

Government and Nonprofit Cooperation in Russia: Serving Older Adults

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Abstract

The topic of older people in Russia has been a difficult issue. After the economic and ideological changes of the 90's older people have shifted to be the most vulnerable, poor and disrespected group in the Russian population. As historically Russia has been a paternalistic state, everyone is still expecting it to play the leading role in taking care of the elderly and protecting older people's rights and interests.

Cooperation with the nongovernmental organizations was difficult mainly because of the recent history, when most nongovernmental nonprofits could be divided into these groups: 1) Nonprofits associated with the government and sponsored by it, 2) Independent protesting nonprofit nongovernmental organizations fighting against the government and corruption; 3) "Independent" organizations founded specifically for money laundering by criminal and commercial enterprises; 4) Independent nonprofit organizations started by "grass roots", supported or not by foundations, foreign or Russian.

The aims of the research included estimation of the level of involvement of the Governmental and nongovernmental organizations in providing adequate conditions for older persons for their self realization and active life style, revealing existing partnerships and possibilities for cooperation between them and possibilities to improve the services on the local level.

The research was conducted in 8 cities of Russian Federation (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Ufa, Kazan, Tuymazy, Prokopievsk, Novokuznetsk, Oryol). In each of the cities we surveyed local older persons aged over 55 for women and over 60 for men as according to the Russian legislation a person becomes eligible for the Government pension at this age, and also officially becomes considered as the "elderly". From 84 to 210 people were surveyed in each city. Also in each city we interviewed representatives of municipal authorities, governmental social welfare organizations, and nonprofits, whose target population included older persons.

Common problems included

- Lack of trust and communications between governmental and nonprofit organizations;

In most cases representatives of governmental institutions when asked about nonprofit sector they were only able to name nonprofits officially supported by the government and associated with them. When asked about ease of cooperation generally government officials were much more positive and optimistic than nonprofits. They were confident that cooperation was fruitful and easy for both sides, whereas nonprofits stated that sometimes contacts were impossible, they were not treated respectfully, and governments did not want to hear them.

- Lack of information about available services (both governmental and nonprofit);
- In most cities (except for Orel) from 44 to 66% older respondents could not name any organization, providing conditions for active and productive life of older persons.
- Little attention to scientifically and economically sound planning of the programs for older persons.

According to the results of the survey on average about 70% of the senior respondents stated that the municipality is not concerned or is likely not to be concerned about their opinions, and 60% think that the municipal authorities do not or are likely not to take into consideration their needs or interests.

Introduction

This paper offers discussions and conclusions of the preliminary results of the research conducted in the National Research University Higher School of Economics “Creating conditions for realization of the social potential of older adults at municipal level”¹. The aims of the research included estimation of the level of involvement of the Governmental and nongovernmental organizations in providing adequate conditions for older persons for their self realization and active life style, revealing existing partnerships and possibilities for cooperation between them and possibilities to improve the services on the local level.

The research was conducted in 8 cities of the Russian Federation (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Ufa, Kazan, Tuymazy, Prokopievsk, Novokuznetsk, Oryol). In each of the cities we surveyed local older persons aged over 55 for women and over 60 for men as according to the Russian legislation a person becomes eligible for the Government pension at this age, and also officially becomes considered as the “elderly”. From 84 to 210 people were surveyed in each city. Also in each city we interviewed representatives of municipal authorities, governmental social welfare organizations, and nonprofits, whose target population included older persons.

¹ Access the research project details at http://www.hse.ru/science/scifund/proekt_ts/14691283/

Situation of Older Adults in Russia

The world population has been growing old at a fast rate. The number of older adults has been growing in all countries both relative to other ages and in absolute numbers. Despite the economic transition, slowly recovering birth rate and life expectancy, according to the forecasts in 2016 older population will constitute almost a quarter of the Russian population (24.8%)ⁱ. Hence Russia is also facing all the problems associated with the ageing population.

One of the pertinent issues for older people in Russia is still poverty even though the Government social pensions have been raised recently to exceed the official cost of living. Most of the pensioners still only have this type of pension, because the Russia is still transitioning its pensions system. Today Russia has a combined (solidarity and funded) pension system, but most retired persons still receive only the solidarity part of it, because they worked in the USSR. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union the pension system was 100% solidarity system. Retired persons received as pensions from 40 to 90% of their average income during the best 5 years they chose. It was more than enough to live on, and often allowed to help the younger generation as well. Pensioners did not belong to a low income group; they were considered respectful members of the society, especially those who had the status of war veterans and labor veterans. They were the people who fought for the freedom of the Soviet State and defended it from fascist aggression. They were also the carriers of the socialist ideology.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the value of the pensioners' allowance that they were receiving plummeted. Healthcare rapidly lost the quality it used to have, and quality of life deteriorated too. The principles and life styles that had been perceived as eternal and unshakable suddenly disappeared. The ideology that they had

lived through reversed totally. All of a sudden, retired persons turned out to have the wrong ideas, people who were holding to the past, and even the victory over fascism was not unquestionable anymore. This is especially true for the “older old” whereas the younger old generation retiring now had time to adjust to the new conditions and ideology. However, public image of older people as low status population and the object of aid surviving the last years of their lives has become common for all retired persons.ⁱⁱ

Historically Russia has always been a paternalistic state; therefore most people, especially older generations are still expecting it to play the leading role in taking care of the elderly and protecting older people’s rights and interests. These attitudes influence both public services and public attitudes towards it. According to Kozlova T.Z. in 2000 (almost 10 years after the reforms started) 40% of retired respondents in Moscow and 60% in the provinces were dissatisfied with the quality of their lives. Moreover, most of them considered the state and the government to be entirely responsible for their well being. Furthermore, they experienced acute feeling of mistreatment and unfairness after the collapse of the Soviet Union.ⁱⁱⁱ Today this is still mostly true, as confirmed by the answers of older people in our survey.

State and Nonprofit Actors Serving Older Adults in Russia

At the time of the USSR collapse there was only one governmental agency that was responsible for all the welfare and social security issues in the country. Besides this agency (the Ministry of Social Security) there were literally no other commercial or nonprofit organizations taking care of the well being of the older population. Today still all the government agencies and services aimed at older people are supervised by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development. However, there is no any special

agency serving directly and only older people and developing policies for improving their lives.

The Ministry has a number of internal departments as well as supervising external state agencies. Among the internal departments playing an important role in providing services for older people are Social Security Department, Disability Department, Healthcare Department . The external agencies supervised by the ministry include Federal Supervisory Authority on Healthcare and Social Development, Federal Agency on Medicine and Biology, Pension Fund of the Russian Federation, Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation, Fund of Obligatory Health Insurance of the Russian Federation and others ^{iv}

The institutions directly dealing with citizens in every city are offices of the Social Security Department (and Social Service Centers under their authority), offices of the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation, and healthcare institutions. The major responsibilities of Social Security consist of providing monetary compensations and other benefits to vulnerable and disadvantaged population. Whereas, Social Service Centers (first appeared in mid nineties) focus on different kinds of social assistance. Currently, these centers exist in most neighborhoods in Moscow and other major cities. However, in smaller cities their functionality may be significantly limited. For example, most Social Service Centers in Moscow offer in-home services of social workers (such as cleaning, food delivery, etc), in-kind provision of food and other items for the poorest, day care services and leisure opportunities for older adults. However, in the town of Tuymazy (population of 60 thousand) the center only provides the first two options.

The top down management structure creates some difficulties in adjusting to local conditions of municipal authorities and institutions acting at the municipal level. For example, Social Service centers, which have been recently transferred from municipal jurisdiction to under the Social Security Department's one, have difficulties acting and interacting with other institutions at the municipal level. This transition was a subject of several complaints we heard both from municipal employees and NGOs.

Among other governmental institutions which indirectly provide services for older people should be mentioned state owned theaters, museums, and music halls. Those often provide discounts and create events specifically for older people. ²

1) Nonprofits Associated with the Government and Sponsored by it.

There are several so called nongovernmental organizations supported directly by the government. Among them are "The Association of the Blind", "The Association of the Persons with Disabilities", and so called "Oorganization (councils) of veterans, pensioners and retirees". The latter declare itself a membership organizations and cite tremendous numbers of members (in millions). However, this membership is based on automatic inclusion of ALL retired persons in the member list of the organization without ever considering their opinion. This demonstrates purely soviet approach. And these organizations by structure and ideology most often represent "leftovers" of the Soviet times. These councils were created still in the Soviet era (1986) and were politically and ideologically based on the Soviet system. Participation was "volunteer-

² Interview, Kolton L., Jewish Charity Center "Hesed Abraham", Saint Petersburg

mandatory” based and some administrative positions could be paid. Nowadays they exist in virtually every municipality or even village in the Russian Federation.

The government provided these organizations with modest facilities and an allowance for administrative expenses. Their primary function at that time used to be to honor the veterans of the Russian Revolution and Civil war and the World War II. Also, their other mission was to commemorate the deeds of Soviet people in the war and spread the knowledge among younger generation. In no case did they have any social service functions. Most of them though have inherited the entire spirit of the Soviet bureaucracy, including long meetings and pompous declarations, however, some functions have changed. Sometimes today they serve as hosts for older persons’ hobby/art/music clubs. Some of them have also taken a responsibility to educate people about changes in legislation and provide with newspapers and consultations during the difficult times of 90s. Some of the leaders also are performing advocacy functions.^v However, mostly they advocate for the veterans of the World War II, who already are well supported by the local and federal government and supporting them is not a controversial issue in anyway. They are well set on the Government’s agenda and receive good benefits from the Government, even though the numbers of the Veterans of the WWII are becoming fewer and fewer every year. This creates some tension between older people, who were not “fortunate” enough to be veterans fo the WWII and therefore have to survive on the minimum pension of about 150 US dollars.

It should be noted here that nowadays most Chairs of the Veterans’ Councils are retired top managers of government authorities of different levels, and factories.

Therefore they often are just continuing their long term relationship with the

authorities. These organizations are considered worth supporting, (72% of municipal employees agree about that) and are indeed supported financially, or by in-kind provision of premises and other facilities (66% of municipalities).^{vi} Representatives of these “nongovernmental” organizations, which in fact are organized and fully supported by the government have been most loyal towards the authorities in our interviews, even when stating some pertinent social issues.

Another interesting “hybrid” promoted and supported by the government recently is so called “Union of Pensioners”. It was founded as an advocate organization for the interests of older people. In 2006 they signed an agreement with the Pension Fund of Russian Federation about cooperation for the advocacy and benefits of older persons.^{vii} The Union of the pensioners of Russian Federation also signed the contract with political parties such as United Russia with the same purpose of cooperation for the benefit of the older persons.³ The role of partisan organizations is not significant enough yet. It is also not clear yet what that role includes. Members of such organizations in some cities are said to have been attracted from the employees of the Pension Fund. On the other hand, in Kazan this organization has managed to organize and run for years a Third Age University in partnership with Kazan University.

2) Independent Protesting Nonprofit Nongovernmental Organizations Fighting Against the Government and Corruption.

These human rights activists’ organizations sometimes (though rarely) notice issues concerning rights of older persons and publish some research on that^{viii}.

³ Website of The Union of the pensioners of Russian Federation
<http://www.rosensioner.ru/p/docs/soglasheniya.html>

However, mostly age discrimination goes unnoticed or is only privately discussed by nonprofits serving older people. There are some examples when such organizations published research and international documents on older people's rights, even tried to organize a coalition of organizations to promote the rights of older persons.⁴

3)Independent Organizations Founded Specifically for Money

Laundering by Criminal, Commercial Enterprises or Government.

Unfortunately the practice of money laundering through charity organizations created specifically for these purposes has been well known since the “wild” nineties in Russia and is often mentioned as a reason of reluctance of potential donors to actually donate money to charities and a source of mistrust by population.^{ix} About 3% of population defined nonprofit organizations as “performing criminal activities”. 27% of respondents believe that nonprofit organizations are created to “serve private interests of their interests”.^x And here the pronounced mission of an organization does not make any difference. Serving older adults may be declared on the agenda as well as serving needs of children with disabilities and other purposes. Evidently, they do not serve anybody, but the commercial or criminal interests.

Also, nonprofit organizations were widely used as an instrument to establish “political capital”. “Every other well-known congressman, mayor or governor has some relations with nonprofit organizations and charitable foundations”^{xi}. However, as soon as a politician acquires the visibility of his/her name, the organization he/she was supporting virtually disappears.

⁴More information at the website of the organization at <http://source.dobroedelo.org/index.php/socialnaya-gerontologiya/>

Moreover, charities and foundations were used for making gigantic profits. In 90s there were no mechanisms of financial accountability at all. Nobody could control how, in fact, an NGO was spending its financial resources. And, their activities were not monitored. An NGO could work as a purely commercial enterprise and still have tax benefits due to its NGO status.

4) Independent Nonprofit Organizations Started by “Grass Roots” or Established by a Renowned Person, Supported or not by Foundations, Foreign or Russian.

Some of grass root organizations existed still in the Soviet Union, though rarely approved by the government. However, the real “nonprofit rush” started in Russia in the 90s, when many Western Foundations were ready to support and develop civil society and the social situation was so disastrous that required humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, few have ever been interested in supporting organizations for older adults. Those few organizations having been supported are still playing an important role and visible in the nonprofit scene for older adults (Foundation “Good Deed” (“Dobroe Delo” in Moscow). However, there was a much bigger number of organizations specifically configured and sponsored for a particular project, which closed right after the end of the project. Even now one can watch their abandoned “ghost” sites on the web.

The “real” independent “new kind” nonprofit organizations currently working with older adults in Russia constitute the following well differentiated groups.

Formalized, officially registered NGOs

This group is formed by a large range of organizations from well established and well financed Foundations, medical and gerontological centers to smaller organizations employing one or two persons. The numbers of the first ones cannot be compared to the numbers of those in the Western countries. Most small ones often have only one source of income, often one-time, or no income at all. People who lead them often run on enthusiasm and organization might get dissolved if the leader quits. However, there is a number of examples which manage to fulfill their direct missions and those missions range from providing services to developing a better image of older persons. As for most other nonprofit organizations in Russia they often struggle in terms of funding, governance and management. There are few professionals in the area and most have to learn by already working in the field. During the 2000's in Russia the "Foundation Dobroe Delo" has tried to form a coalition of organizations "For the Rights of the Elderly" which is striving generally for the rights of the older people in Russia. Interestingly enough, in 2009 among 50 organization members only 4 were discretely declaring themselves as organizations working for the older generations. Others were for families, children, education. And partly they provided services for older adults.

Informal clubs

Clubs are informal groups of peers, older adults united by a common hobby. The most widely spread type of a club for older persons is a chorus. Many of them function as additional programs at the Veterans' Councils or Third Age Universities. They provide for the feeling of community inclusion (again, community of older persons mostly, but sometimes they manage to interact with other generations by acting

and singing for audiences of different ages. They do enhance the image of older persons as active in the community and able to enjoy life.^{xii}

Universities of the “third (older) age”

In bigger cities (about 1,000,000) there often will be a “third age university”, a «pensioners' university», «people's university». This is a special group of organizations, which cannot be strictly defined as governmental or nongovernmental. Some of them are based on the remains of the networks of associations “Knowledge” widely spread in the Soviet Union and are modeled from the German universities of the third age. Some are organized by State Universities. We have found several instances of Third Age Universities organized by Veterans’ councils, grass root organizations (in Tuymazy, St Petersburg), and Pensioners’ Party (in Kazan). Also, sometimes Social Service Centers organize Third Age Universities (or let other organizations use their facilities). In most cases education is informal, there is no graduation, or degree conferred. However, sometimes, more as exception rather than a rule, Third Age Universities cooperate with regular universities and issue certificates for the coursework.^{xiii}

Political parties

There were a couple of political parties that tried to involve older citizens and solicit their voting power. During 1990s there were several leftist parties, which promised either return to the Soviet Past, or promoting the values of the soviet past. They were popular with older persons many of whom still cannot accept the change of the regime. The Party of the Pensioners was founded in 1997 and attracted a significant part of the electorate. Communist Party of Russian Federation is supported by many older persons because of its association with the communist past of the country. Half of the party’s members are older than 60 years old. However, membership is decreasing

from about 500,000 in 1999 to nearly 184 thousand in 2006. Common perceptions of the activities of political parties have been stable and negative (60-70% of respondents) for several years^{xiv}

Specifics and Challenges of Government – Nonprofit Cooperation in Serving Older Adults in Russia

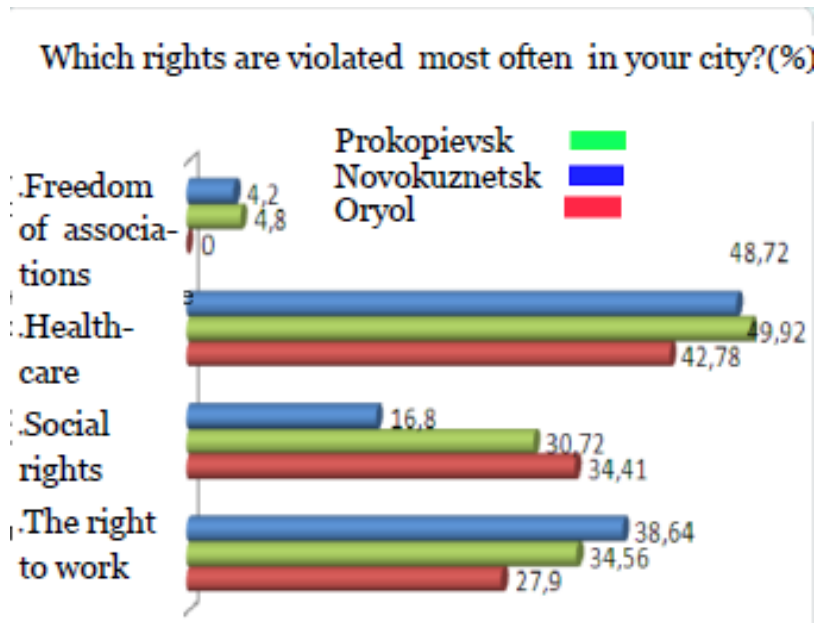
Government -nonprofit cooperation in Russia is complicated by many circumstances of history as well as modernity. Among the most cited problems we could hear in interviews with representatives of NGOS and municipalities are these: Imperfections of legislation, lack of trust and communication between different types of organizations, Difference of approaches to serving older adults, Lack of information about available services (both governmental and nonprofit). It is typical that most problems were named by representatives of the nonprofit organizations. Most government employees have generally a more positive view on the situation with older adults generally, and on the relations and cooperation with nonprofits in particular.

Legislation

Given the short history of the new Russian legislation it is clear that it cannot be perfect at this time yet. When we talk about cooperation of public and nonprofit organizations serving older adults we need to consider several aspects: laws applicable to persons of certain age and laws specifying possibilities for interactions between the government and nonprofit organizations.

First, according to the Russian law a person becomes eligible for an “old age” pension at the age of 55 for women and age of 60 for men. It was considered a positive discrimination once, however, nowadays it provokes earlier age discrimination at work for women (as stated by several respondents of our interviews). Also, according to the

data from the questionnaire, the right to work was named as one of the violated very often (from 28 to 39% in three of the researched cities).



Pic.1. Violation of the rights of older people

Second, pension regulations and benefits regulations should also be considered in our analysis. These regulations are not easy to understand, and both nonprofit organizations and Social Security Offices offer consultations for older persons about it.

Third, the nonprofit legislation in Russia has been criticized extensively for its complexity, uncertainties and nonexistent mechanisms of implementation. In 2005 under President Putin there were multiple amendments to the NGO legislation which made it extremely hard for nonprofits to register with the federal authorities and work on a legal basis.

It is typical, that most representatives of municipalities and SS offices do not see any problems with all the types of legislation. Some of them (and some

representatives of Veterans' councils) suggested that "the only thing we need to do is to raise pensions, there is nothing else we need".⁵

Generally, most NGO representatives also agreed that "the laws are perfect, but there are no legal procedures for their implementation".⁶ . However, NGO employees also named the following difficulties:

- Disparities between different laws in terms of volunteer contributions regulations, such as the size of expenses compensation, the legal way of compensation, volunteer benefits etc.⁷
- There are declarations to develop cooperation between NGOs and governmental organizations but there are absolutely no concrete legal mechanisms to do it.⁸
- At the beginning of 2010 the law on privileges for "socially oriented" organizations was adopted at the Federal level, which was supposed to be followed by the regional mechanisms of implementation. However, in 2011 there are still none in most regions, including Saint Petersburg.⁹
- There is a mechanism of "public hearings", which is supposed to solicit public opinions on socially important issues for the government authorities to implement it. However, there is no agreement on its efficiency. While municipality employees and Veterans' councils representatives believe it's a very good way to hear older adults who constitute the majority of the attendees of such hearings¹⁰ , other NGOs representatives believe it is just

⁵ Interview, Novokuznetsk

⁶ Interview with Chernysheva S., Thrid Age School "House of projects", St Petersburg

⁷ Interview, Kolton L., Jewish Charity Center "Hesed Abraham", Saint Petersburg

⁸ Interview with Chernysheva S., Thrid Age School "House of projects", St Petersburg

⁹ Interview, Klishova G., Charity organization "Pokrov Community", St Petersburg

¹⁰ Interview, Kutuzov N., Council of the Veterans, Prokopievsk,

Interview, employee of the local government, Tuymazy

“for the public to vent their dissatisfaction”, but in fact authorities do not take this information into consideration.

Lack of Trust and Communications between Governmental and Nonprofit Organizations;

Many NGOS do not have any idea about the kind of support they could receive from the government. Moreover, many representatives of the government don't have a clear idea about activities of the nonprofit sector and social good created by them. The lack of interest from municipalities was cited as one of the major problems in another research by NGO representatives whereas only 6% of municipal employees thought it was a problem ^{xv}

In our interviews when asked about ease of cooperation generally government officials were much more positive and optimistic than nonprofits. They were confident that cooperation was fruitful and easy for both sides, and replied something like that “it's fine, we have an entire department responsible for the relations with NGOs” ^{.11}. Or “Our cooperation is wonderful, there are a lot of other organizations working with older people and we often do things together”. ¹² In most cases representatives of governmental institutions asked about nonprofit sector were only able to name nonprofits officially supported by the government and associated with them (Veterans' councils).

However, most NGO representatives stated that sometimes contacts were impossible, they were not treated respectfully, and governments did not want to hear them. Sometimes authorities diminish the role NGOs play in serving older adults: “They say that only 5 grannies attend our courses, though we have been working since 1997

¹¹ Interview, Local government, Novokuznetsk

¹² Interview, Sokolova L., State Social Service Center, St Petersburg

without any financial support from the Government and have served thousands of people”¹³ And quite often they appropriate the credit for the activities in fact run by nonprofits, and they cite these activities in their reports to regional government.

Having said that, we should indicate that 62% of NGOS somehow cooperate with the local governmental institutions and city authorities.^{xvi} According to statistics it is most common that NGOs are interacting with the local government about: receiving information - 40 %, delivering information, analytics - 29 %, participation in joint Boards 27 %, participation in realization of municipal programs (with no contract or financial liabilities)- 21 % участвуют в реализации муниципальных программ (без социального заказа), participation in joint discussions and committees 21 %..^{xvii} This is confirmed by some interviewees: “Overall the situation is difficult. Our organization has good relationship with the local authorities but we are more of an exception. It’s mostly personal connections, that work, but there is no systematic conversation”¹⁴.

Difference of Approaches to Serving Older Adults

Even though aging and depopulation are considered a problem in the Russian Federation, all the policies are concentrated on youth and there are no explicit policies or federal programs on older generation. This definitely reflects in the views and attitudes of the government employees. The striking difference in the approaches proclaimed by municipal and nonprofit employees is how they perceive the older population. In most interviews municipal employees stated that to improve lives of older people they only need higher pensions. When asked what social potential of the older generation can be most useful for their municipality the common reply was “helping to look after and educate children”. Hence, older people are seen as most

¹³Interview, Kanonygina T, “Knowledge”, NGO, Oryol

¹⁴ Interview, Klishova G., Charity organization “Pokrov Community”, St Petersburg

useful in families and sometimes in public education system as invited speakers.

Whereas nonprofit organizations focus on positives of the old age. When asked about social potential they talked about multiple variety of roles older persons can take in the society. Also, NGO leaders usually agree on the necessity to raise the pensionable age because they believe older persons, especially women over 55 (who become eligible for the state pension at this age) are fully capable to function as before, whereas government employees just stick to the law.

According to the results of our survey from 45% of respondents in Saint Petersburg to 87% in Prokopievsk (with other cities in between) consider that municipal authorities do not or are not likely to take into consideration their needs or interests. Whereas, most municipality representatives are confident that they take into consideration older people's opinions, and some even state they survey their clients to receive their feedback.¹⁵ It is interesting, that a large number of respondents (81%) in this city stated that the local authority are not likely or do not take into consideration their needs or interests.

Nonprofits representatives blame government for not having any clear policies towards older people. Among the deficiencies of the policies were most often mentioned the following.

1. Lack of scientific approach and knowledge to develop efficient policies and lack of political will to use help from NGOs to do it. "I've talked to the mayor. He says he has no funds for older people in his budget. But they never have any. So he should plan for it for the future. He should do the research and improve his social policies. I am ready to help... [There are international documents which should be followed, such as Madrid Plan on Aging.]. But nobody has ever read

¹⁵ Interview, local government, Novokuznetsk

- it. Just recently they have started doing something and I guess it's because the international organizations are going to ask for a report on actions taken. I am convinced that our government only does something out of fear.”¹⁶
2. Not differentiating between different groups of older persons. “They just don't think that older people are all different. They only know that they are an expenditure item. They just don't hear what NGOs tell them.”¹⁷
 3. Exclusion of older people from decisions making process. Older people do not participate in the governance process. Mostly there are no councils “of the wise” or “the old”. And if they participate in public hearings, it is just fiction.
 4. Focus on the young generation only. “Developing this and that for the young is in all government programs. But older people are still here! And even with our low life expectancy everyone has a chance to live 20-30 years after retirement. That is a third or a fourth part of a life. What do you do with it? The government has to provide them with opportunities to live fully, enjoy their lives and contribute to the society. And it's not only about raising pensions.”¹⁸
 5. Focus on essential needs only or populist measures (entertainment during the Victory Day and Day of older persons). “They are focused on the wrong priorities. Instead of concentrating on engaging younger older adults, and taking care of those who became prisoners in their own homes they deliver food products. Let supermarkets do that. They have capacities and interest to do it.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Interview, Kanonygina T, “Knowledge”, NGO, Oryol

¹⁷ Interview, Klishova G., Charity organization “Pokrov Community”, St Petersburg

¹⁸ Interview, NGO, Tuymazy

¹⁹ Interview, Grigorieva I., expert on ageing, St Petersburg

Lack of Information about Available Services (Both Governmental and Nonprofit)

Lack of information is clearly an issue for most cities in the research. This problem was indicated both by the interviews (mostly nonprofits) and is seen from the analysis of the survey results.

However, whereas NGOs indicate this problem, and are working on informing older people about their services, most government employees see no problem in that: “Of course, they know everything about available services. They can just come to our office and we’ll tell them all they want to know about.”²⁰ In Tuymazy municipality organizes field trips of officials and “hot lines” so that people could come or call and ask questions. However, most municipalities do not really make an effort to reach out to people. “I know that some people did not receive the benefits they were entitled to, because they just didn’t know about them”. ЛЬГОТ²¹

In most cities (except for Oryol) from 21 to 66% older respondents could not name any organization, providing conditions for active and productive life of older persons.

Most nonprofit leaders agree that the information is limited and convenience of access to information is arguable: “Of course there is not enough information. You can see it in this fact. We compiled an information brochure “Public benefits for older persons” and we handed it out at a recent conference. They [older persons] took all the copies we had!”²²

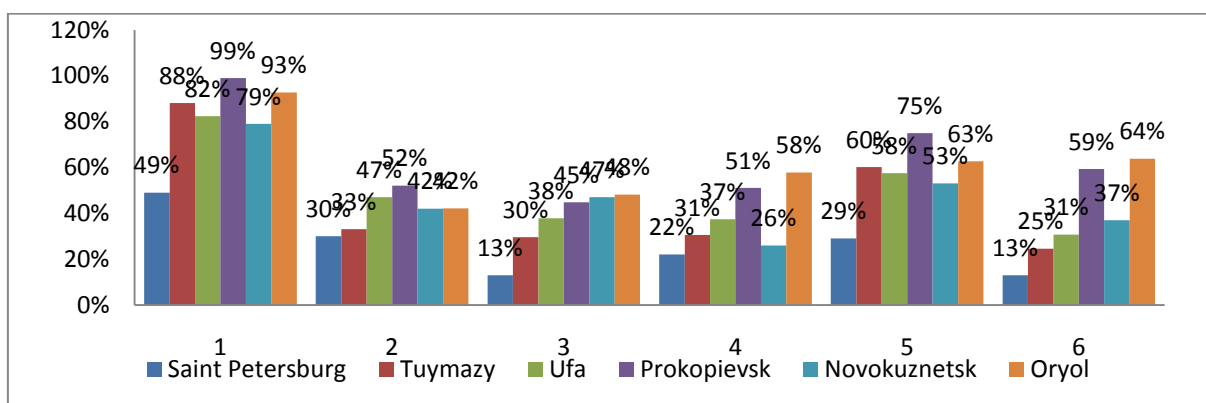
NGO leaders disagree on what the primary sources of information for older persons are. “Word of mouth” is definitely one of most trustable ways for older people to receive information about services and opportunities available in the community.

²⁰ Interview, local government, Tuymazy

²¹ Interview, Sokolova L., State Social Service Center, St Petersburg

²² Interview, Kolton L., Jewish Charity Center “Hesed Abraham”, Saint Petersburg

However, local radio and television also have been commonly mentioned as an important source of information for older adults. However, whether in smaller cities most older respondents agreed that the local media is generally available in all city areas, in St Petersburg less than half agree with that. Generally respondents from Saint Petersburg turned out to be the least satisfied with the quality and availability of information in the city among the five cities on the graph.



- 1 Local television, radio and newspapers are available in all city areas
- 2 Regular information and broadcasts of interest to older people are offered.
- 3 Public and commercial services provide friendly, person-to-person service
- 4 Printed information – including official forms, television captions and text on visual displays – has large lettering and the main ideas are shown by clear headings and bold-face type.
- 5 Print and spoken communication uses simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences
- 6 Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time.

Pic.2. Older adults' satisfaction with the quality and availability of information²³

Another problem discovered in the interviews is that information is not adjusted for older people in terms of readability, which is also confirmed by the survey results (on average less than 40% agree that printed information is readable). Another issue is that the media often does not present a positive image of older people. Moreover, it was mentioned that even for those people who go to public institutions to find out

²³ Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities © World Health Organization 2007 was used to compile the questionnaire for the survey

information, it is not comfortable and convenient to do: “There are even no chairs in the pension fund office”.²⁴

Conclusions

Government and nonprofit organizations serving older adults are very different in structure and approaches. The government institutions are usually managed top-down and are more or less standardized all over the country. Nonprofit nongovernmental organizations serving older people are various in legal forms, missions, funding, size and services they provide. There is also a special layer of semi-nongovernmental nonprofit organizations supported and sponsored by the Government but declaring themselves independent associations.

Cooperation between government and nonprofit nongovernmental organizations in Russia is generally quite complicated. Factors which influence most the cooperation in the field of serving older people are the following: uncertainties of legislation, lack of trust and communication between nonprofits and government, difference of approaches in to serving older population, and lack of information.

ⁱ Краснова О.В. Имидж пожилых будет улучшаться. [The image of older persons will be improving]. Социальный календарь АСИ, выпуск № 12 на октябрь 2006 года. Available online at <http://www.asi.org.ru/ASI3/main.nsf/0/50C58FE3BB3716B9C32571F8005ADAAE>

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ⁱⁱⁱ Козлова Т.З. (2001) Пенсионеры о себе. [Pensioners about themselves]. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Russian Academy of Science. P. 110.

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