

## II Keynote Addresses

### 1. PROMOTING LONGER LIFE AND ENSURING WORK ABILITY

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Current projections are that this planet will have 9.2 billion people in 2050. That is 2.2 billion more than now. Nearly all of these new 2.2 billion people will be born in developing countries. In contrast, many developed countries will experience population ageing, or even the curious phenomena of population decline.

Ageing societies are a unique development in history, and we are just at the beginning of it. Changes in age structure are leading to changes in dependency, with enormous economic, financial, social and even political consequences.

Ageing societies will have to figure out how to manage and prosper without having enough children to become tomorrow's workers; how to get more age-related spending from the welfare state — in areas such as pensions, or education and training, or health care — and how to pay for it; how to boost the productivity of a decreasing number of people of working age; how to confront the risk of labour and skills shortages, whether to accept more immigration for instance. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the premises on which modern welfare programmes were established have changed or soon will.

Demographic change and the challenges it poses are high on the agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO). A report on this topic and its implications for employment and social protection was published in 2010. And demographic change is on the agenda of the 2013 International Labour Conference, just as the youth employment crisis was discussed last June.

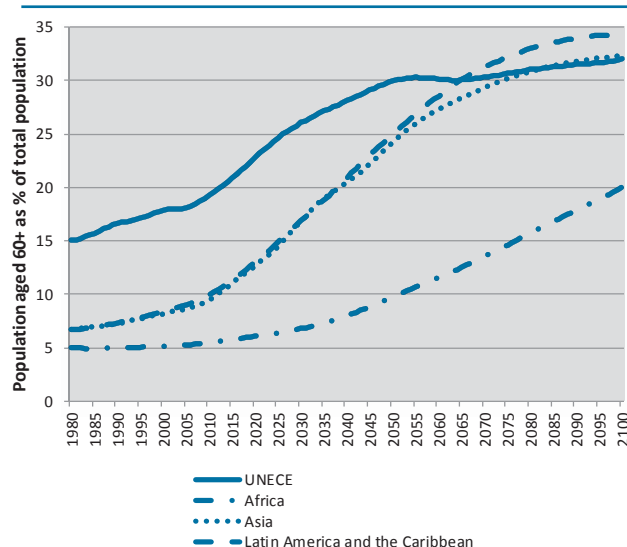
One characteristic of demographic change is that it is totally transparent and certain, and the challenges it poses for policymakers are absolutely clear, although how and when to combine solutions and measures is difficult, in some areas controversial, and of course up to each society to decide.

#### Population 60+ as a percentage of total population

Worldwide, the population aged 60 or over is growing faster than all other age groups, with an estimated global increase from 204 million in 1950 to 2 billion in 2050 and to 2.8 billion in 2100. In other words, a ten-fold increase in the time span of just 150 years! However, the ageing of populations differs significantly between countries and regions. UNECE countries are in an "age of ageing". They

are already relatively old compared to the rest of the world and will continue to age. By 2050, 30 per cent of the population in this region is projected to be 60 years of age or older. This figure currently stands at 20 per cent (figure 1).

**Figure 1: Share of population 60+ in total population (per cent)**



Source: United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2010*, (June 2011 update, medium variant)

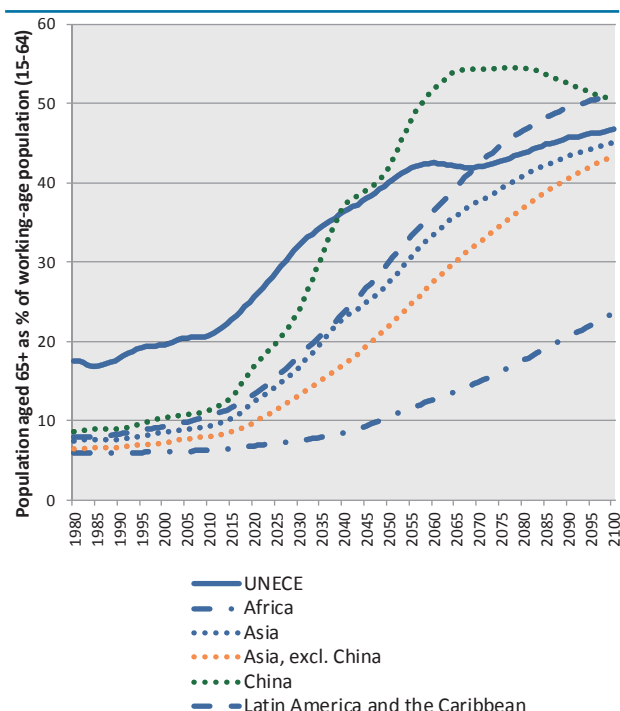
#### Old age dependency ratios

These demographic changes and labour force trends have driven major increases in old age dependency ratios in many countries and regions and will continue doing so, as can be seen in figure 2. In UNECE countries, the old age dependency ratio increased from 17.5 per cent in 1980 to 21.4 per cent in 2012 and is projected to reach 40 per cent in 2050. This is a doubling in less than 40 years. During the decades to come, until about 2070, UNECE will be the region with the highest dependency ratio, except for the very special case of China. The trends shown in figure 2 are alarming and quite rightly feed the debate on fiscal sustainability in UNECE countries.

#### Labour force participation rates

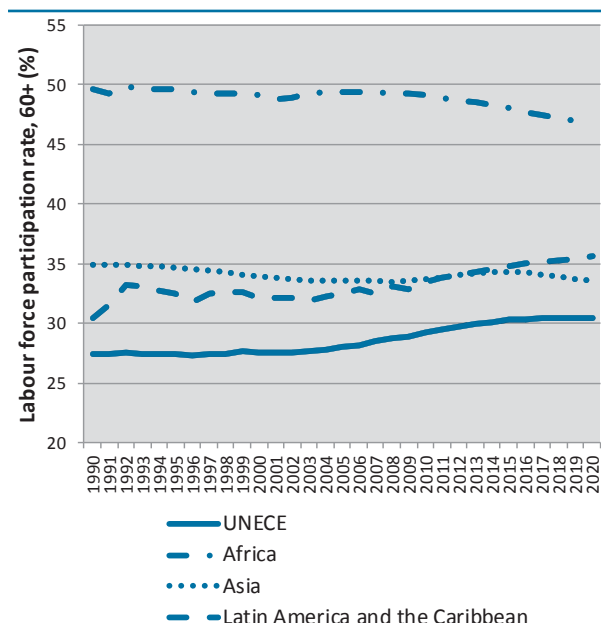
Despite increases in longevity, UNECE countries present low labour force participation (LFP) rates for the older age groups when compared to other regions (figure 3).

Figure 2: Old age dependency ratio (per cent)



Source: United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2010*, (June 2011 update, medium variant)

Figure 3: Labour force participation rate of population 60+ (per cent)



Source: ILO, *Estimates and Projections of the Economically Active Population (EAPEP)*, 6th Edition, 2011

However, increases in retirement age in many countries in recent years have increased these rates and they are expected to continue to increase.

Substantive country differences exist. Sweden and Norway present the highest participation rates for the age group 55-64 (above 70 per cent in both countries)

but much lower rates for the 65+ population (11 per cent for Norway and 8 per cent for Sweden). In contrast, countries like Armenia and Georgia present much higher participation rates for the 65+ population (24.4 per cent and 45.6 per cent respectively). This reflects the fact that in lower income countries, older people are obliged to continue working, mainly in the informal economy, because they are not entitled to pensions, or if these exist they are too low.

“Retirement” is a luxury that people can enjoy mostly in developed, high-income countries, but tends to be rare in most low-income countries. The link between old-age pension coverage and labour force participation in old age is strong.

### Old age pension beneficiaries

Figure 4 presents the different levels of pension coverage all over the world according to ILO calculations.<sup>1</sup> In the majority of developing countries, less than 20 per cent of the population benefits from old age pensions (the dark blue areas). UNECE countries present the highest pension coverage, despite country variations.

### Policy responses

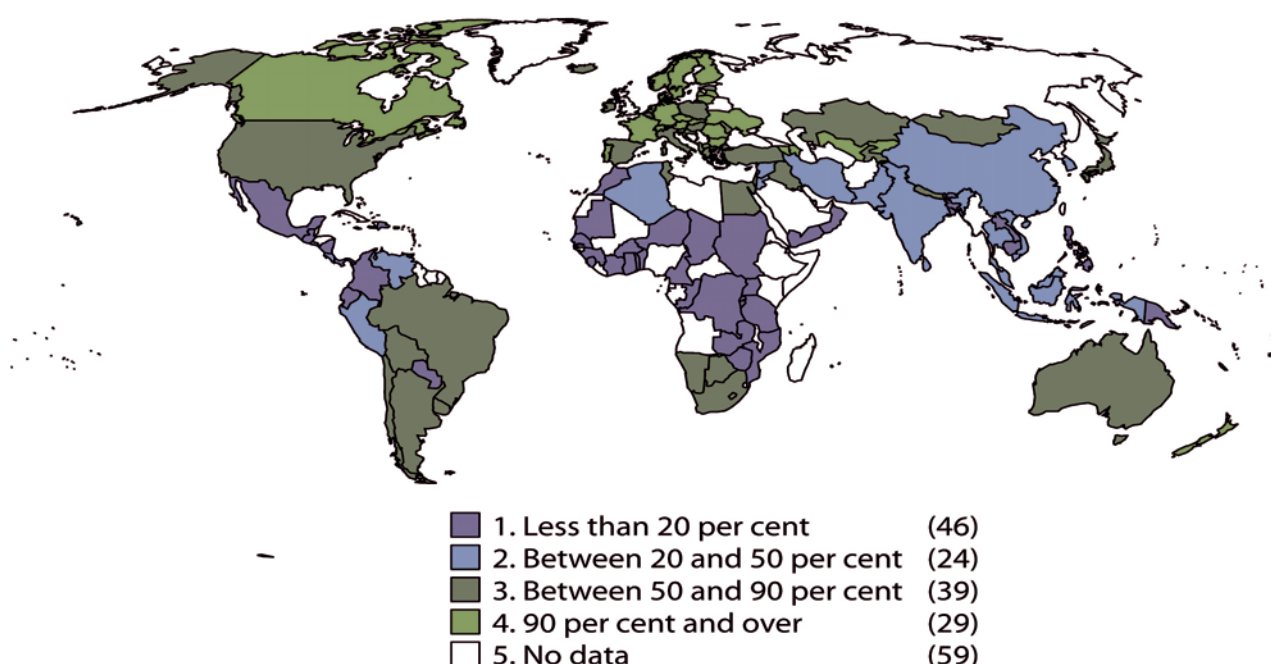
So what policy responses are needed in ageing societies? Broadly speaking, possible solutions fall in four categories:

- First, promoting full and productive employment. This includes raising the participation in the workforce of people who could work more or longer but do not. This is important, more now than ever, in countries experiencing low growth or recession. Promoting productive employment also includes raising productivity growth so that those at work contribute more to society and the economy.
- Second, increasing immigration can compensate for the reduction of the working-age population.<sup>2</sup> While migration is not the only solution, it certainly provides part of the answer, but as we know it is also a highly sensitive issue.
- Third, the ILO approach underscores the importance of a life cycle and intergenerational perspective – affirming that youth, adulthood and old age are but different stages of life which influence and interact with each other.

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization (2011). *World Social Security Report*.

<sup>2</sup> The level of immigration required between 2000 and 2050 in the European Union would be 47 million people to maintain the size of the total population and 674 million to maintain the ratio of the working-age population (15 to 64 years old) to the old-age population (65 years or older).

Figure 4: Old-age pension beneficiaries as a percentage of the population above retirement age



Source: International Labour Organization

- Fourth, extending working lives, and increasing the employment rates of older workers specifically, is high on the policy agendas of many countries. In recent years, many governments in UNECE countries have extended retirement ages.

It must be made clear from the outset, however, that a prolongation of working life is not appropriate for everyone. In particular, it is not appropriate for older people in ill health, or who spend their working lives in difficult working conditions or with long contribution periods.

It is self-evident that to work longer an individual must be in good health, be receptive to the idea of working longer, and have the opportunity to do so. Thus there is an array of policy measures that can contribute to extending working lives. There are four key categories of interventions: addressing prejudice and age discrimination; activation measures; skill development; and working time and work organization.

### Combating prejudice and age discrimination

Attitudes and prejudice with respect to older people are a major obstacle to opening up employment opportunities and often lead to direct and indirect discrimination. The European Union's *Active Ageing, Special Eurobarometer* survey released in 2012 found that workplace age discrimination is the most widespread form of age discrimination, with one in five citizens saying they personally experienced it or witnessed it.<sup>3</sup>

Concrete actions taken to change employer practices have mostly included awareness campaigns, the development of "tool kits", the promotion of best-practices, and consultation and cooperation with social partners. For example, the Austrian Industry Federation created a website ([www.arbeitundalter.at](http://www.arbeitundalter.at)) with information on best practices in accommodating age diversity in the workplace that is often referred to as a model. In France, enterprises with over 50 employees were obliged to conclude before January 2010 an agreement to implement an action plan relating to the employment of older workers. If not, financial sanctions (1 per cent of total wages) apply.

The main international standard that addresses discrimination is the *ILO Convention on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation* of 1958 (No. 111). Age was not explicitly included as a category of discrimination, but the Convention permits Member States to add other grounds. The explicit inclusion of age as a form of discrimination had to await the adoption of the *Older Workers Recommendation of 1980* (No. 162). An important development in November 2000 was the promulgation by the EU of *Directive 2000/78/EC on Discrimination* establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and which includes age among several other grounds not previously covered by EU texts.

<sup>3</sup> European Union (2012). *Active Ageing, Special Eurobarometer*.

According to an ILO study of about 30 countries, 24 in the UNECE have some form of age discrimination legislation.<sup>4</sup> The increase in the number of countries implementing age discrimination legislation is a positive development. But enforcement is key. Awareness raising, including education and information campaigns, also have their place, and the social partners – together with governments – have a key role to play in carrying this out.

### Activating older workers

The second category of policy interventions to extend working lives is activation measures.

Countries are making increased efforts and shifting funds from passive to active measures. A highly topical issue is whether the needs of older people are best met by specially targeted measures or by an all-age mainstreaming approach.<sup>5</sup> In Denmark, there is no special programme for those 50 and older, although older unemployed people are no longer exempted from activation measures. Germany has opted for an integrated targeted approach with the introduction of its *Perspektive 50+* programme in 2005. Under the programme, the Ministry sets incentives for public and private sector organizations to establish pacts to help the long-term unemployed aged 50+ back into work. In the United States, *One-Stop Career Centers* and the *Senior*

*Community Service Employment Program* provide job search assistance to older workers.

### Fostering employability

The third category of measures is fostering employability through education and skills training. Experience shows how important education and skills are in improving the employment prospects of older workers.

Nonetheless, table 1 shows that training participation declines with age. It is interesting to note that in countries such as Finland and the United Kingdom, the rate of employed people over the age of 55 participating in training is quite high (e.g. 17.4 per cent in Finland and 15.9 per cent in the UK) but in relative terms (when compared to those aged 25 to 54) is much lower.

In the EU, older workers display the lowest participation rate in training compared with other age groups, particularly with respect to formal, as opposed to informal, training.<sup>6</sup> Lower participation is influenced by supply and demand factors. Employers may be less inclined to pay for the training of older workers as the return on these investments in human capital is limited by the retirement decision of the employee. Recent research focussing on the Netherlands found that age-specific subsidies for job training make an important difference to retaining older workers.<sup>7</sup>

Table 1: Participation in training (employed persons aged 55+)

	Austria		Finland		Czech Republic		Estonia		Germany	
Indicator	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Rate of participation in training of employed 55+ (per cent)	5.5	9.0	11.1	17.4	5.3	4.4	3.9	6.7	1.6	4.1
Relative to rate of participation in training of employed aged 25 to 54 (ratio)	0.55	0.58	0.52	0.68	0.75	0.53	0.47	0.49	0.28	0.48
	Greece		Estonia		Poland		Hungary		United Kingdom	
Indicator	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Rate of participation in training of employed 55+ (per cent)	0.2	1.0	3.9	6.7	1.5	1.7	1.0	0.6	11.9	15.9
Relative to rate of participation in training of employed aged 25 to 54 (ratio)	0.17	0.28	0.47	0.49	0.23	0.28	0.26	0.22	0.53	0.68

Source: OECD 2012

<sup>4</sup> Naj Gossheh (2008). "Age discrimination and older workers". *TRAVAIL*, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> European Social Fund (2011). *ESF-Age Network*, Issue 5, November 2011.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2011). *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2011*, December 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) (2011). Picchio, M. and J. C. van Ours. "Retaining through Training: Even for Older Workers", Discussion Paper No. 5591.

Nevertheless, other research reports that workers who participated in firm-specific training early in their careers retire earlier than workers with a general training background, because employees with firm-specific skills are more likely to be covered by employer-sponsored pension schemes than workers with general skills, which gives these employees the opportunity to retire earlier.<sup>8</sup>

Participation in training is also linked to prior educational level. An inquiry in Germany concluded that it is not age per se that explains participation in further training but rather the previous level of qualifications. Higher educated older workers show the highest propensity to undergo training.

It is of interest to note that measures to improve the employability of older workers hit by the crisis were used by several countries. In 2009, Italy introduced the *Programme on Income and Skills Support*. It was initially designed for 2009-2010 but has been extended to 2012. Slovenia introduced an integrated package of measures to promote active ageing in 2010 that includes education and training options for older workers and older unemployed persons, awareness raising campaigns to challenge stereotypes about ageing, measures to increase health and safety at work, and measures to improve public employment services.

Particularly relevant is Canada's *Targeted Initiative for Older Workers*. As part of Canada's *Economic Action Plan* to mitigate the effects of the crisis, more federal funding was approved for the Initiative introduced in 2006 to ensure that displaced older workers aged 55 to 64 in vulnerable communities have access to training and employment programmes. This programme has had very positive results.<sup>9</sup> The ILO and the OECD presented this example at the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers meeting in September 2011 in Paris.

The life cycle approach argues that it is necessary to engage workers in the process of lifelong learning as early as possible so that a culture of learning is established. An adequate response to low levels of education and training of older workers should not focus only on participation of this age group. The experience of workers at a younger

age will have a key impact on their labour market decisions and outcomes when older.

### Working time and work organization

The fourth type of policies is those that affect working time and work organization. These dimensions are very much affected by demographic change and by other factors, including the shift from the single "male breadwinner" household to dual-earner households, and the growing concern over the quality of life and working.

The "linear working life concept" may have to be replaced by a more flexible one. This implies rethinking how periods of work, leisure, learning and caring are distributed throughout life. Patterns such as part-time work, flexible working schedules, leave for caring or parental responsibilities, educational leave, career breaks, and sabbaticals are increasingly widespread. *ILO Older Workers Recommendation No. 162* spells out detailed policy measures with regard to working time and work organization.

Although increasing the availability of arrangements allowing for reduced working hours for older workers appears to be a positive step, ILO research shows that it may have unintended consequences, such as inducing those who would stay in full-time work to take part-time employment, or stigmatizing older workers. This is one of the reasons why Belgium and the Netherlands have moved away from an age-specific policy to granting everyone the right to a reduction of working hours.<sup>10</sup>

Austria recently evaluated its old-age part-time scheme. This was a policy to allow flexible retirement options for the older persons with an aim to increase labour supply. It was found that most older workers substitute part-time work for full-time work if they have a chance, and that the overall effect of promoting part-time work on the total labour supply of older workers is negative.<sup>11</sup>

Before implementing age-specific measures, it is critical to know the extent to which working-hour constraints discourage older workers from continuing to work or returning to work. In order to improve work capabilities and develop a positive attitude towards employment among older workers, options that would allow workers to adjust working hours need to be provided at all stages of working life.

<sup>8</sup> Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) (2008). Montizaan, R., F. Cörvers, and A. De Grip. "Training Background and Early Retirement", Discussion Paper No. 3504.

<sup>9</sup> The evaluation of the first round of participants revealed that the vast majority (74 per cent) were able to find a job during or following participation in the programme; 80 per cent of participants felt more employable as a result of the activities. Significantly, the evaluation found that most projects were successful in matching participants with local economic development opportunities. These results are particularly positive considering that 30 per cent of participants did not have a high school diploma, 50 per cent were long-term unemployed, and all lived in communities with diminished prospects for employment.

<sup>10</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO) (2004). Jolivet, A. and Sangheon Lee. *Employment conditions in an ageing world*.

<sup>11</sup> Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) (2009). Graf, N., et al. "Labour Supply Effects of a Subsidised Old-Age Part-Time Scheme in Austria", Discussion Paper No. 4239.



## Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth underscoring one of the General Provisions of the *ILO Older Workers Recommendation* that says:

“Employment problems of older workers should be dealt with in the context of an over-all and well balanced strategy for full employment ... due attention being given to all population groups, thereby ensuring that employment problems are not shifted from one group to another.”

In this respect a contentious issue that comes up in policy debates is the substitution of older for younger workers. It is often claimed that fewer jobs for older workers means more jobs for youth. This is based on the so-called “lump of labour” fallacy that there are a fixed number of jobs and workers are perfectly substitutable for each other. In practice, younger workers cannot easily substitute for older workers — the evidence suggests that early retirement policies have not generated jobs for younger age groups. There is also evidence that across the OECD there is a positive correlation between changes in employment rates for younger and older people.

At the other end of the age structure, the youth employment challenge has become extremely serious.

In June 2012, the International Labour Conference (ILC) held a general discussion under the title “The youth employment crisis” and concluded with a strong call for action to address this crisis.

The figures are dramatic: 75 million young people unemployed worldwide in 2012, 4 million more than in 2007; more than 6 million young people discouraged; more than 200 million young people working but earning under US\$ 2 a day; a large increase in part time and temporary employment, youth graduates only able to obtain “serial internships”, not permanent jobs.

Unemployment and under-employment early in life may permanently hamper young people’s productive potential and future employment opportunities. This underlines the point that it is important to address demographic change from a life cycle and intergenerational perspective.

A similar call for action as was issued for young people is necessary for older workers in ageing societies. This sense of urgency is one of the reasons why governments, employers and workers decided to put the issue of demographic change and its implications for employment and social protection systems as an item for general discussion at the next ILO – ILC in June 2013.

The discussions in this UNECE Conference are highly relevant as a stepping stone to the ILC next year.

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## 2. PROMOTING PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND NON-DISCRIMINATION OF OLDER PERSONS

**Clemens Tesch-Römer**, Director, German Centre of Gerontology

Population ageing has a profound impact on societies. It affects educational institutions, labour markets, social security, health care, long-term care and the relationship between generations. Active ageing is a central political concept that takes in not only the challenges, but also the opportunities of long-living societies. This includes opportunities for older people to continue working, to stay healthy longer and to contribute to society, for example through volunteering.

When addressing factors that influence participation in old age and policies on active ageing that intend to foster active participation, social inclusion, and non-discrimination of older persons, the following elements are important:

- Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when they take place early in the life course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.
- Diversity in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions aimed at promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

- The transition into retirement is an important gateway for active ageing.
- Active participation in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.
- Images of ageing frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.

**Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when they take place early in the life course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life**

Active ageing embraces both individual processes and societal opportunity structures for health, participation and integration. The goal of interventions for active ageing is the enhancement of quality of life as people age. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UNECE use the term “active ageing” to include different ageing trajectories and diverse groups of older people. Moreover, it is emphasized that opportunities for health,

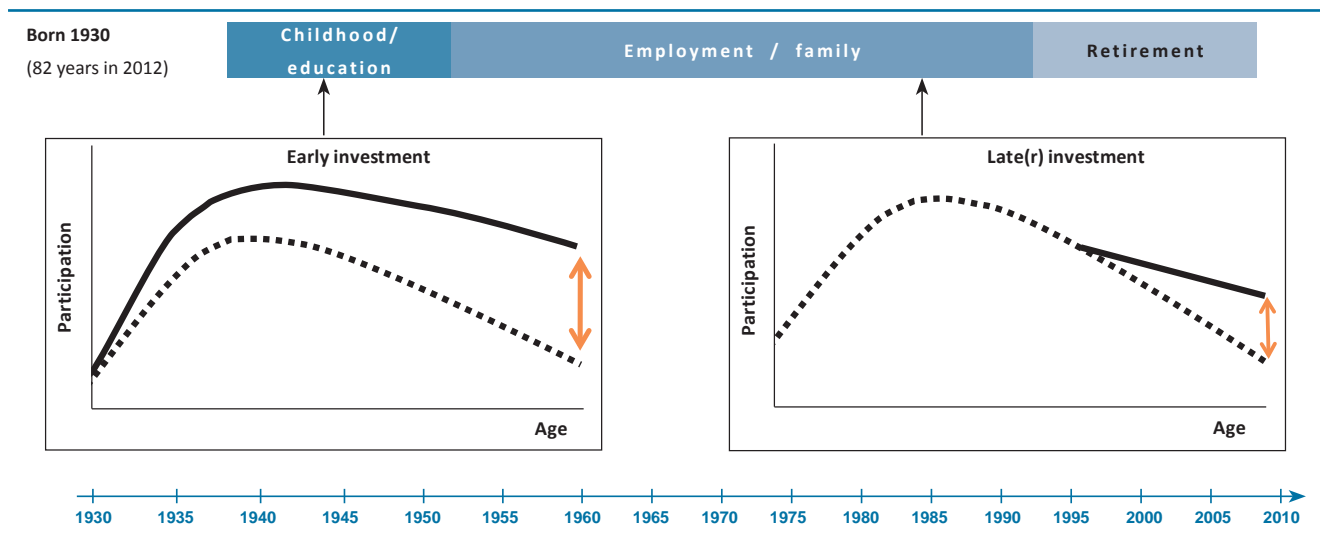
participation and security have to be optimized in order to enhance quality of life as people age. Participation and security are understood in the broadest sense, including social, economic and political participation, social inclusion and integration, and intergenerational relationships.

Active ageing must begin with investments early in life, for example in education, health behaviour, volunteering in childhood and adolescence (figure 5).<sup>12</sup> The diversity in ageing trajectories shows that good health, stable social integration, and societal participation do not occur naturally in old age. The existence of different trajectories indicates that certain factors may change the course of ageing – and that knowledge about these factors could be used in interventions.<sup>13</sup> With respect to health, for instance, it has been argued that individuals who start to perform physical activities early in life and maintain this over the life course will likely have better functional health throughout the life span, although a decline in late life is inevitable.<sup>14</sup> Early life experiences, especially

education, yield positive effects which will be visible in old age.

Policies on active ageing should rely on measures which foster successful development in earlier phases in life. Providing learning opportunities over the life span has long-lasting positive effects on active ageing. However, even in middle and late adulthood, investments in active ageing are effective (e.g. changing health behaviour, vitalizing social integration, stimulating volunteer activities). Intervention studies demonstrate that changes in health, social integration, and participation are possible up to late adulthood. It should be emphasized, however, that the efficiency of interventions decreases with advancing age. Governments and other stakeholders need to provide the basis for lifelong health education and promotion, including health promotion for older people. Relevant stakeholders should also provide an adequate environment for people of all ages. The central arena for investments in active ageing is the local and regional context (e.g. age-friendly cities).

Figure 5: Interventions for active ageing



Source: C. Tesch-Römer

### Diversity in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions aimed at promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination

In gerontology, the process of ageing and the phase of old age is seen as part of the life course.<sup>15</sup> Although there might be disruptive events in old age (like the

onset of dementia), biographical trajectories throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood shape the third and fourth phase in life. Hence, the cornerstones of active ageing are already laid in early phases of life. One should keep in mind that ageing individuals follow diverse developmental trajectories and that this diversity tends to increase with age. Among the factors which contribute to diversity in old age, gender, level of income and wealth, ethnicity, living with or without a handicap, educational status gained in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood stand out as they are highly influential for development over the life course.

<sup>12</sup> See United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2012). Tesch-Römer, C. (2012). *Active ageing and quality of life in old age*. New York and Geneva: United Nations.

<sup>13</sup> Berkman, L. F., K. A. Ertel, and M. M. Glymour (2011). "Aging and social intervention: Life course perspectives". In Binstock, R. H. & L. K. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*, 7th ed., pp. 337-351. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

<sup>14</sup> Manini, T.M. and M. Pahor (2009). "Physical activity and maintaining physical function in older adults". *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 43, 28-31.

<sup>15</sup> Elder, G. H., and J., Z. Giele (2009). "Life course studies: An evolving field". In Elder, G. H. & J. Giele, Z. (Eds.), *The craft of life course research* (pp. 1-24). New York: Guilford Press.

Developmental research has generated a tremendous amount of evidence about the long-lasting impact of the conditions in early childhood and adolescence on adult development.<sup>16</sup> Children living in privileged families will achieve a higher educational status, work in less strenuous jobs, and will earn more over their life time.<sup>17</sup> Hence, education – the acquisition of knowledge and skills – constitutes a gateway for an occupational career that opens up other opportunities as well. Cumulative inequality theory points out that risks and opportunities connected to educational status accumulate over the life course.

Educational status accounts for differences in health, social integration, and societal participation, even in middle and late adulthood. Hence, interventions aimed at promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination should take into account diverse life-course histories, including skill and knowledge acquisition.

### The transition into retirement is an important gateway for active ageing

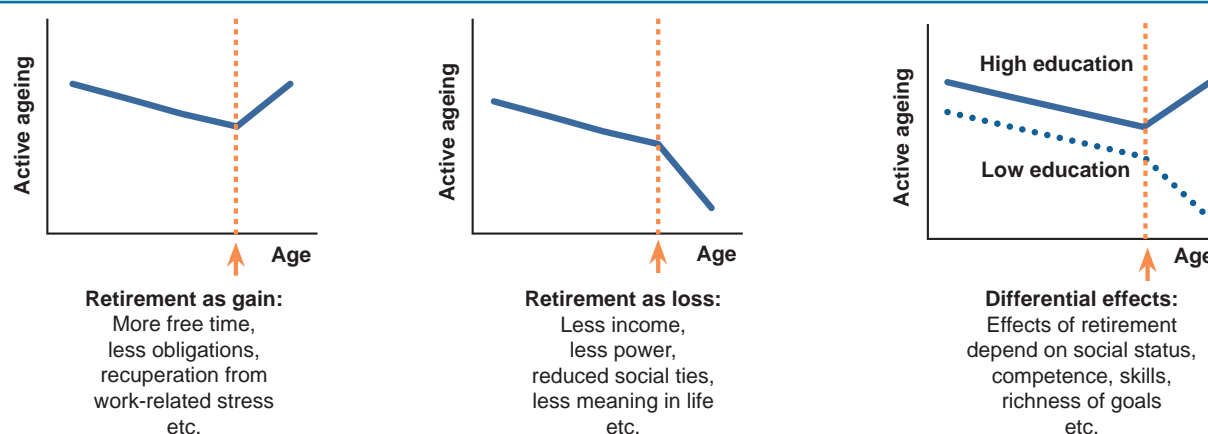
Retirement is a critical life event marking the beginning of the third phase of life. Leaving the labour force is a salient transition with diverse developmental trajectories and outcomes. Retirement may be experienced as a developmental gain. The obligations of employment fade away and a period of late freedom may begin which can be filled with a variety of activities. In this case, retirees enjoy the fact that retirement lowers obligations, increases free time, and offers opportunities for recuperation from work-related stress. In contrast,

retirement may be experienced as a developmental loss. Many retirees have to cope with a decrease in income as well as losses in social status and social roles. Retirement may also diminish opportunities for mental stimulation and endanger a sense of meaning in life. Finally, it may be that retirement has differential effects which depend on pre-retirement resources like social status, income, wealth, competence and skills as well as richness of life goals.

Empirical research has shown that developmental retirement trajectories are highly diverse, depending on socio-demographic factors like education, conditions at former workplaces, modes of transition, and differences in pre-retirement health.<sup>18</sup> Retirement is not a uniform transition for all people. Retirees who have a larger pool of resources at their disposal are less likely to experience an overall change in life satisfaction when retiring.<sup>19</sup> This contrasts with retirees who were unemployed before retirement (short-term increase, but long-term decrease in life satisfaction) or retirees for whom the decrease in income results in problems making ends meet (short-term decrease, but long-term stabilization in life satisfaction). It should be noted that the influence of educational resources is visible before retirement: individuals with a higher educational status have a higher probability of gainful employment during the last decade before retirement than individuals with a lower educational status.

Hence, it is decisive to take the individual form of retirement trajectory into account when planning interventions for active participation in later life. Not

Figure 6: Retirement - gain or loss ?



Source: C. Tesch-Römer

<sup>16</sup> For example, Britton, A., M. Shipley, A. Singh-Mannoux, and M. G. Marmot (2008). "Successful aging: The contribution of early-life and midlife risk factors". *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 56, pp. 1098–1105.

<sup>17</sup> Dannefer, D. (2011). "Age, the life course, and the sociological imagination: Prospects for theory". In Binstock, R. H. & L. K. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*, 7th ed., pp. 3-16. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Fasang, A. E. (2010). "Retirement: Institutional pathways and individual trajectories in Britain and Germany". *Sociological Research Online*, 15(2). Lowis, M. J., A. C., Edwards, and M. Burton (2009). "Coping with retirement: Well-being, health, and religion". *Journal of Psychology*, 143(4), 427-448.

<sup>19</sup> Pinquart, M., and I. Schindler (2007). "Changes of life satisfaction in the transition to retirement: A latent-class approach". *Psychology and Aging*, 22(3), 442-455.



all retirees experience the transition into retirement as the pathway to late freedom, and not all of those who do feel this way decide to actively participate in society (figure 6). In addition to trajectories into retirement, it is necessary to provide meaningful opportunities for active participation.

### Active participation in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community

One important aspect of active participation in late adulthood is volunteering, i.e. “activities or work that some people willingly do without pay to promote a cause or help someone outside of their household or immediate family.”<sup>20</sup> Volunteering has important effects, e.g. increased social inclusion, opportunities for education, and enhancement of quality of life. In addition, volunteering has high potential for the community. Volunteer work is a crucial resource for social and environmental problem-solving and increases the social capital of neighbourhoods and communities. Finally, volunteer work creates significant economic value for the society as a whole. However, it should be emphasized that the time and effort required to volunteer must not exceed the capabilities of a person in order to have positive effects on the person.<sup>21</sup>

One of the main questions in this context concerns the problem of recruiting volunteers, especially from those groups without a lifelong history of volunteering. Clearly, organizations have to pay attention to the individual situation of potential older volunteers. A highly successful example of recruiting and retaining volunteers is the *Experience Corps Baltimore*, a programme which involves older volunteers in public schools with the dual goal of supporting students and of health promotion for older volunteers.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, the combination of a detailed screening process and positive effects of participation has resulted in high retention rates, between 80 per cent and 90 per cent.<sup>23</sup> The choice of voluntary activities

and the ability to plan one’s own time table are highly important in motivating volunteers. People with a low income (and mostly also a lower educational status) emphasize institutional facilitators of engagement, like compensation for the activity.<sup>24</sup>

Volunteering rates in middle and late adulthood vary between educational groups. Individuals with a higher educational status undertake voluntary service more often than individuals with a lower educational status. The *European Survey on Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe* (SHARE) shows that across countries, the rate of volunteer work, defined as active engagement in voluntary or charity work during the month before the interview, was on average about 6 per cent in individuals with low education, about 11 per cent in the middle educational group, and about 18 per cent in the group with a high level of education.<sup>25</sup> Analyses based on the *German Ageing Survey* (DEAS) show that although volunteering decreases with age, the educational gradient is steeper than the age gradient: differences in the rates of volunteering between groups with different levels of education are by far greater than differences between age groups in the age range of 40 to 85 years.<sup>26</sup> Similar results concerning educational status can be found in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the fact that motives for volunteering change over time (and may differ between cohorts) should be taken into account. For instance, it has been suggested that the cohorts of baby boomers (cohorts born between 1945 and 1965, with different peaks in the US and Europe) are motivated to volunteer in youth-focused activities or activities that are connected with their local community.<sup>28</sup>

Given the positive impact volunteering has on the individual, community and society and considering the diversity between different groups of older people, one urgent question concerns the mechanisms and factors which may positively influence active participation and increase the rate of volunteering in the older

<sup>20</sup> International Labour Organization (2007). *Manual on the measurement of volunteer work*. Geneva: ILO.

<sup>21</sup> Windsor, T. D., K. J. Anstey and B. Rodgers (2008). “Volunteering and psychological well-being among young-old adults: How much is too much?” *The Gerontologist*, 48(1), 59-70.

<sup>22</sup> Tan, E. J., Q.-L. Xue, T. Li, M. C. Carlson, and L. P. Fried (2006). “Volunteering: A physical activity intervention for older adults—The Experience Corps Program in Baltimore”. *Journal of Urban Health*, 83(5), pp. 954-969. Windsor, T. D., K. J. Anstey and B. Rodgers (2008). “Volunteering and psychological well-being among young-old adults: How much is too much?” *The Gerontologist*, 48(1), 59-70.

<sup>23</sup> Martinez, I., K. Frick, T. Glass, M. Carlson, E. Tanner, M. Ricks, et al. (2006). “Engaging older adults in high impact volunteering that enhances health: Recruitment and retention in The Experience Corps Baltimore”. *Journal of Urban Health*, 83(5), pp. 941-953.

<sup>24</sup> Tang, F., N. Morrow-Howell, and S. Hong (2009). “Inclusion of diverse older populations in volunteering: The importance of institutional facilitation”. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(5), pp. 810-827.

<sup>25</sup> Erlinghagen, M., and K. Hank (2006). “The participation of older Europeans in volunteer work”. *Ageing & Society*, 26 (04), pp. 567-584.

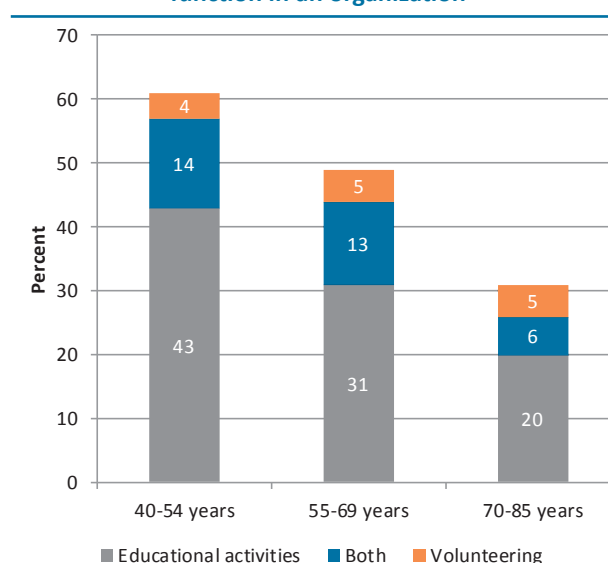
<sup>26</sup> Naumann, D., and L. Romeu Gordo (2010). “Gesellschaftliche Partizipation: Erwerbstätigkeit, Ehrenamt und Bildung”. In Motel-Klingebiel, A., S. Wurm and C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.), *Altern im Wandel. Befunde des Deutschen Alterssurveys (DEAS)*, pp. 118-141. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

<sup>27</sup> Kaskie, B., S. Imhof, J. Cavanaugh, and K. Culp (2008). “Civic engagement as a retirement role for aging Americans”. *The Gerontologist*, 48(3), pp. 368-377.

<sup>28</sup> Prisuta, R. (2003). “Enhancing volunteerism among aging boomers”. In Harvard School of Public Health—MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement (Eds.), *Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement*, pp. 50-89. Boston, MA: Harvard School of Public Health.

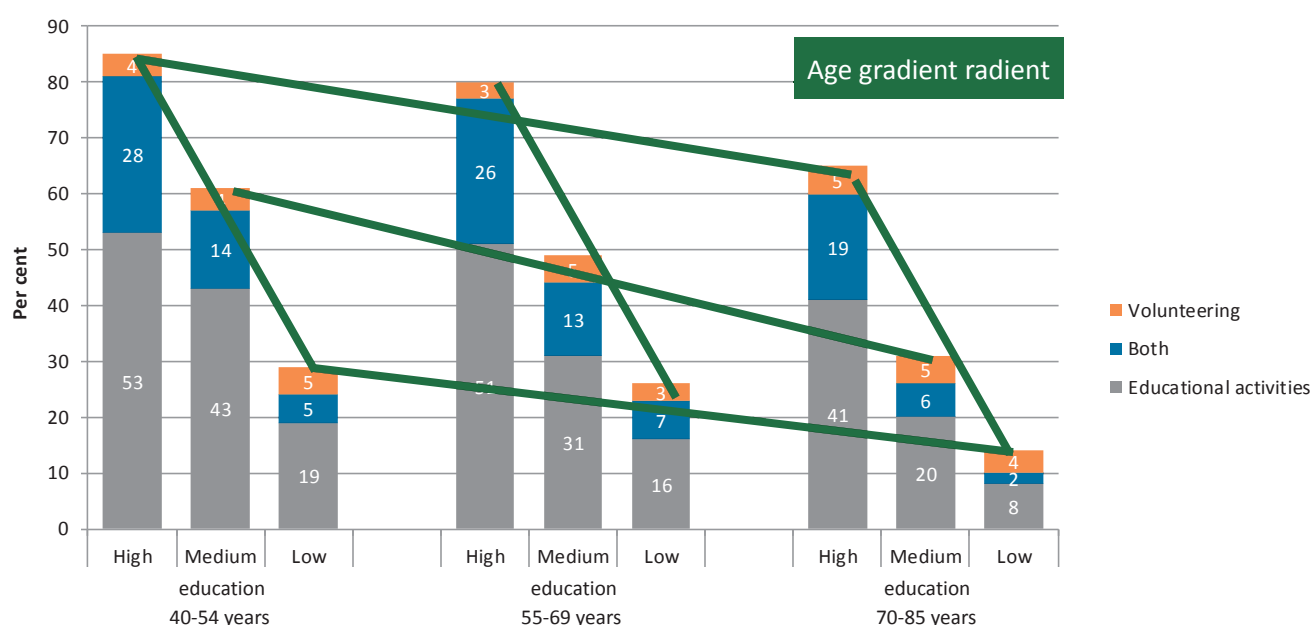
population (figure 7). On the level of organizations, it is decisive to match the needs of voluntary organizations and the interests of volunteers, especially those of younger birth cohorts as norms, values and preference underlie generational change. On the level of the municipality, several features of age-friendly cities have been identified. Physical accessibility, service proximity, security, affordability and inclusiveness increase active ageing.<sup>29</sup> Local policies, which intend to increase the rates of productive participation of older people, seem to have a complex effect. While some of these measures, for example extended information about volunteering activities, increase the number of inhabitants with lower education who are volunteering, they have no or even slightly negative effects on inhabitants with higher education (figure 8).<sup>30</sup> On the societal macro-level, the extent of democratic participation and the provision of welfare state services positively influence the rates of productive participation of older people.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 7: Percentage of individuals with an honorary function in an organization**



Source: Naumann, D., and L. Romeu Gordo (2010). "Gesellschaftliche Partizipation: Erwerbstätigkeit, Ehrenamt und Bildung". In Motel-Klingebiel, A., S. Wurm and C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.), *Altern im Wandel. Befunde des Deutschen Alterssurveys (DEAS)*, pp. 118-141. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

**Figure 8: Percentage of individuals with an honorary function in an organization, by education level**



Source: Naumann, D., and L. Romeu Gordo (2010). "Gesellschaftliche Partizipation: Erwerbstätigkeit, Ehrenamt und Bildung". In Motel-Klingebiel, A., S. Wurm and C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.), *Altern im Wandel. Befunde des Deutschen Alterssurveys (DEAS)*, pp. 118-141. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

<sup>29</sup> Plouffe, L., and A. Kalache (2010). "Towards global age-friendly cities: Determining urban features that promote active aging". *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 87(5), pp. 733-739.

<sup>30</sup> Traunmüller, R., I. Stadelmann-Steffen, K. Achermann, and M. Freitag (2012). *Zivilgesellschaft in der Schweiz*. Zürich: Seismo.

<sup>31</sup> Hank, K., and M. Erlinghagen (2011). "Volunteering in 'old' Europe: Patterns, potentials, limitations". *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 29(1), pp. 3-20.

### Images of ageing frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons

Images of ageing play an important role in promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination of older persons. There is a growing body of empirical evidence showing the consequences of images of ageing for the ageing person<sup>32</sup> and for professionals (e.g. implicit ageism in professional decision-making<sup>33</sup>). It has been shown that images of ageing are more positive in individuals with higher educational status. Depending on the relationship quality, more frequent contact with older people in childhood can also lead to more positive images of ageing.

Strategies aimed at changing the images of ageing may include direct intervention measures, like school curricula, community programmes for intergenerational exchange, and media interventions for a realistic portrayal

of older persons. However, the empirical research on the effectiveness and efficiency of these interventions is very sparse, so no conclusive recommendations can be formulated yet. In general, anti-discrimination laws may be helpful in changing images of ageing or at least limiting the impact of negative age stereotypes.

Societal and individual conceptions of ageing influence developmental trajectories over the life span. The use of the potentials of active ageing is influenced by societal images of ageing. Bringing new “images of ageing” into the mass media and into the consciousness of the general public might show that older people are a potential societal resource. It should be noted, however, that purely positive images of ageing do not do justice to frail older people in need of care. Hence, images of ageing should be inclusive and embrace both the potentials and risks of old age when striving to promote participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination of older persons.

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## 3. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND AGEING IN DIGNITY

*Susanne Iwarsson, Centre for Ageing and Supportive Environments (CASE), Lund University, Sweden*

Traditionally, we mainly focus on the ageing individual and population – much less on environments and even less on the interaction between the person and the environment. Independence in daily functioning and the well-being of older European citizens in the future will be significantly enhanced through an improved understanding of the interrelations between ageing persons and their environments in areas such as home and out-of-home environments, and intertwined with the impact of technology and products. In order to ensure the full integration and participation of older people in society, the societal infrastructure must be accessible and enable activity and participation in areas such as housing, public facilities and public transportation. Based on current research on person-environment interactions, there is evidence that combinations of functional limitations as related to existing environmental barriers are the major contributors to the generation of

accessibility problems. Actors in physical planning need more knowledge about functional capacity and how the process of ageing interacts with physical environmental barriers in the generation of accessibility problems.

The home is the place where most people age and thus also an important arena for the provision of social services and health care. While objective aspects of housing such as housing standards and accessibility are important, based on current research on home and health we know that perceived aspects of housing are crucial for activity, participation and health. There is a complex interplay between objective and perceived aspects of housing and health, with marked differences among subgroups of older people. Our knowledge of such dynamics is insufficient, but there is a need for more individualized housing counselling and housing provision, which then leads to the need for the development of evidence-based social services and health care that can be provided in different forms of housing, carefully adapted to the individual situation.

Based on research showing the positive effects of physical and mental activity to support active and healthy ageing, there is a need for forward-looking health promotion and preventive strategies, going beyond those of housing and care provision. Most importantly, mobility is often compromised by functional decline. Assistive technology that supports mobility and physical activity has seen much development (figure 9), but in several European

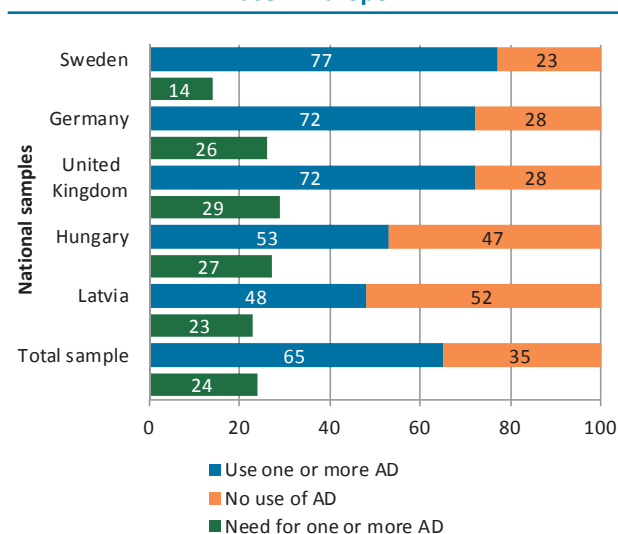
<sup>32</sup> For example, effects on health, performance in memory tasks, and activities; Wurm, S., M. J. Tomasik, and C. Tesch-Römer (2010). “On the importance of a positive view on aging for physical exercise among middle-aged and older adults: Cross-sectional and longitudinal findings”. *Psychology and Health*, 25(1), pp. 25-42.

<sup>33</sup> Levy, B. R., and M. R. Banaji (2002). “Implicit ageism”. In Nelson, T. D. (Ed.), *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons*, pp. 49-75. Cambridge: MIT Press.

countries there is low awareness of what the use of mobility devices would add to quality of life and well-being, and the provision systems are not well developed.

Adding to the complexity of the ageing process, with current medical advances larger proportions of the population will live for many years with chronic diseases and disabilities, bringing even larger challenges for society to create environments enabling activity, participation, independence and — ultimately — health.

**Figure 9: National samples of assistive device (AD) use in Europe**



Source: Centre for Ageing and Supportive Environments (CASE), Lund University, Sweden.

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## 4. INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY – A GROWING CHALLENGE FOR GOVERNMENTS AND NGOs

*Irene Hoskins, President (2006 – 2012), International Federation on Ageing (IFA)*

I bring to today's discussion the perspective of someone from the older generation who has worked on ageing issues in both the non-governmental organization (NGO) world as well as in the intergovernmental sector as a former official of the World Health Organization (WHO). As an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the IFA (International Federation on Ageing)<sup>34</sup> participated actively in the deliberations of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) as well as the development of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). The current *European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations* also embraces intergenerational values as an integral part of active ageing.

### Stimulating intergenerational dialogue

As a preliminary remark and in spite of dire predictions about the decline of harmonious intergenerational relations, intergenerational solidarity appears to be

alive and well in the UNECE region. In as much as any general statement can be made about a region of the world as vast and as multicultural as the UNECE region, families and generations continue to support and care for each other. The question therefore is how can intergenerational dialogue and solidarity between the generations be further strengthened as an overarching policy goal for the region?

In this regard, I would also like to stress the importance of the cross-cutting issues related to gender that are inextricably linked to intergenerational solidarity. In spite of increased awareness regarding gender issues, they are often still the missing link when it comes to policies relating to intergenerational solidarity.

First of all, the formulation of new policies that promote a society for all ages demands a discussion of the aspirations, contributions and needs of both young and old. It must be an ongoing subject of policy deliberations at all levels — international, national and local. To give an example from the upcoming election campaign in my own country, the United States, one of the hottest campaign issues is how the very popular, public health insurance programme for persons over 65 (*Medicare*) will continue to be provided and financed. Given the importance of this issue in the national debate, policymakers will have to give a fair hearing to all sides.

<sup>34</sup> The IFA (International Federation on Ageing) is a global non-governmental membership organization that promotes knowledge exchange of best policies and practices in the field of population ageing. The IFA aims to serve as a resource for policymakers and academic circles, as well as older people and practitioners in the field of ageing.

The overall objective of a society for all ages is to encourage and maximize the potential of both men and women throughout the entire life course, including life at older ages. While organizations such as IFA and others primarily advocate on behalf of the world's older population, we never lose sight of the fact that intergenerational policies and programmes have to be fair and affordable for all generations. This is particularly true when societies begin to experience significant demographic shifts from a younger to an older population. While this may create stress and even potential areas of conflict, it has to be recognized that intergenerational solidarity is the glue — even under stress — that holds families and communities together and that actively contributes to a more stable and prosperous society. There is also no doubt that intergenerational solidarity enables individuals to reach their full potential during the various stages of the life course, from younger to older ages.

### Intergenerational and gender issues in the provision of care for frail older people

Throughout the centuries, the family has always been the mainstay in the provision of care for people of all ages who need it. This includes children, young people, persons with disabilities, and older people who experience a decline in functional capacity and need help with activities of daily living. How such care is provided differs among UNECE countries, so that today there is a complex and rich variation in how families and governments practice intergenerational solidarity.

For example, according to UNECE research,<sup>35</sup> Nordic countries in the region provide support to a high proportion of frail older persons based on a model of decentralized publicly provided home care services. As a result, the proportion of persons over 65 living in residential care institutions is the lowest in the UNECE region, amounting to only around 3.3 per cent. However, the proportion of older persons living in residential homes is also similarly low in other countries of the region — primarily in Southern Europe — which have maintained a strong tradition of providing family care at home rather than relying on publicly provided services.

In commenting on intergenerational family relationships in ageing societies in the UNECE region,<sup>36</sup> Professor Pearl Dykstra of Erasmus University in Rotterdam warned that population ageing is not only about older persons

but also how it affects the relationships of persons of all ages. In particular, she draws attention to the importance of gender influences on intergenerational relations. According to Professor Dykstra, it is important to explicitly address the ways in which legal and policy arrangements constitute differential opportunities and constraints for men and women across generations and family.

She points out that:

1. There is little evidence that people are less inclined to care for family members if public provisions are available;
2. Interdependencies between generations and between men and women in families are built and reinforced by the legal and policy arrangements in a given country;
3. Women's integration in the labour force has largely taken place without fundamental changes to the formal and informal rules associated with the male breadwinner model.

In conclusion, her overriding message to government policymakers is that national policies should seek to support intergenerational care regimes without reinforcing both social class inequalities and gender inequalities.

The question therefore is how can we most effectively and efficiently promote intergenerational solidarity without at the same time undermining the well-being of the poor and the vulnerable, without limiting the choices for women to pursue their careers outside the home, and without diminishing the economic and health security enjoyed today by so many older citizens of the UNECE region?

### The challenges of intergenerational policymaking

While the overarching goal of any government is to ensure both the effectiveness of and affordability in developing intergenerational policies, unintended consequences and errors can and do occur. And they may often become apparent only after several decades have passed. Here are some examples:

- Cuts in survivors' benefits and dependents' benefits in social security programmes that are based on the assumption that women are protected by their own social security record may in fact leave many women both economically and socially vulnerable. This is particularly the case at older ages when the opportunity to build adequate retirement savings has passed them by.
- Another example of doubtful intergenerational policy has been the push toward earlier retirement, resulting in the premature exclusion of many older workers, both male and female, from the workplace, leaving these premature retirees with lower entitlements and lower lifelong income security.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2010). "Towards community long-term care". Policy Brief No. 7, July 2010.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2010) Dykstra, Pearl. (2010) *Intergenerational family relationships in ageing societies*. New York and Geneva: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=10581&L=0](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=10581&L=0).



- The lack of financial literacy or inadequate information about the consequences of many key life decisions – such as schooling, health promotion and prevention, skills training, retirement planning, etc. – may have long-term consequences that result in heavy strains on the individual, the family and ultimately the government forced to deal with categories of the population that are both marginalized and vulnerable.

Intergenerational policies may thus have very long-term effects. The question, therefore, is how can we do a better job for the future in formulating intergenerational policies, particularly when the demographic weight of the generations will be very different than it is today? Here are three suggestions for consideration:

1. Social partners, governments, NGOs and academia should explore, research and document innovative ways and models that ensure the participation of and fair treatment for all generations as they move through the life course. This means it is not only desirable but necessary to ensure that governments, NGOs and academia constantly assess the intergenerational impact of public policies.

2. Concerted efforts must be made by all parts of civil society to make critical information, statistics and evaluations available to consumers and voters to promote a better informed level of public debate and dialogue. This will help ensure that all generations will better understand their stake in society. Governments should have an obligation to make critical data and evidence-based information available and accessible to civil society in order to monitor and assess change.

3. NGOs and civil society — to be effective in representing the overarching interests of their constituents — should build intergenerational coalitions with other civil society partners. Examples are cooperation of older people with youth organizations, the disabled with trade union leaders, teachers with religious organizations, and women with a broad spectrum of NGOs working for child and maternal health, better education, equal opportunities, and last but not least economic security in old age.

Ensuring more balanced policies to protect and promote intergenerational solidarity has always been a challenge throughout the ages. But currently this challenge has been immensely exacerbated by the worldwide economic recession of the last decade coupled with rapid demographic ageing in both developed and developing countries.

While many NGOs and social partners have seen their resources cut in the face of the economic slowdown, a lack of intergenerational leadership and vision at this point in time could result in serious threats to intergenerational solidarity in future years. Questions will therefore have to be raised and answered about the long-range and differential impact of economic and social policy decisions on children, women, families, workers, the disabled, and finally on all of us as we age.

The greying of our populations, resulting from falling birth rates and longer life expectancies, will compel all countries in the region to re-examine many of their public policies, including guarantees for retirement, universal access to health care, access to higher education and training, equal access to employment for both men and women, protection of the environment, as well as policies in many other domains.

Some adjustments to education, health and pension systems may therefore have to be made to ensure their future solvency and effectiveness. Will these changes be made while at the same time fostering improved intergenerational solidarity, or will the criticism prove correct that it is far easier to delay action and kick those hard decisions down the road to future generations?

When we realize that we will soon be living in a world where the 60+ population exceeds that of children under age 15, we also realize that we are no longer living in a “business as usual” environment. A better informed and widely disseminated dialogue on intergenerational solidarity among all stakeholders will be necessary in all UNECE countries and regions, regardless of their respective levels of economic prosperity. This dialogue will be essential to ensuring that we achieve the societies in which our children and older people would aspire to live.

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## 5. STIMULATING INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

*Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Board Member, European Youth Forum*

We are all future generations, from the oldest of us to the youngest; living tomorrow must mean that we all have a care to make sure that the future will turn out better than today. Human progress, development and growth

(in the wider sense) have improved the lives of billions of people over time; however, in recent years this progress has increasingly made the lives of those on the edges of society worse not better.

This has actually affected both the oldest and youngest in society, and while the gap between generations can sometimes seem to be larger than ever before, we have more to gain together, in solidarity, than we do apart. It will also, however, pose challenges to that cooperation between the generations, underscoring sacrifices that all present generations must make for the next.

The European Youth Forum is the largest democratic grouping of youth organizations in the world, representing almost 900 million young people in Europe. Through our network of youth organizations such as YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), Girl Guides and Red Cross Youth to our national youth councils (coalitions of national and local youth organizations in each country) we speak with one voice to get a better deal for the young today and for all tomorrow. Like many, I have seen family members get old, suffer the indignity of pain and pass away, but I have also seen family members loved and looked after by their close family, sharing stories, ideas and experiences, which not only helps shape all of us but also helps pass on a vision of a better future for all, including the very weakest and overlooked in society.

Changing societies must not be an excuse to leave behind those who are unwilling or unable to change with them; they must be careful not to jilt the younger in preference for the older and they must share the pain which is always felt in social change. There are five key areas for young people today where we need to build a basis of social obligations to achieve success.

#### **Demographic changes lead to a need for democratic changes**

We have all seen the demographic changes in Europe; we are getting older and living longer, or to be more accurate some of us are living longer. In the rush to cater for a generation of older voters we must also understand the needs of young voters. It is therefore important that people of working age as well as those past working age be able to contribute to democratic life in Europe.

With young people dissatisfied with the state of European democracy, extending voting to 16 year olds should be seen as an idea whose time has come. The European Youth Forum is promoting a written resolution in the European Parliament calling for votes at 16, and the Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe already supports the idea. A voice for young people who are worst affected by and most alienated from the formal political process must now be a cornerstone of a future Europe.

Votes at 16 would relink the intergenerational solidarity between those who are young and those who are old enough to vote, providing a direct connection to recognizing those who have a larger stake in the future and those who wish/need to see change today.

During the next European elections, the European Youth Forum will launch the League of Young Voters to build youth as a political force in Europe; this, however, should not be seen as competition with older generations, but in fact a force with which to unite. It is often said that young people want change now, but it is the older voters that must see the immediate change to improve their lives. Allowing youths to vote from age 16 would start to redress the balance, moving young people from the sidelines to the mainstream; as an electoral force, it would put youth policies, which are often similar to ageing policies, on the map.

In the recent past, generations of people had free education, free health care, and often a job for life; these rights and privileges were not easily won, but they have been so easily lost. New generations grow up with a higher education level than ever attained before but with worse job prospects. What is becoming clear is that the claim that financial gain is incurred through higher education is being distorted as many graduates cannot find jobs and when they do they often fill jobs in which they are overskilled, thus pushing the poorest in society into further uncertainty in the job market. It is therefore important that both older and younger generations work together to support the universal service provision they both need.

#### **Providing transport and social services for all**

The universal provision of transport and social services has been eroded, and the division of society, between the poor and rich, between the educated and the not educated and between the old and young, continues to grow at Europe's peril.

The European Youth Forum recognizes that it is often young people and old people who use public transport heavily, it is often the young and old who need social services, and again it is only through universality that these services can be fairly provided. "Means testing" is a scourge that both stigmatizes and misses those on the edges, and breaks down the principles of solidarity for all, slowly destroying the support that the young and old so often need in societies which are now more fragmented than ever.

Health services and education remain key for young people. However, there is a contradiction when jobs are no longer for life but our education systems are less flexible than before. Can people really develop, upskill and retrain if the option is only open for those who can afford to pay the fees for a continuing education that was once free?

It is important to recognize in this new world that education holds a wider social purpose. The ability for all to access educational services, which are not just focused

on employability, but also the ability to grow as a person, is vital for a multicultural and an ageing society.

### **The advancement of society must give us concern for sustainable development**

If we take the concept of sustainable development to heart, as the youth forum does, we need to refocus our debates on solidarity around all pillars of achieving economic equality, social mobility and environmental protection: Meeting the needs of today's generations without damaging the chances of future generations.

This is why the interesting idea put forward at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development earlier in 2012 and taken up by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to ensure that global governance incorporates the voices of future generations is so interesting.

All ages have been jilted by the past generation, and while political weight needs to be rebalanced to include the full participation of the younger present generation, if we are really going to further sustainable development then we need to incorporate commissioners and ombudspersons for future generations at all levels. The UNECE, using the Aarhus Convention as a sustainable development participation mechanism, could go on to develop a governance mechanism for future generations, such as already has been done on the environmental side of sustainable development in Hungary. This would bind present and future generations further together.

If we had had such governance or at least oversight previously, then maybe we would have not been in the situation we are today. We could have avoided the pension crises where retirement ages are pushed higher and higher, not voluntarily, but because decent pensions cannot be secured for these who are close to retirement.

### **Decent employment for all should not exclude decent retirement for the old**

The slow destruction of the pension system has not led to more young people planning private savings, but to them giving up on their future, the feeling that the rug has been pulled from underneath generations to come by the generation that has gone before increases.

Therefore, it is vital that Europe resist the tendency to raise pension ages further and not treat young people in the employment market with contempt as it is they who pay for the present older generation, without any immediate reward for themselves and with few prospects of benefitting from a future reward.

"Solidarity means sacrifice." But what is sacrifice without the possibility of social advancement? Without a job, how can young people be expected to save for the future? When they are told to spend to help the economy now, how can they support themselves in the future? These are wider economic questions. One answer is that we need to move away from the short-termism of how GDP is measured and include social welfare and savings, such as those of natural resources or pensions, to recognize investments in the future.

Action is needed now. The youth forum calls for a jobs pact for young people to ensure that they are in employment, training or education. In turn, we recognize that young people now may have to pay for the transition. Providing dignity at work also means that people must make space for others to move up and move on. This does not mean that early retirement should be a policy that we advance (there is little evidence either way of the benefit to the economy), but a social pact must also mean that people are enabled to move on with dignity.

Security at work without offering a chance for both employee and employer to celebrate a lifetime of employment and retirement as a right leads to harsher work practices for the older generation as employers have to then try to force them out and become less willing to employ older people. Young people should not be pitted against older workers; discriminatory measures such as the age-related minimum wage do not help but harm, keeping the young underemployed. Part-time work and people moving slowly into retirement with pension payments as support help knowledge transfer to younger generations. These are some of the solutions that we could offer.

### **Conclusion**

Only by tackling some of the key issues, making sacrifices for the greater good, and showing solidarity for those that are on the fringes of society can we truly create intergenerational solidarity. The autonomy of young people, allowing them to move away from the family and explore new ideas, is vital for a progressive society. We should not expect young people to have to live with family when they tell us they want independence. Society should allow for more flexible living. Young and old should be free to move, but in safety and with the support that is needed for both, along with the freedom to learn and independence to earn without reliance on others. The slogan of the youth forum is "For Youth Rights"; it could quite easily be "For Your Rights", providing, protecting and empowering all generations.

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## 6. ENSURING A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES: PROMOTING QUALITY OF LIFE AND ACTIVE AGEING

**László Andor**, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

This conference has two aims — first, to take stock of progress over the last five years in the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan; and second, to agree on priorities for action for the coming years.

The European Commission has been involved in the Madrid process since the outset in 2002. We have built up close, productive working relations with the UNECE Secretariat, and the issue of population ageing has been high up on our agenda. Within the European Union, most policy instruments to implement active ageing strategies are in the hands of the Member States. But what the European Union can do is encourage the Member States to tackle the problems and get them to work effectively together. To foster active ageing we have been and are offering better opportunities for it through various policies and funding programmes. Here I outline some of the European Commission's major policy initiatives and plans for the future.

It is no coincidence that 2012 is both the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the *European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations*. In the European Union, making an issue the subject of a *European Year* is a way of raising awareness among the general public and triggering action by policymakers and key stakeholders. The *2012 European Year* promotes active ageing in three areas — employment, participation in society, and living independently. In practice it means fostering an active-ageing culture that includes older people, rather than excluding them.

The *2012 European Year* also seeks to change attitudes to ageing, challenge the understanding of what it means “to be old” and “to grow old”. It aims to highlight older people's untapped potential and the contribution they can make to society.

And as the Vienna Ministerial Declaration emphasizes, for active ageing policies to become a reality, we need to promote social inclusion and participation by older people, and combat discrimination against them.

The time was ripe for a *European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations* because the European Union is at a demographic turning-point. With the baby boom cohorts beginning to retire in large numbers, we are starting to feel the impact of population ageing. Over the next 30 years, the EU working-age population should shrink by 1 to 1.5 million a year, while the number of people 60 and over will increase by about 2 million a year.

Demographic change in Europe poses a major challenge for our welfare systems and for solidarity between generations. It increases the burden of pensions and care for a growing number of retired people on a shrinking working age population — at a time of severe unemployment too. This is one of the issues tackled by the *Europe 2020 Strategy* — the EU's growth strategy, which seeks to harness innovation, improve education and skills, and consolidate Member State finances. Europe 2020 sets various targets, including a 75 per cent employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 and a plan to lift 20 million people out of poverty by 2020.

Active ageing policies in the Member States are crucial to meeting those targets. Coupled with pension reforms, they will also help reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion in old age. However, adequate and sustainable pensions depend on good jobs and a balance between time spent in employment and time spent in retirement. This means raising the effective retirement age and seeing how to improve retirement income through better access to safe and more cost-effective supplementary pensions.

Following European Commission recommendations, many EU Member States have now raised the retirement age in line with the rise in life expectancy, curbed opportunities for early retirement, and increased incentives to work longer. And this has borne fruit. Since the crisis started, what we see is a reversal of the trend towards early retirement in the European Union. Older workers have actually done rather well during the current recession, and their employment rates have improved slightly.

But there is still scope to do more. Across the European Union, the percentage of those employed in the 55-to-64 age group ranges from around 30 per cent in Malta and Slovenia to 70 per cent in Sweden. Extending working life therefore goes hand in hand with efforts to meet the Europe 2020 employment rate target and balance budgets. It means not only encouraging people to stay in the labour market longer, but also improving older workers' employability.

### European Innovation Partnership

Leaving aside a lack of adequate income, poor health and frailty are major factors that put older people in risk of social exclusion. To address them, the first European Innovation Partnership launched by the European Commission focuses on active and healthy ageing. It seeks to increase EU citizens' healthy lifespan by two years by 2020. Improving the health of EU citizens as they grow older will relieve pressure on health and



social care systems and will harness older people's growth potential. One of the cross-cutting actions in the *European Innovation Partnership* will focus on age-friendly environments — an idea based on the World Health Organisation's age-friendly cities scheme.

### **Combating discrimination**

I mentioned that one of the *2012 European Year's* aims is to change attitudes towards older people and fight negative stereotypes — or "ageism", which is discrimination on grounds of old age. EU anti-discrimination legislation bans discrimination on grounds of age in employment, including vocational education and training. And most discrimination cases heard by the Court of Justice of the European Union actually concern age discrimination.

Age discrimination is often coupled with discrimination on other grounds, such as gender, race or disability. Over 32 per cent of people aged 55 to 65 say they have some disability. So an effort is needed to enable older persons and persons with disabilities to take part in everyday life. One step in this direction is to improve accessibility. To remove barriers to people with disabilities in the physical environment, transport and information and communications technologies, the Commission has undertaken to consider regulating.

It is planning to present a *European Accessibility Act* late in 2012 to establish a European framework for accessible goods and services. The objective is to improve access to goods and services for persons with disabilities and the older population on the basis of a "design for all" approach. The initiative will be business-friendly and is likely to include provisions on accessibility in public procurement and on the harmonization of accessibility standards at the European level.

### **Following up on the 2012 European Year**

It is too early to assess the impact of the *2012 European Year* on policy developments in the Member States, particularly at local and regional level. But the *2012 European Year* certainly mobilized a wide range of stakeholders and showcased many new initiatives to promote active ageing and strengthen solidarity between

generations. It elicited commitments for further action from the Member States, and several Member States seized the opportunity to launch major national initiatives to promote active ageing.

We need to build on the political momentum generated and ensure there is proper follow-up. The Commission is keen to support the Member States and stakeholders through various initiatives:

- First, in conjunction with the Member States, we are finalizing a set of guiding principles for active ageing. They will lay down guidance on improving the conditions and opportunities for active ageing. We hope they will be endorsed by the Social Affairs Ministers in December under the Cypriot Presidency.
- Second, to measure progress in active ageing, we also are working with the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the European Centre in Vienna on developing an active ageing index. It should give us an indication of the untapped active-ageing potential of both women and men in each country.
- Third, the European Commission plans to issue an open call for proposals in 2013 to support Member States in developing comprehensive active-ageing strategies.

At the June 2012 European Union conference on "Good governance on active and healthy ageing", there was broad agreement on the need for public authorities at various levels and across different policy areas to work closely together on designing effective, comprehensive strategies for active and healthy ageing. We will be happy to support this and ensure that countries can benefit from each other's experience with integrated policymaking for active ageing.

### **Conclusion**

The *2012 European Year* has spurred the EU Member States to step up their efforts to promote active ageing. They have come up with actions and entered into commitments. This has meant they have also stepped up their efforts in connection with the UN Madrid process. The UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing gives a further boost to active ageing.