

Statement

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Introduction

In the Czech Republic, the pandemic coronavirus has appeared in the second wave of its expansion in Europe after Italy, Spain and other countries. Therefore, some valuable experiences were disposable for taking first needed measures. In general the Czech government was not prepared as many other states (safety requisites, instruments, rooms and beds in hospitals, lack of testing and treatment experiences, not any proved vaccination against COVID-19 etc.).

On March 12, 2020 the emergency status has been proclaimed and a special crisis governmental commission established for controlling the fight against the coronavirus; very drastic limitations have been ordered (as closing certain shops, enterprises, offices and schools, meetings and outdoors move and state borders crossing restriction, introducing new home office application, forbidding cultural and sports events, obligatory drapes (masks) wearing, strong hygienic measures, special measures in hospitals as well as in houses for seniors etc. etc.).

Increased danger of coronavirus infection has been identified for people between 20 – 70 years old with a growing seriousness with the age. The highest mortality appears for groups over 70 years (8 %) and over 80 years (14 %).

At present, the coronavirus in the Czech Republic seems to be on retreat. Since early May, a step-by-step liberalization process has been adopted for ending on May 25.

At the moment (May 19, 2020) the total number of infected people reached 8586 whereas mortality 297 people (the total population in the Czech Republic is about 10.4 millions of inhabitants).

It is necessary to highlight the disciplinary approach of the Czech population during the pandemic crisis and the immense work of all the people actively engaged in this period as well.

Questions

1. **What are/were some of the main challenges during this crisis, especially for seniors?**
2. **Are there positive solutions that have been put forward that could lead us also in the future?**
3. **Are there particular stories you would like to highlight?**

Answers

1. What are/were some of the main challenges during this crisis, especially for seniors?

- Czech population has been surprised by a rapid start of the pandemic and by its consequences for which it had not been prepared.
- The COVID-19 has reached the special houses for seniors and health-handicapped people. The reason was that at the beginning of the pandemic crisis no controlling new clients, services providers and personnel was arranged.
- The media emitting uninterrupted flow of negative information what has lead to big depressions especially in case of elder seniors.
- Some of the seniors at the beginning of the crisis were deprived of any info because of a lack of access to TV or computers.
- Any health care has been focused on epidemic coronavirus and therefore care or prevention for any other health problem have to be delayed or neglected.
- Any predictability for the coronavirus infection development is very difficult for lack of any know-how including specific vaccinations.
- The importance of psychic consultative help cannot be neglected as well. An equilibrium of fear and hope is to be maintained. The seniors had to overcome the fear, depressions, isolation, and loneliness.
- A real constructive help and consultation have been needed to solve senior's problems like payment of services, housing, rents, special financial contributions income and social care.
- A great sensibility of personal freedom and human rights in decision-making is of paramount importance for seniors facing administrative regulations by state authorities.
- An appropriate criticism exists for maintaining the freedom and any vision of further hopeful development.
- Civic solidarity reached in the course of the crisis should continue.
- The interdisciplinary cooperation among competent scientists and politicians in the Czech Republic and Europe is necessary.
- Political representatives at any level should take the responsibility for common good.

2. Are there positive solutions that have been put forward that could lead us also in the future?

- Obviously, with any further development (inclusive an end to pandemic coronavirus) the situation will no more return to that before this disease. Many new problems will need a solution at various levels from individuals up to states and the whole human kind across the whole Planet. The government should prepare not only a positive scenario of the country development but also a negative one and it should also take the necessary measures (including needed reserves of food, water, sanitary materials).
- Especially seniors have arrived to aware their values outside exclusively material ones such as health, the sense of human life, family, inter-human relations, inter-generation co-

operation and solidarity, public interest, responsibility at all levels, denounce of the indifference etc.

- Social networks integrating all interested segments of the population should be established. In our case, a co-operation and advocacy of seniors organizations at any level should be ensured with the government as well as its appropriate sectors of ministries, with both chambers of the Parliament as well as representatives of clubs of political parties and movements, with the Union of municipalities and villages, NGOs, with all public media to identify and solve special goals brought by seniors.
- Social enterprises are to be supported.
- European pillar of Social Right is needed for guaranty of any future putting into the practice the social goals and rights.
- As to the public informative level a higher and objective reflect of European initiatives in national media is needed.
- A large promotion of electronic communication possibilities for seniors (video conferences, video workshops, video lectures, virtual theater performances, concerts etc., personal communication by SKYPE, e-mails etc.).
- Information about health and its prevention for seniors should be largely promoted as one of the precaution principals.

3. Are there particular stories you would like to highlight?

- There are many examples of a spontaneous and voluntary initiative among the population (co-operation in the family, with neighbours and communities at various levels). The inter-generation solidarity has been realized in practical ways. Young people have been helping the seniors especially at the local level - shopping for them, helping with the care of little animals, visiting for discussions, distributing hygienic material and information etc.
- The members of the Czech SKS executive committee as well as of clubs bought the material, made a great number of the masks lacking in the market, and distributed them to those people unable to get them by other ways.
- Regularly actualized SKS web pages, phone calls as well as a virtual communication have served as important tools for information about the development of the crisis. ESU email contacts were appreciated.
- Consultation activities and the offers of various services have been proposed from local levels up to the central level. In addition local authorities or NGOs contacted seniors asking them about their needs.
- Daily emissions of the Pope Francis messes from Vatican transmitted by the TV NOE or disposable directly from the Holly See media and also the ecumenical messes from Czech churches transmitted by the Czech broadcast or TV have been highly appreciated when the attendance to the messes was impossible. Several messes were broadcasted from the new Catholic church in Prague 11 where is also the residence of the local SKS club. Our deacon had a sermon *How to overcome fear*.
- The media have been playing the important role; one of the Czech TV channels has been reserved for the seniors. A special edition of the KDU-ČSL party monthly *Nový Hlas* was dedicated to the coronavirus pandemic (see annex). The Council of the Czech Seniors has

been publishing also in its monthly periodical *Doba seniorů* articles about the life of seniors in the crisis and has made lobbying for some interests of seniors at the Czech government.

Attachment: <https://www.kdu.cz/getattachment/862dddfb-900d-4642-893a-ae3073238f19/Novy-Hlas-kveten-2020.aspx>