Не всегда дома лучше: Как обеспечить пожилым людям комфортную жизнь?
- 2018.11.20. Индекс привлекательности рынка труда для пенсионеров: Коми на 55 месте из 85
- 2019.01.14. Страстный поцелуй Шукшиной и Алибасова вызвал оторопь
- 2019.01.16. Телекрючок для бабушки: Почему все больше жителей Псковской области делают покупки в телемагазинах, и всегда ли это идет им на пользу
- 2019.01.22.a. Выигравший полмиллиарда пенсионер из Петербурга: Раньше надо мной все смеялись, теперь я это буду делать
- 2019.01.22.b. На сколько получится увеличить пенсию, если временно отказаться от нее и продолжить работать?
- 2019.01.24. В Италии разрешили хоронить умерших вместе с любимыми домашними животными в одной могиле
- 2019.01.29.a. В магазинах появятся отдельные полки для натуральных молочных продуктов
- 2019.01.29.b. Штаны, фуфайка и туалет на улице: как живут воронежцы, выигравшие в лотерею 506 млн рублей
- 2019.01.31. Мужчин возраста 45+ убивает одиночество и безысходность

- 2019.02.03. Живет певчий дрозд: 85 лет исполнилось выдающемуся грузинскому режиссеру Отару Иоселиани
- 2019.02.04. «Настоящий качок!»: 71-летняя Татьяна Васильева жмет лежа 20 кг и хвастается мускулами
- 2019.02.05. Пенсионные новинки у наших соседей: Польша понизила пенсионный возраст, Россия - повысила, а Украина привязала к стажу
- 2019.02.07. В Ивенце мужчина продал ружье - купил гроб и ботинки, теперь его ждет суд
- 2019.02.08. Норвежский детский писатель: «Когда ребенок спрашивает о смерти, а родители отмалчиваются, его страхи только растут»
- 2019.02.15. Секрет долголетия: 91-летний ветеран из Иркутска бегает и отжимается в мороз с голым торсом
- 2019.02.18. 45-летний Цискаридзе собирает деньги на свои похороны
- 2019.02.22. «Она кричала на всю больницу»: в Тюмени женщине вытащили спицу из ноги без анестезии
- 2019.02.24. Травматолог Сергей Казаев: Чтобы снизить вес, садятся на мясную диету и получают подагру
- 2019.03.01. «Помогите сохранить красоту!». Пенсионер, обустроивший во дворе пенопластовый зоопарк, собирает деньги на ремонт фигурок
- 2019.03.05. Проценты по вкладам бьют рекорды: что будет с рублем дальше
- 2019.03.09. Татьяне Веденеевой сделали неудачную пластику
- 2019.03.15. Даешь молодежь!
- 2019.03.25. Народная артистка Беларуси Белла Масумян: «Когда партнер по роли умер у меня на руках, я на время потеряла голос, слух, зрение и не могла вернуться в театр»
- 2019.04.07. 70-летний Леонтьев сделал заявление о своей болезни
- 2019.04.12. Как россиянам будут помогать стать здоровыми долгожителями
- 2019.04.14. Кишинев глазами британского журналиста: «Если вся Молдова такая, как центр столицы, то туристов не ждите»
- 2019.04.16. Радиоведущий Сергей Кузин: На кресло-качалку на пенсии не надеюсь - когда сыну будет 18 лет, мне стукнет 72, и надо кем-то для него быть
- 2019.04.22. Дети XXI века будут жить 110 лет, а в ближайшем будущем на рынке труда будут конкурировать четыре поколения
- 2019.04.25. Открытие ученых: бородачи грязнее собак
- 2019.04.30. Детский «Голос» предложили разделить на шоу для богатых и бедных с ведущими Собчак и Бузовой

- 2019.05.07. В Госдуме опровергли разработку законопроекта о запрете пластиковой посуды
- 2019.05.10. «День тишины» от Максима Виторгана не помешал бы ему самому
- 2019.05.11. В ДТП под Кобрином попала семья из трех человек
- 2019.05.14. Главный гериатр Минздрава РФ Ольга Ткачева: Россия вводит новую систему поддержки для людей пожилого возраста
- 2019.05.14. Крутит «солнышко» и подъем с переворотом: 67-летний пенсионер из Дагестана поражает своими трюками на турнике
- 2019.05.22. Фотофакт: пенсионер соорудил «велопоезд» для сбора макулатуры
- 2019.05.24. Исследователи долголетия: ключ к продлению жизни - в ваших руках
- 2019.05.25. Борис Фрумкин: «Георгий Данелия глазами объяснял, какую музыку хочет от нас к фильму «Мимино»
- 2019.06.01. 40-летняя подруга Прохора Шаляпина доказала свою беременность
- 2019.06.04. «Дед командовал артиллерийской батареей, раненый в обе ноги»
- 2019.06.10. Бабушки и дедушки угоняют в Минске электросамокаты для внуков
- 2019.06.11.a. Почему миллионы людей мечтают получить российский паспорт
- 2019.06.11.b. Электрички за полцены и скидки на продукты: разбираемся, на чем может сэкономить белорусский пенсионер
- 2019.06.12. «Да когда ты уже помрешь наконец!» Соседка-алкоголичка управляет жизнью всему подъезду
- 2019.06.12. «Я просто медленно умирал. И почему-то искренне поверил всему, что мне говорила врач»
- 2019.06.16. Министр здравоохранения: «Нельзя на лекарство брать цену с потолка!»
- 2019.06.22. Ольга Бузова, MARUV и Тима Белорусских приедут летом на Алтай
- 2019.06.28. 55-летняя китайка выиграла для Люксембурга бронзу Европейских игр: «У нее очень неудобный стиль игры»
- 2019.06.29. 75-летний профессор-биофизик Жданов гонит старость прочь... чесноком. Его поддерживает супруга-медик, на 30 лет моложе
- 2019.07.02. Ирина Дорофеева: Я наконец встретила свою первую настоящую любовь

- 2019.07.07. «Я замужем, но венки на воду бросила. Вдруг второй понадобится». Как отметили Купалье в поселке Паричи
- 2019.07.16. Флешмоб «постаревших» звезд: Собчак стала двойником Хиллари Клинтон, а Куценко — Фредди Крюгера
- 2019.07.23.a. «Отключала свет соседям и ждала с отверткой в подъезде»: в милиции рассказали, что творят пожилые минчане
- 2019.07.23.b. «Полтора года я была в программе онкопоиска - лимфома проявилась за ночь и на поздней стадии»
- 2019.07.30. а. Досрочные пенсии за вредную работу планируют поднять в 8 раз
- 2019.07.30.b. Трэш, фан и популярные блогеры
- 2019.08.01. Сколько просрочки на прилавках и почему работает только одна касса: Директор магазина раскрыл изнанку сетевого ритейла
- 2019.11.27. Интриги любви
- 2019.06.18. Михаил Леонтьев: Сейчас у нас не пенсии, а ничтожные пособия на старость
- 2019.07.07. 70-летний мужчина вышел на лед в Бресте и стал звездой интернета

Onliner.by

- 2017.06.05. «Пенсия у меня 1500 евро, но налоги...» История белоруски, которая красиво стареет в Бельгии, однако все равно собирается обратно
- 2017.08.07. «К 2030 году нас ждет эпидемия одиночества». Разговор о том, почему нам плохо без других людей
- 2017.09.26. Сорок лет одиночества. История белоруски, которая живет в глухом лесу совершенно одна без электричества, телефона и водопровода
- 2018.05.02. Литературный редактор Onliner.by Юлия Михайлова: общество из всех сил хоронит пожилых людей, а они не хотят хорониться
- 2018.06.21. Второе детство: как в США появились целые города для пенсионеров
- 2018.09.28. «Верующие и атеисты чувствуют себя бессмертными, только каждый — по-своему». Руководитель Белорусского Красного Креста о старости, смерти и о том, как помочь безнадежно больным
- 2018.10.03. Художник Антон Шаппо: новые крестоносцы — современные пацаны устают от жизни уже к тридцати

- 2018.11.24. Круглосуточная работа, голод и три войны. 100-летняя женщина о том, как пережила все и не сломалась
- 2019.01.03. «Не хватило на пальто за 90 рублей, взяла в рассрочку на два месяца». Как белорусская глубинка приходит в себя после праздников
- 2019.01.06. «Мой друг наставил себе турников в 50 лет и фактически загнал себя в могилу». Белорусский долгожитель о том, как дожить почти до сотни
- 2019.01.17. Указ №500 дал право «ипэшникам» не платить взносы в ФСЗН в момент неосуществления деятельности. Как это будут контролировать?
- 2019.01.24. «Люди не знают, что такое по-настоящему тесно». Как семья минчан живет в микроквартире площадью 22 «квадрата»
- 2019.01.25. «Потерянное поколение Z» заставит вас почувствовать себя старым
- 2019.01.30. Врач Андрей Беловешкин: чистая биология — игнорируя прошлое, мы лишаемся будущего. Как вырваться из «дня сурка»
- 2019.02.05. «Один снос я уже пережил, и вот опять». Минский дом ликвидатора аварии на ЧАЭС «приговорили» второй раз за 13 лет
- 2019.02.07. «Любовь к стране естественна, зачем ей учить?» Посол Дидье Канесс о том, как французы воспитывают детей
- 2019.02.08. Торговцы надеждой. Дяди с чудо-сиропами собрали пенсионеров на распродажу, а мы пришли без приглашения
- 2019.02.08. Правда ли, что мужик уже не тот, и почему пенсионеры такие доверчивые: журналисты о злободневной неделе
- 2019.02.10. Потомственный учитель музыки: «Лабал бы каверы по барам, зарабатывал бы больше»
- 2019.02.13. «Пятьсот? Пятьсот рублей — это хорошо. Знаете, как мы бы на них жили!» Репортаж из нищего города
- 2019.02.15. Вчерашняя студентка об ужасах жизни «на квартире у бабушки»
- 2019.02.18. Сладкие развалины. Репортаж о рассыпающейся белорусской провинции, которая повисла на волоске
- 2019.02.20. В США предупредили об опасности «омолаживающих» переливаний «молодой крови»
- 2019.02.21. «Однорушница кричала, что я королева туалетной бумаги». Как девушка из-под Гомеля стала пожарным в США
- 2019.02.22. Устали выживать в городе и купили старый дом за 850 рублей. Честная история о переезде в глушь

- 2019.02.25. «Они для меня все свои, родные». История участковой медсестры, которая вырастила три поколения детей
- 2019.02.27. Белоруска переехала во Францию и рассказывает о том, с чем ей никак не удается смириться
- 2019.03.02. История 100-летней Анны Езерской: «Наши свиньи поели огород соседки. Та написала заявление, что батька Богу молится, и его расстреляли»
- 2019.03.06. «Вы даже не представляете, что камеры по ночам снимают». Репортаж о жизни последних деревянных бараков в Минске
- 2019.03.07. Дорога к замку: один день важнейшего белорусского города, в котором привыкли выживать
- 2019.03.09. «У белорусских музыкантов все хорошо с некрологами». Александр Помидоров про самоуничтожение, ненависть к людям и жестокую травлю
- 2019.03.12. За 3500 рублей получить 15 соток в Зацени. Выгодная сделка «черных риелторов», в которой нет криминала
- 2019.03.18. Арифметика выживания. Репортаж из района, где людям не платили с января
- 2019.03.22. В «Синэво» на 88-летнюю клиентку упала вешалка. Стороны поругались, а суд решил, что виновата мама с ребенком
- 2019.03.24. «Каждый день смотрюсь в зеркало: какое же мое лицо старое, погляжу — тьфу!» История 99-летней женщины, которая спортивнее, чем ты
- 2019.03.25. История обычного тунеядца: «Хотелось бы с внуками пожить еще, но говорят: работай»
- 2019.03.26. Куда пропал рядовой Невмержицкий? Репортаж из полесской деревни, где все ждут и надеются
- 2019.03.29. «Уходит муж — нужно увеличить грудь!» Разговор с пластическим хирургом о естественном старении и праве человека на «тюнинг»
- 2019.04.02. Численность населения мира составляет 7,7 миллиарда человек, к 2050-му будет 9,7 миллиарда
- 2019.04.07. «Через десять лет я вижу себя человеком, у которого будет личный массажист». Абитуриенты о мечтах, зарплатах и ЦТ
- 2019.04.11. Читатель Onliner Владимир Мартинович: продал однокомнатную квартиру и построил дом
- 2019.04.17. История счастливого человека, который двадцать лет закапывает деньги в землю

- 2019.04.19. Лукашенко о зарплатах: «Мы достигли \$500, дальше — задача са-
мого человека»
- 2019.04.22. «У меня 200 долларов пенсия. На эту сумму проживешь?» Как
белорусы переводят тысячи долларов на Кипр в обмен на «без-
бедную старость»
- 2019.04.28. «Я ничего в девках не терял. Развлекался, но глупостей не делал».
Долгожитель о том, как уйти от смерти, общаться с женщинами
и беречь здоровье
- 2019.04.28. Официально: Пенелопа Крус вновь ягодка. Топ фильмов к 45-
тию актрисы
- 2019.05.03. Так живут белорусские богачи. Репортаж о городе, которому за-
видует даже столица
- 2019.05.04. Ветеран войны Полина Ивановна Шведова: в 19 лет мне говори-
ли, что выгляжу на 45
- 2019.06.04. Конференция EMERGE 2019: аллея стартапов и лекарство от ста-
рения
- 2019.06.05. Читатель Onliner Александр Ивинский: перестаньте помогать
бедным без нужды!
- 2019.06.06. Похудевший Дмитрий Быковских: как я перестал быть жир-
ным — 110 минус 50 за 7,5 месяца
- 2019.06.18. Голодание становится модным у топовых бизнесменов. Это вооб-
ще нормально?
- 2019.06.18. Рассказываем про эстонский город, в котором можно купить
квартиру за 50 евро
- 2019.06.28.a. Экономист Катерина Борнукова: больничные, декретные, пен-
сии — как их могут урезать?
- 2019.06.28.b. Люди vs завод. Разбираемся с конфликтом в Бресте и пытаемся
отделить экологию от хайпа
- 2019.06.29. Театральная эпоха. Большой рассказ про народного артиста
Валерия Раевского, который руководил Купаловским больше
30 лет
- 2019.06.30. Купили дом, чтобы не пропасть с голоду. Уникальная дача
советских художников-оформителей
- 2019.07.01. Кругосветка 17/18 в Непале: «Гималаи, 5416 метров! Черт побери,
я это сделал!»
- 2019.07.05. Кажется, мы нашли самый жуткий балкон в Беларуси
- 2019.07.06. Противникам строительства ледовых дворцов: танец почти
70-летнего жителя Кобрина

- 2019.07.16. Узнали, как будут выглядеть в старости Макс Корж и Тима Белорусских
- 2019.07.26.a. Драма из Могилева. Как Инна Викторовна квартиру соработнице отписала
- 2019.07.26.b. Только не со мной. Упал с высоты в шестьсот метров и остался жив
- 2019.10.26.c. В Беларуси продолжают работать 10 женщин и 12 мужчин старше 90 лет. Зачем?

Argumenty i Fakty

- 2017.01.20. Ученые назвали главные причины преждевременного старения женщин
- 2017.02.23. Рынок «серебряных волос». Почему старики в Китае - двигатель экономики?
- 2017.03.20. Жизнь на все 100. Какие неожиданные факторы способствуют долголетию
- 2017.04.05. Невеста на пенсии. Где встретить свое счастье?
- 2017.04.08. Тайна долголетия. Как дожить до ста в радости и без болезней
- 2017.04.18. Белорусы решили взяться за тело и поменять рацион.
- 2017.04.20. Тайна долголетия. Как дожить до ста в радости и без болезней
- 2017.05.12. Повернуть старение вспять. В Голландии ученые «омолодили» 90-летних
- 2017.05.24. Как сделать так, чтобы пожилые люди могли себя реализовать?
- 2017.06.08. Жить с качеством. Как создать общество, дружественное пожилым
- 2017.06.19. Победившие время
- 2017.06.30. Врач-геронтолог: “Начинать бороться со старением надо уже в молодости”
- 2017.08.25. Не думай о секундах свысока. В чём секрет долголетия разведчиков?
- 2017.09.01. Почему пожилым людям полезно разгадывать кроссворды?
- 2017.09.18. Худым на зависть. После 50 лет 2-3 лишних килограмма могут быть полезны
- 2017.09.24. Ученые назвали легкий и эффективный способ продлить жизнь
- 2017.10.09. И как теперь жить? То, что раньше считалось вредным, оказалось полезным
- 2017.10.25. Молодость навсегда. Есть ли альтернатива кремам и «инъекциям красоты»?

- 2017.11.08. Академик Скулачев: “Единственный способ замедлить старение – недоедать”;
- 2017.11.24. Испытание возрастом. Как из него выйти победителем?
- 2017.11.30. Отдыхать рановато? Почему пожилые белорусы продолжают трудиться
- 2017.12.09. Больше морщин - больше противопоказаний. Особенности фармакотерапии пожилых
- 2017.12.18. Деньги удлиняют жизнь? Почему мы живем меньше, чем японцы и испанцы
- 2018.01.15. Геронтолог Владимир Шабалин: “Аскетов среди долгожителей нет!”
- 2018.02.28. Года - не беда. Центр активного долголетия - отличная площадка для досуга.
- 2018.03.11. Ученые заявили, что катание на велосипеде замедляет процессы старения
- 2018.03.14. Как стареть успешно. Что нужно сделать, чтобы не жалеть о прожитых годах?
- 2018.03.30. Профессия — лечить. Чем живет сегодня современная хирургия в Беларуси
- 2018.04.26. Гарантийный срок истек? Как отсрочить старость после выхода на пенсию
- 2018.05.08. Больше морщин – больше противопоказаний. Особенности фармакотерапии пожилых.
- 2018.05.24. Заживем как японцы. Упражнения, которые помогут сохранить ясность рассудка.
- 2018.06.04. На своем месте. Виктор ЛИШАКОВ: «Проявляю инициативу и творчество в работе»
- 2018.06.19. “Они в сто лет женятся”. Репортаж об исследовании долгожителей Азербайджана.
- 2018.07.09. На сколько дольше будем жить?
- 2018.08.05. Ученые назвали диету, которая помогает похудеть и замедляет старение
- 2018.08.16.a. Стратегия жить. Нужно не сражаться со старением, а адаптироваться к нему
- 2018.08.16.b. Физкульт-привет! Почему активность в пожилом возрасте особенно важна
- 2018.09.01. Поддержат делом. Кто может рассчитывать на помощь Красного Креста?

- 2018.09.04. Биохакинг и новые увлечения. Что делать, чтобы долголетие было в радость?
- 2018.09.12. Плюс шесть лет. Как сохранить здоровье и бодрость духа в пожилом возрасте
- 2018.09.18. Какие продукты не стоит есть пенсионерам?
- 2018.10.01. Количество бригад скорой помощи планируется увеличить в Беларуси
- 2018.10.19.a. Без бега и йоги. Простые советы, которые помогут отсрочить старость.
- 2018.11.19.b. Сегодня старость наступает позже, а пожилых людей становится все больше
- 2018.11.23. Болезнь Альцгеймера. Как сохранить ясность ума на долгие годы.
- 2018.11.29. Как научить бабушек и дедушек пользоваться смартфоном
- 2018.12.02.a. Прощайте, отеки, морщины и пигментация.
- 2018.12.02.b. Тайна долголетия. Как отодвинуть возрастные болезни и наступление старости?
- 2018.12.02. Физические нагрузки полезны и сердцу, и кровеносным сосудам
- 2019.01.22. Какие надбавки к пенсии получают 80-летние пенсионеры?
- 2019.02.13. Перелом шейки бедра - больше не приговор?
- 2019.02.14. Как стать богатым. 7 простых правил обогащения, известных с древности
- 2019.02.20. Цигун для всех. Как пожилые минчане оздоравливают тело и душу
- 2019.02.28. Когда пенсии не хватает. Какие вакансии для пенсионеров есть на рынке труда
- 2019.02.28. Свой милиционер. Как найти участкового и чем он может помочь?
- 2019.03.11.a. Идеальная пара. 16 продуктов, которые лучше всего сочетаются друг с другом
- 2019.03.11.b. Овсянка, сэр. Почему эта каша стала самой популярной
- 2019.03.11.c. Почему болит голова и тошнит, когда меняется погода?
- 2019.03.22. Наши за границей. Самый чудесный город – тот, где человек счастлив
- 2019.04.02. Психолог: Любой кризис можно преодолеть, если идти к цели с чистыми мыслями
- 2019.04.12. Самое время летать? Реально ли, будучи на пенсии, путешествовать по миру
- 2019.04.19. Наши за границей. О Пасхе в Таррагоне и религиозных традициях Каталонии

- 2019.04.24. Пить или не пить? Вред и польза витаминов из аптеки
- 2019.05.02. Список Христо Мемерски. Простые рецепты молодости, красоты и долголетия
- 2019.05.10. Прибавка к пенсии. Сколько пенсионер зарабатывает на мёде со своей пасеки
- 2019.05.20. Верещака и тюря от шеф-повара и эксперта белорусской кухни Елены Микульчик
- 2019.06.13. Что почитать летом? Названы книги для увлекательного чтения на каникулах
- 2019.06.14. В Минске открылся новый пункт почтовой связи
- 2019.07.01. И никаких диет! 113-летний пенсионер - о том, как дожил до своего возраста
- 2019.07.09. Овчарка, лабрадор или бигль? Каких собак кому лучше заводить
- 2019.07.19. Что по «ящику»? Кто и ради чего смотрит телевизор?

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation

1. Jurkevits, A. (2019). Official Media Discourse of 'Active Longevity': an Attempt to Popularize the Idea of the Inclusion of Older People into Society or to Conceal Undesirable Forced Choices. *Interações: Sociedade e as novas modernidades*, (36), 72-99. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.ismt.pt/bitstream/123456789/1187/1/document.pdf> doi: 10.31211/interacoes.n36.2019.a3
2. Mikulionienė, S.; Rapolienė, G.; Jurkevits, A./Микуленене, С.; Юркевич, А.; Раполене, Г. (2019). Potrebnośt' v obshchenii i rol' eydzhizma v ee realizatsii: kachestvennoye issledovaniye pozhilykh lyudey/Потребность в общении и роль эйджизма в ее реализации: качественное исследование пожилых людей [The need for communication and the role of ageism in its realization: a qualitative study of older people]. *Успехи геронтологии*, 32(1–2), 273–281. [Index Medicus/MEDLINE; PubMed; Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) at the Web of Science base; SCOPUS; included in Academic Journal Catalogue (AJC)] http://www.gersociety.ru/netcat_files/userfiles/10/AG_2019-32-01-02.pdf
3. Jurkevits, A. (2019). Contemporary official discourse on pension reform in Belarus. *Belarusian Political science review*, 4, 10-41. Retrieved from http://palityka.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/BPSReview_V4_2019.pdf
4. Rapolienė, G., Mikulionienė, S., Gedvilaitė - Kordušienė, M., Jurkevits, A. (2018). Socialiai įtraukti ar atskirti? Vyresnio amžiaus žmonių gyvenančių vienu, patirtys. *Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika*, 16, 70-82. Retrieved from <http://www.zurnalai.vu.lt/socialine-teorija-empiriya-politika-ir-praktika/article/view/11441> doi: 10.15388/STEPP.2018.16.11441.

List of presentations

1. "“Active aging” counter-narrative as an instrument of soft power in the Belarusian official discourse of the pension reform’, presented at the Eighth International Congress of Belarusian Studies in Vilnius, Lithuania, 27 –29 September, 2019.
2. "“Old age” and “active ageing” concepts within Belarusian pension reform discourses’ , presented at the COST Action CA 15122 ‘Reducing Old-Age Social Exclusion (ROSEnet) 4th Training School of COST Action CA 15122 (ROSEnet), organised by the Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University, Wales, Swansea, UK, 24 – 27 June, 2019.
3. "“Old Age” and “Active Ageing” Concepts within Belarusian Pension Reform Discourses’. Poster-presentation presented at the ‘Venice International University Summer School ‘Summer Institute on Ageing’ in Venice, Italy, 4–9 June, 2018.

4. 'Contemporary media discourse of "old age" and "active ageing" in Belarus', presented at the "Evidence and Policy Summer School on Science, Policy and Demography" in Laxenburg, Austria, 5 – 7 September, 2018.
5. "Old Age" and "Active Ageing" Concepts within Belarusian Pension Reform Discourses' presented at the Training School 'Theory and Methods in Research on Ageism and Age-discrimination', Norrkoping, Sweden, May 30 – June 2, 2017.
6. 'Portrayal of older people in Belarusian media portal TUT.BY', presented at the 2nd Training School of COST Action CA 15122 "Reducing Old-Age Social Exclusion (ROSEnet), Camerino, Italy, 18–21 September, 2017.

Research projects

- 2017–2022 *Indoor living space improvement: Smart Habitat for the Elderly*. COST Action CA16226, the member of the national project team.
- 2017–2018 *Older people living alone: trends, profiles and challenges to intergenerational integration*. Research project Nr. GER-001/2017 carried out in Lithuanian Social Research Centre (the leader of the project Dr. Sarmitė Mikulionienė), junior researcher.
- 2016–2020 *Reducing Old-Age Social Exclusion: Collaborations in Research & Policy*. ROSEnet. COST Action CA 15122, working group member.
- 2014–2018 *Ageism – a multi-national, interdisciplinary perspective*. COST Action IS1402, MC Substitute Member.

Additional trainings

- 18 of August, 2019 – 'In Quest of Research Integrity' - Seminar in the international conference *Plagiarism Across Europe and Beyond* at Mykolo Romerio University, Lithuania.
- 24–27 June, 2019 – *Policy Challenges in Life Courses of Social Exclusion*. 4th Training School of COST Action CA 15122 (ROSEnet), organised by the Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University, Wales, Swansea, UK.
- 5–7 September, 2018 – *Evidence and Policy Summer School on Science, Policy and Demography* at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), in collaboration with the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA), Laxenburg, Austria.
- 4–9 June, 2018 – *Summer Institute on Ageing*, Venice International University Summer School, Venice, Italy.

May 30 – June 2, 2017 – *Theory and Methods in Research on Ageism and Age-discrimination*
– Training School organized by Linköping University, Norrköping, Sweden.

18–21 September, 2017 – *Reducing Old-Age Social Exclusion* – 2nd Training School of COST Action CA 15122 (ROSEnet), organised by INRCA, Italy's National Institute of Health and Science on Ageing, in collaboration with the University of Camerino, Camerino, Italy.