

Chapter 6

Attitudes Towards Older People in the Labour Market and in Politics: A Cross-National Comparison



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Introduction

Attitudes and values of individuals change more or less in the course of their lives. Life experiences change. Growing up, and then the phase of adulthood, are associated with the performance of various changing social roles in different stages of the life cycle.

Moreover, changes taking place in the recent decades have forced individuals to redefine their own place in the society, as well as the place of those who vary in terms of age, cultural capital. Defining and redefining one's identity and the way we perceive others are not easy, as it has been underlined by Giddens:

In many modern settings, individuals are caught up in a variety of differing encounters and milieux, each of which may call for different forms of "appropriate" behaviour. [...] On the one hand we find the type of person who constructs his identity around a set of fixed commitments, which act as a filter through which numerous different social environments are reacted to or interpreted. Such a person is a rigid traditionalist, in a compulsive sense, and refuses any relativism of context. On the other hand, in the case of a self which evaporates into the variegated contexts of action, we find the adaptive response which Erich Fromm has characterised as "authoritarian conformity. (2006: 190)

Stereotypes hinder the change of perception of ourselves, as well as others, even though the changing social world encourages such change (Allport, 1958; Cudy et al., 2008; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Levy, 2009). The social structure, the place, which we occupy in it, and the age of individuals serve as a basis for understanding and acceptance of transformation. Castells distinguishes three forms and

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sources that are crucial in the process of constructing identity: the legitimizing identity, introduced through dominant social institutions; the resistance identity, developed by those whose position is inferior and who are stigmatized by the logic of dominance; and finally, the project identity, which emerges when social actors develop or redefine their identity on the basis of available cultural materials (Castells, 2002: 8).

Settersten (2017), focusing on analysis of the situation of the older people, underlines that "...both individual and population aging are heavily conditioned by social factors. The strong focus in the literature on personal factors associated with individual aging brings the risk of losing sight of the social." Settersten (2017), summarising his consideration, writes: "*Aging*" and the "*life course*" are distinct but complementary phenomena. He stresses that (1) age is a salient dimension of individual identity and social organization; (2) a reconfigured life course brings reconfigured aging; (3) old age is a highly precarious phase of life; (4) difference and inequality are not the same, but both can accumulate over time; (5) aging is gendered; (6) aging is interpersonal, and "independence" is an illusion; (7) "choice" and "responsibility" can be dirty words; (8) much of aging is in the mind—it is imagined and anticipated; and (9) history leaves its footprints on aging, gerontologists must look beyond the personal, for much of the relevant action is to be found in social experience."

The life trajectory theories point to the variety of factors that exert impact upon individuals. Their authors' emphasis that impacts of the factors intersect, and their strength, varies during different phases of life (Beck, 1977; Inglehart, 1990; Mannheim, 1974; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Inkeles & Smith, 1974). They also point out that these changes are processual, which applies both to individuals and communities.

Hatch (2005) offers a multilevel life course model, which consists of four groups of factors: the individual biography, the social standing and membership in social groups, the age group, to which the individual belongs, and a wider social context. As he underlines, these factors are interrelated.

For example, studies have shown that individuals' health is not only determined by age. It also depends on social group affiliation. Those living in poverty are usually in a poorer health condition compared to the wealthier ones. The same can be said about less educated persons and members of ethnic or racial groups, which are discriminated against. Studies have also proven that macro-scale events (such as the Great Depression of the 1930s, the second world war, establishing of the communist system and its fall in some countries of Europe (Grey, 1997; Inglehart, 1988; McAdam et al., 1996), the student movements of year 1968 (Inglehart, 1977), feminist movements of the 1960s and the following decades (Gelb, 1989; Kaplan, 1992; Vianello & Hawkesworth, 2015) influenced the shaping of identity of people, their systems of values, life aspirations and behaviours (Inglehart, 1977, 2018; Riley et al., 1999; Duncan & Agronick, 1995).

The second half of the twentieth century brought events that politicians had not expected. Subsequent generations changed their systems of values, placing increasing emphasis on postmaterialist values while having a sense of fulfilment of

materialist needs (Inglehart, 1977, 2018). These changes were supposed to lead to reconstruction of institutions, which would give more influence to young people. At the same time, the elder generation was presented as failing to catch up with the emerging new challenges in economy, as well as in the sphere of social and cultural solutions, which slowed down the transformation. History of the last decades has shown that meanders of history were much more complicated than it had been suspected. In the recent years, the labour market situation of the young generation has become difficult. Substantial unemployment rates, which exerted impact mainly on young people, lack of stability of those who got employed, despite the increased education level of this generation, have placed them among the precariat (Standing, 2011). It also turned out that – as it has been indicated by parliamentary and local elections, as well as emergence of new social movements in European countries in the recent years – the systems of values of the present young generation are far from being simply a continuation of trends identified in the 1970s. In the sphere of customs, there have been substantial changes, oriented at freedom of choice of individuals in their private lives (Bauman, 2005, 2018). On the other hand, in the sphere of political values, democracy and free market economy turned out to be less attractive for many than previously anticipated. In many research projects, increased individualism has been noted – particularly among young people, eager to perceive reality from the perspective of individual benefits in the economic and social sphere, as well as an increase in populism (Inglehart, 2018).

Aging of European societies, which has become dramatic in some countries, as well as mass migrations abroad, have forced politicians and economists to revise their previous assessments (Magnus, 2009; Granton & Scott, 2016). The social structure of the aging population has been changing as well. Decades earlier, it was much less educated than the subsequent younger generations. This is true, in particular, with regard to women, who since 1980 have constituted more than one half of university students and graduates in most European countries. At present, a part of this population has either retired or is about to retire. In 2020 the highest number of people with high/higher education (ISCED 5-8) in age 55–74 was in EU in Finland 37.7%, the lowest in Romania 8.6% [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Share_of_the_population_by_educational_attainment_level_and_selected_age_groups_2020_\(%25\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Share_of_the_population_by_educational_attainment_level_and_selected_age_groups_2020_(%25).png) (consulted 26 November 2021).

The feminist movements of the 1970s in Western Europe attempted to change the concept of roles played by women, to promote their emancipation and a conviction that the principle of equality of women and men should be implemented in all spheres of life (Gelb, 1989; Kaplan, 1992; Vianello & Hawkesworth, 2015; Duncan & Agronick, 1995). Nevertheless, in reality, gender inequality has remained dominant in all of these spheres regardless of age both in Western Europe and in post-communist countries (Siemienska, 2004). Attitudes and opinions concerning the older people are largely burdened by stereotypes shaped a long time ago. The combination of these factors, fuelled by slowly changing attitudes, result in the roles assigned to the older people being far from their actual cultural capital.

The lengthening of life expectancy of subsequent generations in the recent decades, improvement of health and the level of education of societies – particularly women – are accompanied by the development of different forms of state and various types of individual insurance of care over the aging population. The existence of the form of care as well as cultural changes conducive to a shift in the roles of the family prove the need for assessment of individual and collective opinions on the role of the older people and modifications of the life trajectories (Ní Leime et al., 2020; Schubert et al., 2019). Also important, particularly in some countries, like Poland, is the influence of the Catholic Church on politics (e.g., the law, which limits access to abortion, religion being taught in schools, presence of the conservative media).

Authors of studies focusing on the older people most of all focus on identifying their health and living needs. Therefore, research focuses mostly on the types of disease, which are most often encountered in this age group, accessibility of medical and care services, institutions, which are aimed at satisfying social communication needs of the older people (such as University of the Third Age, senior clubs), the retirement pension levels (Ní Leime et al., 2020; Blum et al., 2020; Gilbert, 2004).

Due to the demographic changes, mentioned above, the older people are increasingly often analysed from the perspective of the possibility of prolonging the period of their activity on the changing labour market, possessed by their cultural and social capital. However, the problem is much more extensive, as a major role is played by attitudes towards the older people; the way they are perceived by their potential employers and colleagues and the assessment of the capital they represent.

In benchmark analyses of different countries, one has to realize that they differ in terms of their welfare systems, which also change over time. They are also largely decisive for the mode and degree of security provided for the older people, and the associated level of their social and economic marginalization. In his analysis, “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism” published in 1990, Esping-Andersen distinguished between three basic models: liberal, conservative and socio-democratic, which differ in terms of the concept of who should be supported. In the liberal model, it is the poorest. According to Esping-Andersen, the country, which represents this model, is the United States. In the case of the conservative model, receipt of benefits is determined by the status of the individual; care is focused mostly on families. The countries analysed in the chapter that belong to this group are Germany and Spain. As for the socio-democratic model, in which the aim is to ensure a relatively higher standard of living for the widest possible group of the population, the country included in the study is Sweden. The models proposed by Esping-Andersen were received by researchers with great interest and have served as a basis for critical remarks, which will not be discussed here. Esping-Andersen’s work has been cited here to show that one of the significant components which make up the context of functioning of individuals is the degree in which specific social groups are supported/protected by specific regimes. The classification of Esping-Andersen referred to Western European and some non-European countries. It did not include communist countries, their welfare systems, as well as their further transformation after they entered the group of capitalist countries, based on free market economy and

implementing democracy as their political system. Many researchers treat them as a single group from the perspective of the existing welfare system. Some perceive substantial differences between them. For instance, Estonia, Belarus and Ukraine, included in our research, previously had lower standard of living being parts of the highly centralized Soviet Union in economic and political sense. Poland, Romania, Slovenia (formerly a part of Yugoslavia) have been controlled by the Soviet Union since the second world war until the early 1990s but they differ to some degree in their political and economic systems. Some authors point out that what is important is the division into countries, which became member states of the European Union and to some extent adapted their solutions to the EU standards, and the remaining ones. Esping-Andersen (1999) rejected the idea of a distinct Central and Eastern European welfare regime, considering the European post-communist welfare states as converging towards one of his three-fold typology. Esping-Andersen argued that there are 'no' "new" trajectories (...) that deviates markedly from existing welfare states." Ciprian Badescu (1996). No doubts, welfare state regimes serve as a context, providing specific life choices and – to a varying extent – a sense of security for members of the society.

The aim of this chapter is to show how selected European societies assess the cultural and social capital of seniors, and to what extent the place of respondents in their life trajectories is differentiated by their attitudes towards the older people. We assume that the results of comparative research, presented below, concerning attitudes towards the older people, are determined by different living conditions, shaped by different welfare regimes, political systems, as well as macro-scale events in individual countries and micro-scale events affecting individuals. They are shaping their different experiences in subsequent phases of life, as well as the specific nature of their cultural capital. Above mentioned differences in history and social welfare regime have been basis for the inclusion of the countries to presented below analysis. In the analysis, we return to the period of fundamental systemic changes in Europe in the analyses: in the 90s, when Central and Eastern Europe countries started to become independent from the Soviet Union in terms of their economic and political systems. As it has been stated earlier, the main analyses are based on data collected in 2012 in the frame of World Values Survey when the data concerning seniors have been part of the study. 16 <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWVL.jsp> (consulted 22 May 2021) The author of the chapter is taking part in the study since 1990 being responsible for its Polish part.

Attitudes towards older people on the labour market varied greatly in the countries compared (Table 6.1).

The countries examined varied in terms of the degree of acceptance of the policy forcing older people to retire as jobs become scarce. A much greater proportion of inhabitants of post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe opted for this policy in 1990 compared to their counterparts in Western Europe and the United States. An exception to this rule was Spain, where the percentage of the population accepting such labour market policy was similar to that of the Central and Eastern Europe countries. In most post-communist countries, women were more willing to accept a policy than men (see Table 6.1). In Western countries, despite diversity,

Table 6.1 When jobs are scare people should be forced to retire early – % “agree” (data WVS 1990)

Name of country	% Agree	Gender		Age					Education			Income			Values		
		M	F	16–29	30–49	50+	Lower	Medium	Upper	Lower	Middle	Upper	mat	Mixed	Post-mat		
Romania	65	61	68	58	70	64	75	65	51	64	65	65	71	63	43		
East Germany	64	69	60	61	70	61	64	63	65	59	66	67	63	64	64		
Spain	62	63	61	56	64	64	66	60	45	71	61	56	68	59	56		
Belarus	60	60	61	58	64	55	64	59	61	61	60	60	61	60	59		
Slovenia	60	58	62	57	61	61	67	64	43	68	58	49	67	60	41		
Poland	57	54	60	37	59	64	61	58	38	60	52	58	58	57	58		
Estonia	57	55	59	54	58	57	56	57	59	58	53	59	59	57	52		
West Germany	50	51	49	55	50	47	53	48	40	51	52	48	53	53	43		
Netherlands	42	42	42	46	36	46	51	37	36	41	44	37	53	45	34		
United States	16	17	14	15	12	19	20	17	11	20	16	11	21	15	12		
Sweden	09	10	08	10	06	11	10	10	05	09	09	08	17	08	07		

Source: Inglehart et al. (2001)

women clearly accepted it less often than men, which is linked by researchers with the experience of dynamically developing feminist movements in the 1960s and the 1970s (Duncan & Agronick, 1995). In most countries, older respondents were slightly more willing to accept such a proposition; nevertheless, differences between age groups were insignificant. The only exceptions in this regard were post-communist Poland and conservative Spain, where young people were much less eager to accept a policy discriminating against older people. Similarly, people with higher education were less eager to discriminate against older people in comparison with less educated respondents (in 8 countries with different welfare regimes out of 11 countries examined: Eastern (GDR) and Western (FRG) Germany are treated separately here due to their different history in the period preceding unification). Individuals with low income were more eager to accept the policy of excluding older people from the labour market, although in most countries compared, differences between the more and less affluent were insignificant or did not exist at all. The exceptions here were Western European countries (Spain, the Netherlands) and the United States, as well as post-communist Slovenia, where the more affluent were much more eager to protest against the policy of discrimination against the older people. A lower acceptance for the policy based on discrimination against the older people was linked to changes in the systems of values of West-European countries in the second half of the twentieth century. Research results (Inglehart, 1977) indicate that a focus on post-materialist values gained importance particularly among younger people who were participants and witnesses of the student movements of 1968. Persons with this orientation were usually less likely to accept discrimination against older people in comparison with those characterised by a mixed or materialist orientation.

In summary, the countries which are analysed in detail in this chapter differed in terms of their history, which shaped the life trajectories of their inhabitants, as well as their opinions in the period of systemic transformation. Findings presented in following parts of the chapter were collected in the sixth wave of WVS 2012.

Characteristics Attributed to Older People

Table 6.2 illustrates the distribution of extreme answers to a number of questions, strong opinions indicating the perception of the older people, their cultural potential and assessment of the place, which they should occupy in the society (see classification of answers in Appendix).

The table shows percentages of people having particularly negative and particularly positive attitudes towards older people. Most people in all countries perceived older people as deserving respect, less people perceived them as friendly or competent. More than 70% of respondents from post-communist countries – Belarus, Poland, Romania and Slovenia –, as well as the Netherlands, as the only Western country in the compared group, considered older people to deserve respect. The highest percentages of persons with opposite opinions (slightly above 10%) were

Table 6.2 Attitudes toward older people (number of respondents with the most positive and negative attitudes)

	The lowest acceptance/ opinion	The highest acceptance/opinion
Social position: People in their 70s	Above 50% of population: Estonia, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine	Above 30% of population: Germany, USA
People over 70: are seen as friendly	Above 15% of population: Belarus, Estonia, Poland, Spain, Ukraine	Above 60% of population: Germany, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, USA
People over 70: are seen as competent	Above 25% of population: Estonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, USA	Above 50% of population: Estonia, Germany, Sweden
People over 70: viewed with respect	Above 10% of population: Estonia, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine	Above 70% of population: Belarus, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia
Older people get more than their fair share from the government	Above 15% of population: "the lowest disagreement" Sweden, USA	Above 90% of population: "The highest disagreement" Estonia, Germany, Poland, Spain, Ukraine
Companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different age	Above 45% of population: "the lowest disagreement" Belarus, Romania, Ukraine	Above 75% of population: "The highest disagreement" Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, USA
Is a 70-year-old boss acceptable	Above 50% of population: "the lowest acceptance" Belarus, Poland, Romania, Slovenia	Above 45% of population: "the highest acceptance" Germany, Spain, USA
Is a 30-year-old boss acceptable	Above 15% of population: "the lowest acceptance" Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, USA	Above 65% of population: "the highest acceptance" Belarus, Estonia, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Ukraine

recorded in Germany, Sweden, Spain, Estonia and Ukraine. The highest percentages of respondents perceiving older people as friendly (more than 60%) were recorded in the Netherlands, Sweden, the USA and Romania. Percentages of people with opposite opinions were the highest (slightly above 15%) in Belarus, Poland, Estonia, Ukraine and Spain. Persons aged 70 or more were least often perceived as competent. In this case, they were considered to be competent mostly (by more than 50%) in Belarus, Germany and Sweden. More than 25% respondents from Estonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Spain perceived them as incompetent. Therefore, opinions of respondents of countries distinguished by negative or positive opinions (see Table 6.2) show that the conclusion stating differences in history (e.g. Western and post-communist) and type of the welfare regime are clear determinants of opinions of different societies cannot be deduced.

Systematic analysis of factors, which may play a role in differentiation of attitudes towards older people, such as gender, age, education, financial standing, show that while societies differ between themselves, the differences within these countries between various groups are not very significant.

In almost all of the compared post-communist countries, women slightly less often than men perceive older people as friendly. The percentage difference does not exceed 2–3%. In West-European countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden), there is a similar tendency. Opinions of women differ much more from those of men. Women are clearly less eager to refer to older people as friendly in comparison with men. Differences between age groups are usually insignificant, with the exception of the United States, where older people more often perceive persons in this age group as being friendly. Also, the level of education does little to differentiate between attitudes towards older people, and it is shaped differently in the countries compared. Post-materialistically oriented respondents with higher incomes (except for Sweden and Romania) in almost all countries perceive older people as friendly.

The percentage of persons perceiving the older people as competent varies very much in individual countries: it is the lowest in Slovenia (27.5%) and the highest in Sweden (60.5%). Inhabitants of West-European countries more often express their belief that the older people are competent. Men tended to assign competences to them more frequently than women. Similar differences were visible in assessments of older people as friendly. The oldest respondents with the lowest education and the highest income slightly more often perceived older people as competent. However, there is no clear association between a focus on materialistic – post-materialistic values and an assignment of competences to older people, which becomes visible as we compare the distribution of answers in the countries analysed.

Differences in the perception of the older people as deserving respect also significantly vary country to country. This view is least popular in Spain (53.8%), and most popular in Romania (87.1%). In some countries, there are slightly more men, in others slightly more women. Only in Sweden and the USA, the differences are more visible (reaching several percent), as men more frequently declared their belief that older people should be treated with respect. These views were shared by the most affluent young people with university education. There is no clear trend with regard to an association between orientation towards values (materialistic – post-materialistic) and perception of older people as deserving respect.

This substantial diversification of assessment in the case of individual features (competent, friendly, viewed with respect) seems to confirm the need for their separate analysis as components of capital of individuals, belonging to specific age groups. These being assigned (or not) may become one of the significant determinants when deciding on the potential offer for older people as employees. The personal aspirations of older people to continue their work activity may clash against unfavourable or favourable attitudes of employers and younger members in the countries examined.

Assessment of the Situation of Older People

A readiness to hire the older people may also be related to the assessment of their financial status, and, more broadly, their life situation.

A great majority of respondents disagree with the opinion “*older people get more than their fair share from the government*”. The only exception here is the United States, where it is shared by 26.1% respondents. In other countries, this number is much lower. It is particularly low in Estonia (2.8%), Poland (4.8%), Spain (6.6%) and Germany (7.2%). Such views are shared by respondents from countries with varying welfare regimes and socio-economic history. An analysis of internal differentiation in individual countries reveals certain patterns. Women, slightly less often than men, agreed with this opinion; similarly, the eldest group agreed much less often than the younger groups, while persons oriented toward post-materialist values accepted this view slightly less often than those oriented towards materialist values. The education level and affluence in most countries exerted no impact on the opinion that “older people get more than their share from the government”.

The level of acceptance of the opinion “Older people are a burden on society” is higher in the post-communist countries Belarus (20.9%), Estonia (20.1%), Poland (22.8%) and Slovenia (23.4%) in comparison with the rest. While differences of opinion between women and men are insignificant and fail to provide a consistent image, in all countries, the oldest respondents with the lowest education and low income, materialistically oriented, were more often eager to support the stance that “older people are a burden on society”.

Worth noting here is the reluctance to accept the older people in politics (“Old people have too much political influence”), which was particularly strong in Romania (56.9%) and Slovenia (40.1%).

In the remaining countries, it was also high, with the exception of the Netherlands (15.4%) and Estonia (19%). This view was shared more often by men than women and by younger respondents. However, there are no clear correlation patterns between the opinion discussed and the education level, affluence and orientation towards values.

Readiness to Accept Older People on the Labour Market

While noticing the bad – or at least not very favourable – situation of older people, and quite frequently sharing the good opinion of competences, as well as attitudes (friendly or not) of this group, respondents often expressed varying opinions on their presence on the labour market. Acceptance of older people as bosses (Tables 6.3, 6.4) varies very strongly in individual countries and is mostly relatively low. Among the countries compared, on the one hand Germany is distinguished by a high level of acceptance/correlation; on the other hand, it is low correlation among inhabitants of most post-communist countries (particularly Belarus, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).

In all of the countries being compared, acceptance for a 70-year-old boss is relatively most often correlated with the conviction of the respondents that people at this age are competent, less so with the conviction that they are friendly, and to the least extent – that they are viewed with respect. The models for the opinion “Is a

Table 6.3 Predictors of acceptance of 70-year-old boss (multiple regression analysis)

Country	(Intercept)	a204i	a205i	a206i	a208i	a209i	a210i	a211i	a212i	adj.R2	p	sig.
Romania	-0.72	** 0.28	*** 0.58	-0.12	0.06	0.19	0.15	* 0.23	* 0.23	0.09	0	***
Germany	*** 3.06	0.07	*** 0.68	0.02	0.03	0.08	. 0.1	*** 0.24	0	0.13	0	***
Spain	*** 5.67	*** -0.46	*** 0.43	. 0.14	0.15	* -0.28	-0.14	0.09	*** 0.36	0.06	0	***
Belarus	*** 2.46	* 0.18	*** 0.55	-0.07	0.02	** -0.29	. 0.16	*** 0.32	** -0.24	0.09	0	***
Slovenia	1.26	* -0.23	*** 0.59	** 0.34	0.06	-0.17	0.06	0.24	0.1	0.06	0	***
Poland	0.99	. 0.22	*** 0.46	0.04	* 0.31	-0.25	0.15	* 0.37	-0.07	0.09	0	***
Estonia	* 1.37	0.15	*** 0.68	-0.05	0.12	-0.1	0.04	*** 0.44	-0.03	0.1	0	***
Netherlands	*** 3.77	-0.1	*** 0.56	0.09	. 0.15	-0.01	0.12	-0.07	. -0.16	0.07	0	***
United States	*** 1.63	0.02	*** 0.78	*** 0.22	** 0.2	-0.07	. 0.14	. 0.13	-0.04	0.19	0	***
Sweden	*** 3.41	-0.05	*** 0.32	0.11	-0.06	-0.17	. 0.22	0.1	-0.02	0.02	0.003	**
Ukraine	*** 2.95	-0.13	*** 0.5	-0.02	-0.13	* 0.26	. -0.17	* 0.19	. 0.17	0.03	0	***

Significance codes: p < (0.001 ***), (0.01 **), (0.5 *), (0.1.)

Table 6.4 Predictors of acceptance of 30-year-old boss (multiple regression analysis)

Country	(Intercept)	a204i	a205i	a206i	a208i	a209i	a210i	a211i	a212i	adj.R2	p	sig.
Romania	*** 6.58	. 0.15	0.04	0.13	-. 0.18	0.03	-0.01	0.13	-. 0.16	0.01	0.011	*
Germany	*** 5.19	0.11	* 0.14	-0.01	0.04	*** 0.3	-0.04	0.02	0	0.01	0	***
Spain	*** 7.01	-0.1	0.01	-0.04	0.07	* 0.23	-0.06	0.04	-0.05	0	0.523	
Belarus	*** 6.36	* 0.18	* -0.15	* 0.18	* 0.19	0.1	* 0.16	*** -0.29	-. 0.12	0.03	0	***
Slovenia	*** 5.71	0.06	* 0.25	-0.05	0.16	0.17	* -0.31	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.04	*
Poland	*** 6.28	** 0.27	. -0.17	** 0.28	-0.03	0.03	-0.01	* -0.3	0	0.02	0.001	**
Estonia	*** 6.27	0.1	0.05	* 0.16	0	0	0.1	-. 0.15	0.1	0.02	0	***
Netherlands	*** 4.58	0.07	*** 0.23	0.08	** 0.17	0.03	-0.03	0.1	0.07	0.04	0	***
United States	*** 4.08	** 0.18	** 0.18	* 0.13	0.03	-0.03	* 0.2	-0.1	0.02	0.04	0	***
Sweden	*** 4.84	0.02	* 0.19	. 0.14	0.15	-0.07	0.09	0.06	-0.03	0.02	0.003	**
Ukraine	*** 5.39	. 0.13	-0.07	** 0.19	. 0.12	*** 0.41	0.11	-0.03	-0.08	0.04	0	***

Significance codes: p < (0.001 ***), (0.01 **), (0.5 *), (0.1.)

70-year-old boss acceptable” show (Table 6.3 and 6.4) that there are stronger relations between the statement and other concerning situation of older people in society than in case when respondents have been asked about an acceptance of 30-year-old boss and perception of characteristics and situation of older people in the society. In both cases, R2 was very low.

Independent variables in the Tables 6.3 and 6.4

- a204 People over 70: are seen as friendly
- a205 People over 70: are seen as competent
- a206 People over 70: viewed with respect
- a208 Older people are not respected much these days
- a209 Older people get more than their fair share from the government
- a210 Older people are a burden on society
- a211 Companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different ages
- a212 Old people have too much political influence

In all of the countries compared, acceptance of young boss (“Is a 30-year-old boss acceptable”) was much higher than 70-year-old boss. Acceptance for the older people was more strongly correlated with assessment of the older people and their situation. However, positive views of their characteristics do not indicate willingness to cooperate with the older people in the public sphere.

A question arises of whether acceptance of the older people as bosses is correlated with conviction that older people contribute to the success of companies in which they are hired. Analysis of the relation between acceptance for a 70-year-old boss and conviction that “*companies that employ younger people perform better than those that employ people of different ages*” shows that the correlation is very weak or non-existent.

The result obtained shows that the recognition of certain characteristics of the older people is not equivalent to the acceptance for their functioning in the public sphere. There are substantial differences in this respect between individual countries. In most of the countries compared, respondents disagreed with the view that “*companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different ages*”. Linear regression model results (Table 6.5) showed that the opinion “*companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different ages*” often depends on respondent age (in 6 countries out of 11 compared). It is less often determined by education (variable: university education – other) of respondents, their gender, life satisfaction or family status.

It could be assumed that the opinion “older people get more than their fair share from the government” would be correlated with the beliefs of who could be a manager. However, this is not the case. The result indicates that the opinion on who can be a manager is related to perceiving the older people as individuals who either meet or fail to meet the requirements for managers, and not their situation on the macro scale – that is, the state policy towards this category of citizens.

Predictors in multiple regression model: (constant) Age, Sex, Higher education, Satisfaction with your life, Living together as married, Divorced, Separated,

Table 6.5 Companies that employ young people perform better (multiple regression model)

Name	ALL	Romania	Germany	Spain	Belarus	Slovenia	Poland	Estonia	Netherlands	United States	Sweden	Ukraine
(Intercept)	*** 2.07	*** 2.53	*** 2.72	*** 2.84	*** 2.16	*** 2.9	*** 2.73	*** 2.5	*** 2.8	*** 2.52	*** 2.96	*** 2.45
age	*** 0.01	0	** 0.01	0	* 0.01	0	.0	*** 0.01	*** 0.01	*** 0.01	** 0.01	* 0
Male	*** 0.06	0.07	.0.07	0.02	* 0.12	0.05	* 0.1	.0.07	0.02	** 0.09	0.01	.0.08
high edu	*** 0.1	0.09	*** 0.29	0.09	0.06	** 0.14	** 0.17	.0.08	0.04	*** 0.1	-.0.07	-.0.05
satisfaction with live	*** 0.04	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0	0.01	-0.01
Divorced	0.03	0.1	-0.02	-0.04	-0.09	0.06	0.07	-0.09	** 0.15	0	* 0.17	-0.09
Living together as married	*** 0.14	-0.01	-0.01	* -0.2	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.08	-0.01	-0.02	0.02	0.02
Separated	-.0.09	0.16	0.02	0.1	-0.21	0.01	-0.33	-0.05	0.18	-0.02	0.04	-0.09
Single/Never married	** 0.06	-0.14	* -0.13	** -0.19	-0.03	** -0.17	0.02	0.09	-0.04	0	0.06	0.04
Widowed	*** -0.16	* -0.18	* -0.17	-.0.21	-0.09	-0.09	-0.1	-.0.13	-0.06	0.03	0.11	0
Housewife	** -0.08	-0.07	0.03	-0.03	0.14	-.0.27	-0.07	0	0.03	-0.06	* -0.67	-0.11
Other employment form	** 0.15	NA	-0.04	0.11	NA	0.19	-0.18	NA	0.08	-0.08	-0.16	0
Part time	*** 0.1	-0.13	** 0.21	-0.03	*** 0.3	-.0.28	-0.19	-0.1	.0.09	0.03	* -0.12	-0.12
Retired	*** -0.19	-0.08	-0.09	-0.03	0.08	-0.04	-.0.13	** -0.2	* -0.11	** -0.14	*** -0.22	-0.04
Self employed	-0.02	-0.13	0.15	-0.09	-0.06	-0.11	-0.07	-0.08	-0.14	0.02	0.1	-0.02
Students	0.04	-0.1	* 0.25	0.18	-0.05	0.03	* -0.25	-.0.2	* 0.2	-0.08	*** -0.27	-0.06
Unemployed	.0.05	-0.1	0.02	0.09	.0.3	-0.11	*** -0.3	-.0.17	0.04	0.03	*** -0.4	0.02
adj.R2	0.05	0	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.05	0
p	0	0.241	0	0.097	0	0.002	0	0	0	0	0	0.185
sig.	***		***	.	***	**	***	***	***	***	***	

Widowed, Single, Good state of health, Part time work, Self- employed, Retired, Housewife, Students, Unemployed, Mixed Values, Postmaterialist Values.

Conclusions

It cannot be said that there are visible differences between societies of “post-communist countries” and others. In many cases, opinions are not shaped consistently with the assumed differences based on political and economic history of individual countries. Age group representation, individual traits and experiences are the main factors that shape different views.

In post-communist countries, inhabitants experienced a shock of political and economic transformation. High unemployment rates in the 1990s, difficulties in obtaining permanent jobs and the necessity to get satisfied with temporary jobs, caused uncertainty, contributed to a lack of willingness to accept the presence of older people on the labour market. This is further fuelled by stereotypes of what older people should deal with. These societies are more dominated by a traditional family stereotype with strong family bonds. According to this model, older people should support and help the young, free of charge, in taking care of the children and

the ill family members (Siemieńska, 2009, 2010; Sikorska, 2019). This stereotype is strengthened by the state social policy, in which it is assumed that infrastructural gaps (insufficient number of easily accessible creches and kindergartens, old people’s homes etc.) would be partially filled by non-paid work of older family members.

However, similarities and differences found in terms of attitudes and opinions concerning older people and their cultural capital and usefulness on the labour market vary in each group of compared countries.

A significant part of respondents expects older people to withdraw to the private sphere and possibly remain active citizens, for instance, in non-governmental organizations, informal assistance relationships, institutions established for older people to supplement the field of activity, which allows to satisfy the needs mainly of persons representing this age category. Therefore, opportunities of older people to be employed to some extent depends on attitudes toward them.

Appendix (Description of Variables Used in Questionnaire WVS 2012)

- How you think most people in this country view the position in society of people over 70.? (10- point scale)

Low position in society (1): 1,2,3,4, middle (2): 5,6, high position in society (3): 7,8,9,10

- Please tell me how acceptable or unacceptable you think most people in [country] would find it if a suitably qualified 30-year-old was appointed as their boss?

0 means they would find it completely unacceptable and 10 means completely acceptable.

unacceptable (1): 0,1,2,3,4(2), more or less acceptable: 5,6,(3) acceptable: 7,8,9,10

	Not likely to be viewed that way	More or less	Very likely to be viewed that way		
...as friendly?	0	1	2	3	4
...as competent?	0	1	2	3	4
...with respect?	0	1	2	3	4

- Please tell me how likely it is that most people in [country] view those over 70.
- Please tell me how acceptable or unacceptable you think most people in [country] would find it if a suitably qualified 70-year-old was appointed as their boss?

0 means they would find it completely unacceptable and 10 means completely acceptable.

unacceptable (1):0, 1,2,3,4(2), more or less acceptable: 5,6,(3) acceptable: 7,8,9,10

- Now could you tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or disagree strongly with each of the following statements? Agree (1) 1,2, Disagree (2) 3,4

...with respect?	0	1	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Older people get more than their fair share from the government						1	2	3	4
Older people are a burden on society						1	2	3	4
Companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different ages						1	2	3	4
Old people have too much political influence						1	2	3	4

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