



the project

SIZE – “Life quality of senior citizens in relation to mobility conditions” is a research project funded by the European Commission’s 5th Framework Programme, involving 14 partners from eight countries.

The project **SIZE** has a life-span of three years (2003-2005). It is divided into four research areas: State-of-the art, qualitative studies (with seniors & experts) and standardised surveys.

The general objectives of **SIZE** are:

- To **explain and describe** the present mobility and transport situation; problems, needs and wishes of senior citizens from their own perspective;
- To **motivate action** by the authorities and other relevant groups in society who are responsible in this area
- To **identify relevant solutions** for existing problems in order to implement policies aimed at “keeping the elderly mobile”.

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life quality
of senior citizens



in relation to
mobility conditions

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In comparison to younger people, senior citizens have to face disadvantages in their every day life. This is partly due to the ageing process itself and partly to the physical and social structure of their environment.

If preconditions affect *mobility* negatively, a decrease of quality is to be anticipated. The probability of a loss of autonomy, even of illness and need for help and care will increase. Therefore, it should be the interest of modern welfare states to improve the mobility of senior citizens and to eliminate mobility barriers.

Target group-oriented approach

User needs – Needs to be considered

- **Individual mobility:** To be able to do those outdoor errands one wants to in order to fulfil one’s needs
- **Safety and security:** To be safe and to feel safe
- **Equity:** Not to be, or to feel as, a second class road user
- **Comfort:** That environment, public means, etc. are accessible and easy to use
- **Aesthetics:** We suffer from ugly environments and are happy with attractive ones
- **Costs:** To be able to afford what one needs
- **Social needs:** There are needs of contacts, communication, culture, a social network

Hypothesis

- * **if** activities and measures are shaped according to the needs of senior citizens, and
- * **if** existing knowledge is distributed and used accordingly,
- **then** transport and mobility preconditions will **improve the life quality of senior citizens**.

Why respect the needs of senior citizens? Some reasons:

- 1) The “**advantage-for-all**” perspective: Considering needs of older pedestrians → advantages for all pedestrians
- 2) The “**value-per-se**”-perspective: To provide good life quality for senior citizens is a value per se
- 3) The **economic** perspective: To “keep senior citizens mobile” is cost effective, it reduces costs of social services, etc.
- 4) The **marketing** perspective: Respecting their needs will improve preparedness to co-operate
- 5) The **safety and mobility** perspective: Perceived lack of safety reduces mobility

Geographical and demographical power

Within SIZE, data was collected in eight European countries. A unified procedure of data collection enables us to make comparisons

- between EU-countries (old and new, etc.),
- between groups (“young old”, “old old”, etc.)
- between experts (scientists, technicians, politicians)
- between senior citizens and experts

The SIZE approach allowed to examine quality of life and mobility problems of senior citizens from many different perspectives.



Map of countries involved

Methodological strength of SIZE

SIZE has a procedure to recommend that helps to understand existing problems. Many needs become only transparent if appropriate methods are used. In the case of SIZE, a combination of qualitative, quantitative and heuristic methods was chosen.

Relevant questions were discussed and elaborated together with the target groups.

The results of the project work were critically reviewed by scientists, representatives of senior citizens' organisations, as well as by decision makers and practitioners of various disciplines at workshops in Cork, Brno, Lund & Brussels.



Workshop II in Brno

Most important problems of seniors

Senior citizens' mobility is connected to many aspects, such as health state, social issues, technical preconditions, politics and policies:

- Technical barriers: Often the design of roads, streets and crossroads is well adapted to cars but quite unfriendly to pedestrians – among them many senior citizens.
- Sub-groups with especially great difficulties have been identified: poor seniors, “very old” (80+) seniors.
- Five aspects of outdoor mobility bother older people most:
 - Inconsiderate car drivers,
 - lack of toilets,
 - vehicles on footpaths,
 - public transport vehicles overcrowded,
 - perceived negative attitudes of the public towards older people.
- Fears reduce quality of life: the fear of falling, of victimisation, of inconsiderate behaviour of vehicle drivers.
- An assumed lack of finances to improve the mobility situation of senior citizens seems to be a knock out criterion. Some financial support is needed, though, to provide social inclusion of older adults as active members of society. A lack of such support will lead to social exclusion of older adults, causing costs of another type.

Activities to the advantage of senior citizens

1. Allow independent lifestyle by maintaining good-quality mobility
2. Support controlled mode change, e.g. from car to public transport, walking, cycling
3. Create awareness of limitations and enhance correct auto-assessment
4. Trigger self-regulating processes in order to initiate wise compensation processes
5. Lower the number of accidents
6. Decrease the severity of accidents
7. Lead to an adaptation of the environment in order to achieve these goals
8. Raise satisfaction levels and improve quality of life

Some recommended solutions

Some solutions can solve problems directly and/or indirectly. There exists a common set of transnational solutions, which were identified in the analysis:

- Social/political issues: Awareness-raising measures, intergenerational improvements, safety and comfort in the public space, etc.
- Traffic issues: Slowing down speeds, prolonging green phases for pedestrians, more urban pedestrian paths, etc.

Measures to improve both mobility conditions and quality of life of seniors are described in detail in the SIZE-Deliverable D17 (see www.size-project.at)

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14 SIZE Partners from 8 European countries:

- Psychologists specialised in the methodology of behavioural sciences, psychogerontology
- Sociologists with focus on gerontology, life-quality, traffic and transport research (traffic safety, mobility, sustainability)
- Civil engineers & architects, specialised in urban research – sustainable urban development, road design, pedestrian mobility, vulnerable road users
- National senior citizens associations

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