

The Consequences of Demographic Change



The lifestyles of the elderly are becoming more varied. EBP identified the current and future needs of older generations and has pinpointed the associated consequences for cantons, cities and communes.

Switzerland is getting older. The children of the high-birth-rate years, the so-called baby boomers, are reaching pensionable age. Many of them have acquired considerable wealth and both men and women leave behind their active and challenging working life in very good health. Many do not experience retirement as the entry into “old age” and a time for withdrawal but as the beginning of a new life chapter. As is the case for the younger generations, their lifestyles and life courses are becoming increasingly diversified. What does this development mean for the public administration? Do the traditional images of «old people» who need support still reflect reality? Do today’s public services and infrastructure still meet the changing needs of the elderly and what will they need in the future? EBP investigated all of these questions in a study commissioned by BaslerFonds, the canton of Aargau, the Federal Insurance Office and the Federal Office for Housing.

With the participation of the canton of Aargau’s interdepartmental working group on demography and the two federal authorities, the project began by identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with demographic change. The next step involved the identification and explanation of the requirements of today’s and future generations of older people: focus groups consisting of inhabitants of the canton of Aargau between 45 and 70 years of age provided an insight into the process of ageing and provided evidence of the different lifestyles. To conclude, various future scenarios were developed. The study indicates

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the areas in which the public administration must assume an active role to meet the challenges posed by demographic change in a future characterised by uncertain economic and social conditions.

Conclusion: Elderly people have different needs and the diversity of their needs will be far more pronounced in the future than it is today. Public authorities are not yet sufficiently familiar with this new clientele.

Cities, urban agglomerations and rural communes are not affected by the same lifestyles to the same extent and this necessitates the adoption of different spatial strategies. The «new elderly» present considerable potential in terms of health, prosperity, knowledge and experience, and this potential should be exploited for future-oriented development.

Parts of the project's final report were acknowledged by the Cantonal Council of the canton of Aargau in mid-April 2011.