



Policy **brief**

Active Ageing

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 13
June 2012

Commitment 2 of the UNECE Strategy on Ageing: To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society.

Commitment 5 of the UNECE Strategy on Ageing: To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing.

Commitment 7 of the UNECE Strategy on Ageing: To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being.

Contents

Challenging context	1
Suggested strategies	1
Expected result	1
Introduction, the concept of active ageing.....	2
Context of the ageing process.....	2
Labour market and participation.....	3
- Work-life balance throughout the life course....	3
- Flexible careers through education and training	3
- Adapting working environment to the needs of all generations	6
- Images of older employees and anti-discrimination policies	6
- Flexible retirement.....	7
Social inclusion.....	8
- Volunteering as a measure to promote social inclusion	8
- Active through the participation in social family networks	9
Health	10
- Preventive health measures – A healthy life style throughout the life course.....	11
- Frailty and long-term care – Towards community care	11
Recommendations.....	12
- Labour market and participation	12
- Social inclusion	12
- Health.....	13
- Streamlining ageing policies.....	13
Bibliography	14
Checklist	16

Challenging context

The way how persons age is determined by a variety of factors: biological pre-conditions, social circumstances, attitudes towards ageing, and life-style. The manner how an individual person ages may contribute to how long a person will live and how fit a person might be in the late period of life.

Current policies on ageing may perceive “old age” as a status rather than the result of a process. Some ageing policies may be aimed at providing services within this status rather than at empowering older persons to live independently. Here, a change of paradigm is needed. In order to gain the ability to remain active, the individual needs to invest in this process throughout the life course. Appropriate societal structures, incentives and awareness-raising would enable persons to live an active life-style as long as possible. Current societal and legal infrastructures may not fully provide those opportunities for active ageing.

Suggested strategies

The 2012 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing with the motto “Ensuring a society of all ages – promoting quality of life and active ageing”¹ is an effort to contribute to awareness-raising and priority-setting in the area of active ageing on the highest political level and in the context of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.² Also the European Parliament has declared this year as the “European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations”³ that sets the frame to start many new projects. At the backdrop of this, the policy brief aims to suggest concrete policy measures which member States may consider for supporting active ageing.

Expected result

The concept of active ageing aims at enhancing the physical and mental well-being of individuals. Personal well-being may ultimately contribute to their ability to be less dependent on and more contributive to societal life. Applying a concept of active ageing will create an infrastructure that allows people to become responsible for their own process of active ageing.

¹For information on the 2012 Ministerial Conference on Ageing see: http://www.unece.org/pau/ageing/ministerial_conference_2012.html.

²United Nations (2002). Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Second World Assembly on Ageing. Madrid, Spain. 8-12 April 2002. <http://social.un.org/index/Ageing/Resources/MadridInternationalPlanofActiononAgeing.aspx>

³Information on EU activities in the context of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, see: <http://europa.eu/ey2012/>

Introduction: the concept of “Active Ageing”

Definition of active ageing

Whilst some may understand active ageing mainly in terms of labour market participation in the second half of life, this policy brief refers to a WHO definition, which relates to a much broader concept: “Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. [...] Active ageing allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need.”⁴ The definition strongly associates with the well-being of individuals. However, the well-being of persons is not only an individual luxury, but has an ultimate societal dimension in terms of an increase in labour market participation and a decrease of health care expenditures, for instance.

Context of the ageing process and its relevance for active ageing

The process of ageing is shaped by various factors.⁵ On the one hand there are biological preconditions that are part of the cause of good health throughout the life course and thus in old age. On the other hand, social circumstances as well as the life style constitute significant factors that impact on health and well-being. As biological factors are difficult to reach from the political level, this policy brief will concentrate on social aspects that play a part in active and healthy ageing. Also, the self-perception and perception of certain attributes of ageing and older persons shape physical and mental well-being. Behavioural science provides evidence that the attitude a younger person associates with old age contributes to the quality of that person’s later ageing process.⁶

An important question to answer in the context of this brief is the distinction between the responsibility of the individual and that of society. Here, it is necessary to address the responsibility of the individual to manage the individual ageing process, but also to encourage member States to shape appropriate political, legal and societal structures, under which people have greater opportunities to age actively.

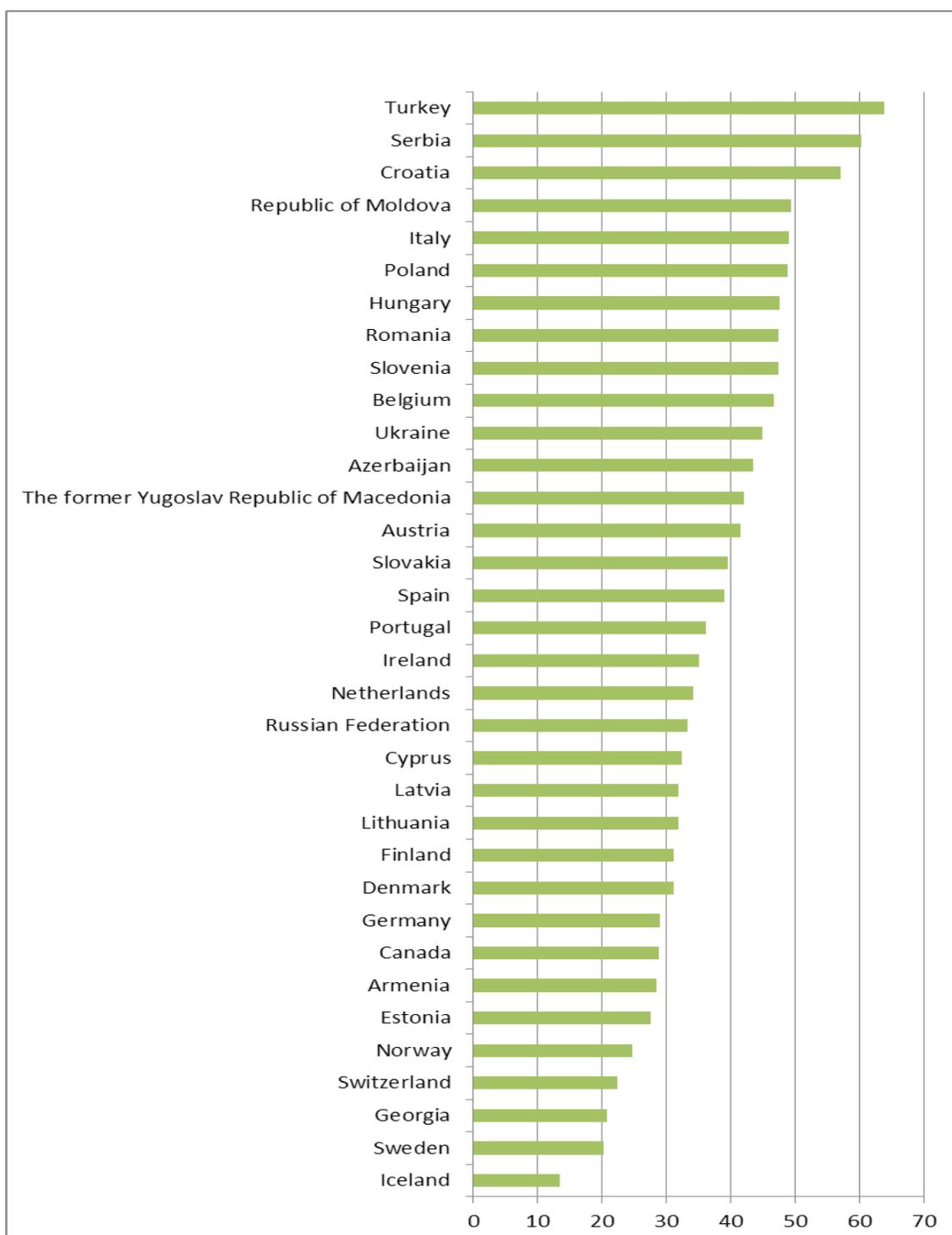
The concept of active ageing attempts to streamline ageing policies from various political domains, such as labour market participation, social inclusion as well as health. Active labour market participation may be supported by establishing flexible retirement arrangements, by forming a working environment that is adapted to the needs of all generations, through continuous education and training, as well as by promoting positive images of older employees and anti-discrimination policies. Older persons can integrate socially better when they find structures for volunteering, for instance in intergenerational settings. Health policies that promote active ageing throughout the life course concern preventive health measures and community care settings. An intergenerational (considering the effects of a policy on various age-groups), a life course (considering future potential impacts of a policy on individual living circumstances), and a gender approach (considering gender differences in the effects of policies) shall ensure that the complex demographic phenomenon of population ageing is addressed adequately and in a well-balanced manner.

⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO): What is active ageing? http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html

⁵ Ferraro, K. and Shippee, T. (2009). Aging and Cumulative Inequality: How Does Inequality Get Under the Skin? *The Gerontologist*. Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 333–343.

⁶ Levy, B. et al. (2002). Longevity Increased by Positive Self-Perceptions of Aging. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 83, No. 2. Baltes, P. and Baltes, M. (1993). Successful aging: perspectives from the behavioral sciences.

Figure 1
Share of inactive population, aged 50-64 in selected UNECE countries in 2010, percent



Source: Source: UNECE Statistical Database (<http://www.unecce.org/stats/data>). See Gender Statistics/Work and the economy/Economically Inactive population by reason for inactivity, age and sex.

Note: The economically inactive population includes all the persons who are not part of the labour force, i.e. are neither employed nor unemployed. The figure presents share of inactive persons aged 50-64 in total population of this age group. Data come from national Labour Force Surveys, which are standard household-based surveys of work-related statistics. As such they cover official and non-registered economy.

Labour market participation

Data on economic inactivity of the age group 50-64 show a large variance in the UNECE region. Among thirty-four countries presented in Figure 1, twenty-five report that over 30 percent of all 50 to 64 year-olds are economically inactive. In three countries the inactive population in this age group accounts for over 50 percent. This high percentage of economic inactivity constitutes not only a loss of resources for the respective countries, but also reflects existing barriers to economic and social participation of individuals, and that ultimately may lead to a decrease of their quality of life.

However, not only older employees and young retirees, but also young graduates in the UNECE region need better access to the labour market.⁷ At the same time, the most economically active middle-aged generation is often overburdened with efforts to reconcile career development and family duties. To find adequate and gender-sensitive labour market instruments that are well-balanced between the needs of various generations, the following considerations may be helpful.

Work-life balance throughout the life course

The encouragement to an active life style needs to take into account that certain age and gender cohorts are already under pressure. For instance, the period between 30 and 50 is in particular dense for women with family responsibilities and therefore often called the “rush-hour of life”,⁸ where the reconciliation of career development, child rearing, partnership, and also care duties for elderly family members constitutes a particular challenge. A combination of time management policies, infrastructural support and monetary transfers may help women (and men) to shape a sustainable work-life balance throughout the life course, which contributes to a greater ability to remain active for a prolonged period in later life. Slowing down the pace of the middle generation, whilst creating employment opportunities for the very young and the ageing members of society may have beneficial effects for all.⁹

Flexible careers through education and training

For many decades many working careers had a clear distinction between three major periods: qualification phase, working phase and retirement phase. In response to emerging social circumstances resulting from population ageing, the concept of active ageing calls for a change of paradigm of this tripartite approach. As employees today are expected to be more flexible in terms of duties they perform and working conditions, the commitment to life-long education constitutes a pre-condition of an active and flexible life style. Early investment into education shows positive effects on employability, health and social inclusion. Older workers with higher education have much higher employment rates than low skilled workers.¹⁰ The availability of a wide range of professional training or re-training opportunities, as well as language and ITC skills may help to maintain the employability of employees throughout the life course, but also increases quality of life beyond retirement age.

⁷The UN Youth Report outlines the working conditions and the unemployment rate of the age group 15-30, which significantly surpass those of adults in most investigated countries. The report also provides recommendations how address this issue in:

United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2012). UN World Youth Report. <http://unworldyouthreport.org/>

⁸Tremmel, J. (ed.) (2010). A Young generation under pressure?: The financial situation and the “Rush Hour” of the Cohorts 1970-1985 in a generational comparison. Springer.

⁹European Commission (2005). Green Paper “Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations”. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/situation_in_europe/c10128_en.htm.

¹⁰For the relationship between status of education and employment rates see: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2001). Education at a Glance 2011. http://www.oecd.org/document/2/0,3746,en_2649_39263238_48634114_1_1_1_1,00.html.

Life-long learning in Luxembourg

RBS, a centre dealing with questions concerning old age, has developed together with the University of Luxembourg a concept of “Learning in Later Life”. Since 2011, the university offers 17 topics accessible for all seniors aged at least 60 or early pensioners. They participate as “free listeners”, who are exempt from charges except for a €50 inscription-fee. There are no preset educational conditions to fulfil. Through this programme seniors keep in touch with young people. Every intellectual effort is an excellent brain training, which allows focusing on new interesting topics. With 100 inscriptions for the first winter term, this programme was a great success. Two thirds of the participants appreciated the initiative as very good, one third found it a good experience. For the summer term 2012, the number of courses will increase to 26 different topics.

Sources: RBS – CENTER FIR ALTERSFROEN

http://wwwen.uni.lu/university/news/latest_news/seniorstudium_informationsveranstaltung_am_30_januarhttp://www.rbs.lu/icc/Internet-fr/nav/occ/occ70739-e54f-0421-e18c-66132700266c.htm, or email; Roland Moes at Roland.Moes@igss.etat.lu

“Fit2Work“ initiative in Austria

The key objective of “Fit2Work” is to maintain and sustainably improve the employability and the ability to work of employees, as well as to avoid premature withdrawal from the labour market due to sickness and work related diseases. This project is part of the Labour and Health Act, which was adopted by the Austrian Parliament in December 2010 and put into force on 1 January 2011. In collaboration with the Federal Social Welfare Authorities (Bundessozialamt), the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice), the Social Insurance for Occupational Risks (AUVA) and the Public Pension Insurance early intervention measures are implemented all over Austria.

Ultimately, a low-threshold service covering work and health issues for all employees and employers was established in 2011. Fit2work is intending a change in the culture of employment of older workers in Austria.

To implement this strategy the programme provides guidance first of all through basic information (IT-supported initial overview, “Knowledge Platform”), consulting services and case management for individuals, as well as consulting services for enterprises. In a further programme phase, a tailored range of consulting services will be made available to enterprises. Accompanying public relations work will raise public awareness on the issue “Healthy working environment”. The evaluation of pilot projects estimates that each invested Euro may have at least a threefold return within one year. It is expected that the delay of invalidity pension payments by one year – achieved through this programme – may save around 300 million euro annually.

Sources: Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. For further contact, please email Edith Werderits at edith.werderits@bmask.gv.at, or visit: www.fit2work.at

Adapting working environments to the needs of all generations

A higher retirement age calls for environments which enable older workers to remain healthy, satisfied and productive, as good health of employees and productivity are correlated. The responsibility here is not only with policy makers, but also with companies and individuals. Stakeholders may consider together how to best promote healthy workplaces and how to provide age-friendly and safe work environments that are adequate for intergenerational cooperation.¹¹ Appropriate involvement in decision-making is likely to benefit employees at all levels of an organisation. Mechanisms should therefore be developed to allow people to influence the design and improvement of their work environment, thus enabling employees to have more control, greater variety and more opportunities for personal development at work. Workplace health and age management may include workplace health services with persons trained in the early detection of mental health problems and appropriate interventions.¹² Important is also the prevention of distressing interpersonal experiences at the work place, such as bullying or harassment, which may cause anxiety and frustration, and which can lead to a variety of illnesses (e.g. the burn-out syndrome) or a premature exit from employment.¹³

Images of older employees and anti-discrimination policies

When working towards an improved image of employees of certain age groups an intergenerational mutual understanding is the key.

A Special Eurobarometer Survey¹⁴ found that a subjectively perceived “not positive” image of older persons may contribute to over 50 percent to the reasons why persons in the age group of 55+ might stop working. The promotion of positive images of older employees is therefore necessary. Highlighting their experience and skills through media programmes, civil society cooperation, or school curricula will be desirable. Anti-discrimination policies may prevent that any harmful actions are undertaken on the basis of negative prejudices.

At the same time addressing and recognizing the struggle of parents, that are reconciling work and family life, would lower their perceived pressure to uphold to an image of an always available employee during child rearing periods. This may contribute to greater empathy of the middle-aged generation to acknowledge older person’s skills whilst showing understanding towards their particular needs. It would foster a holistic approach towards the individual which concedes that during every period of life, active contribution to economic life goes hand in hand with personal concerns for family, social and health matters.

¹¹ See for instance: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2011). The impact of the recession on age-management policies. Dublin.

¹² Wilkinson, R. and Marmot, M. (2003). Social determinants of health – the solid facts, Second edition. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe. p. 18-19.

¹³ International Labour Organization (ILO) (2006). Violence at work. http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_110_engl.pdf.

¹⁴ See: European Commission (2012). Public Opinion. Special Eurobarometer No. 378. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_379_360_en.htm.

Flexible retirement The UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) advocates for abolishing mandatory retirement. A legislative framework that allows flexible working arrangements may help older employees to continue their working career until they reach the statutory retirement age and beyond, if they wish to remain active. A systematic expansion of part-time employment or contractually agreed working-time variations during the employment biography helps to extend the scope for flexible employment relationships for older workers.¹⁵ Taking into account a gender approach could contribute to the inclusion of older women faced by accumulated barriers to enter or remain in the labour market due to child bearing breaks, part-time work or low pay.¹⁶

Economic Factor « Old Age » in Germany

The strategy - Economic Factor "Old Age" - of the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth aims at improving the quality of life of older persons. It highlights the opportunities of demographic change by drawing attention to the potential of products and services for all ages and by strengthening the role of older person as consumers and employees. The budget allocated for the implementation of this strategy was € 1,535 thousand until March 2011 and is € 900 thousand between 2012 and 2014.

Projects in the context of this strategy entail:

- The development of tools for companies and consumers
- A quality label „Shopping for all generations“, which was developed in cooperation with numerous associations on community and “Länder”-level and which has been awarded to more than 3000 different shops
- A website to inform about the strategy: www.wirtschaftsfaktor-alter.de
- Three regional conferences in 2011 and 2012
- An exhibition on „Universal design“
- Studies on the topics:
 - “Work satisfaction of older employees in correlation with images of old age and age management in companies”
 - “Managing transition: An expertise on motivation and preferences of older workers with reference to shaping retirement”
 - “Realising potentials: the consumer group 50 plus”
 - “The German economy and demographic change”
 - “Tourism 50 plus”

Sources: German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. For further information, please contact Dorika Seib at dorika.seib@bmfsfj.bund.de, or visit: <http://www.wirtschaftsfaktor-alter.de>
To receive information on the label, please see: <http://www.generationenfreundliches-einkaufen.de>

¹⁵ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011). Pensions at a Glance 2011. Retirement-Income Systems in OECD and G20 Countries.

¹⁶ Botti, F. et al. (2011). Active Ageing and Gender Equality: A labour market perspective. DULBEA Working Papers. For further reading on pensions, see: European Commission (2012). White Paper. An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions. COM(2012) 55 final.

Social inclusion

A number of studies have shown that socially involved persons are happier and healthier throughout the life course, while loneliness may be caused by various factors such as the loss of a partner, reduced social activities, and decreased physical activity.¹⁷ Member States can promote the social integration of older and younger persons by facilitating opportunities for volunteering and intergenerational exchange.

Volunteering as a measure to promote social inclusion

Although it is never too late to become active in volunteering, there is evidence that people who are active throughout the life course are more likely to remain active when reaching retirement age.¹⁸ State-supported volunteering programmes may offer opportunities for societal engagement and political participation (e.g. in senior advisory boards or senior organisations), but should not serve as an opportunity to replace regular employment.

New Horizons for Seniors Programme in Canada

The New Horizons for Seniors Programme (NHSP) supports the Government of Canada's commitment to promote positive images and active engagement of seniors. Among its objectives, the programme promotes volunteerism among seniors and other generations, engages seniors in the community through mentoring of others, and supports social participation and inclusion of seniors.

Federal funding to the NHSP has been enhanced since its creation in 2004. As of 2011, the total budget for the programme is 45 million Canadian dollars per year. Since its beginning in 2004, the programme has helped seniors to lead and participate in such activities, funding more than 8,500 projects in over 1,000 communities across Canada. The programme funds seniors-led or inspired community-based projects, including not-for-profit organizations, coalitions, municipal governments, educational institutions, and tribal councils.

Through the programme participating seniors share their knowledge and experience also with persons of different generations. For example, the Seniors' Hour on Canoe FM "Ageing Outside the Box" is a seniors-led radio programme connecting seniors to community members throughout Haliburton County. A series of radio programmes were created by seniors for seniors and covered a range of topics, including seniors' events in the community, health tips for an ageing population, and connecting seniors and students through storytelling. Listeners were provided with information to help reduce social isolation and encourage participation in community events and activities. The National Community Radio Association recently recognized the community radio station for its NHSP funded show "Ageing Outside the Box".

Source: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. For further information, please see: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/community_partnerships/seniors/index.shtml

¹⁷ See for instance: Cacioppo, J. (2002). Loneliness and Health: Potential Mechanisms. *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Vol. 64, pp. 407–417.

Note: According to this study, loneliness may contribute to various diseases, e.g. depression, anxiety, stress, and also cardiovascular diseases.

¹⁸ See for instance: Morrow-Howell, N. (2010). Volunteering in later life. *Research frontiers*. In: *Journal of Gerontology: Social Science*. Vol. 65B, pp. 461-469¹⁹ Yad Sarah. Op. cit. See: http://www.unece.org/pau/age/Policy_briefs/GoodPractices.html

Sports, health care and culture for the Third Age in Serbia

The programme started in 2008 as a one off-event to mark the International Day of Older Persons, which was organised by the Gerontology Society of Serbia and the Serbian NGO network HumanaS with 500 participants from 56 municipalities in the touristic spa center of Soko Banja in Southeast Serbia. Due to its great success the event was repeated in the subsequent years with a growing number of participants. In 2011 the project registered as a separate NGO, called the "Movement of the Third Age of Serbia".

The organization aims at improving the social inclusion of older persons as part of the national programme of integration and intergenerational solidarity. In addition to older persons more than 100 students have been involved in the programme as volunteers. A further activity of the organization is the promotion of health of older women, e.g. by offering free examinations on breast cancer.

The highlight of this on-going programme is an event, which is held every year in early October for the duration of two to three days. During these days competitions in various types of sports are organised for the participants (in 2011 there were around 700 participants) and carried out in teams from almost all municipalities (70 municipalities in 2011). Those sports are in particular adapted to the abilities of older persons so that also older persons with disabilities could take part in the activities. During this event also cultural activities, such as literature discussions, singing, painting, participation in environmental projects and classes for computers, are offered.

The programme – as outlined - is already fully implemented, but the NGO "Movement of Third Age of Serbia" is planning new additional activities for the coming years to further develop its programme.

Source: For further information, please contact Lidija Kozarcanin at lidija.k@zavodsz.gov.rs; or visit the website of the project at <http://olimpijada3d.org/>

Active through the participation in social family networks

Intergenerational solidarity, although often deriving naturally from kin and non-kin relationships, may be supported by an appropriate legal framework. It has been argued that most UNECE countries follow one of three patterns of legal and policy arrangements concerning the exchange of non-monetary support: Familialism by default (where no publicly provided alternatives to family care exist), publicly supported familialism, or defamilialization.¹⁹ Every pattern offers room for the development and improvement of active ageing strategies by acknowledging that positive social relationships are developed over a life course and do not start at old age. There is a particular need for action to enhance opportunities for social integration in the "familialism by default"-pattern, as here older persons might become dependent on the goodwill of family members, whereas younger relatives might become overwhelmed with their duties. Life-long education and social community activities broaden the spectrum of opportunities for social interaction. In the pattern that incline to defamilialization the exchange of monetary and non-monetary support between family members may be alleviated in order to create incentives for building stronger family ties.

¹⁹These three patterns have been mentioned in: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Dykstra, P. (2010). Intergenerational family relationships in ageing societies. New York; Geneva: United Nations.

Belgium – Garance 55+

The aim of this programme is to create experiences for women that foster social inclusion into intergenerational settings by facilitating a contact between older women and adolescents of the same district in a community centre.

Knowing each other better, both groups can progressively give up fear and prejudices, as well as learn together how to face insecurity and how to improve the quality of life. Women subjected to aggression (verbal or physical) take part in sessions, where they can share their experiences. That is how they learn how to deal with these situations and how to respect themselves and (re)gain respect from others.

Source: For more information, please visit: www.garance.be

Programme «Grandmothers and grandchildren» in the Russian Federation

The objective of this project is the promotion of intergenerational bonds on the basis of emotions, such as concern, compassion, mutual assistance, tenderness and respect to and from seniors. Older persons shall receive appreciation of being needed and support in their role as mentors.

Within the framework of the project meetings of two generations are held in Social Services Centres. Various leisure activities are organized, such as thematic and festive evenings, talent boutiques, and also excursions and outings.

During thematic events the seniors introduce children to popular traditions and origins of Russian culture by attracting children to artful story telling and poetry reading. Grandmothers may sing, whereas children play musical instruments (balalaikas, spoons).

In so-called talent boutiques older participants serve as mentors for children, whilst crafting together different articles, for instance greeting cards. Through this activity they teach the children not only to accept help, but also make acts of kindness to others. Creative work gives older persons a chance to feel needed and to share experiences.

During outings observations of wildlife are made and talks on ecological issues are held. Older persons improve their physical and mental well-being, when participating in games and competitions. Children become familiar with the historical past of their country through stories and sightseeing of attractions in their city. When having outings with children, grandmothers often remember their youth, whilst finding grateful listeners in the children.

Events organized in the context of the programme “Grandmothers and grandchildren” have positively influenced both, the education of the younger generation and the well-being of the elderly generation.

Sources: Ministry of Health and Social Development in the Russian Federation. For further information, please contact Alexander Preobrazhenskiy at PreobrazhenskiyAS@rosminzdrav.ru, or dszn@tula.net, or UskovaNE@rosminzdrav.ru

Health

A change of paradigm in health policies means to make an investment into active ageing through preventive health measures, instead of relying on curing medicine alone. In those cases where chronic diseases, disability and frailty are unavoidable, a community care setting allows older persons greater active participation in societal life than residential care settings.

Preventive health measures
– A healthy life style
throughout the life course

Building the ground for active ageing starts at a very early age and continues throughout the life course. Thus, preventive measures are a well spent investment into the health of gradually ageing societies. In the introduction of this brief it has been outlined that member States may be able to offer incentives and legal frameworks for healthy life styles, however the ultimate responsibility for choosing such a path is with the individual. Creating a suitable framework in which people can exercise, reduce stress or improve their diet may impact the health status of citizens, if the individual can be convinced to use them. Preventing disease and accidents may also include improving the quality of housing or safety of transport facilities.²⁰

The Italian inter-sectorial programme “Gaining health: making healthy choices easier”

“Gaining health” is a programme promoted by the Italian Ministry of Health and approved by a Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers on May 4, 2007. The programme pursues an inter-sectorial approach with the active involvement of central, regional and local administrations in order to prevent chronic diseases and to encourage healthy lifestyles. In particular, four main areas of intervention were identified: smoking cessation, alcoholism, unhealthy alimentation, and inactivity.

The main aim of “gaining health” is to raise the individual’s self-responsibility for a healthy lifestyle, which contributes to an active process of ageing. For this reason information, education, and assistance are the principal instruments for the programme implementation.

The Ministry of Health created a national platform on alimentation, physical activity and smoking with the aim of promoting and implementing new initiatives that are coherent with the programme. The platform lasted for one year and included the participation of the main representatives of central administrations. A series of practical projects were implemented with the help of the National Center for Disease Prevention and Control and with specific attention to the different areas of intervention.

Communication between different stakeholders remains a constant and central component of the programme. It includes: communication plans that are specific for each area of intervention, awareness-raising campaigns for the general public, and a specific programme in cooperation with schools.

Source: Italian Ministry of Health, for further information, please visit: <http://www.guadagnaresalute.it/site/programma>

Frailty and long-term care –
Towards community care

Although an active and healthy lifestyle may contribute to a longer and fitter life, a status of frailty or disability cannot always be prevented.²¹ The concept of active ageing would be aimed at enhancing well-being by allowing older persons to remain fully integrated citizens of their community. Member States may want to promote infrastructures for long-term care services that empower patients to remain active citizens and prevent institutionalization, such as homecare or daycare services, out-patient health care services, the provision of medical equipment, but also high quality palliative care services to allow terminally ill people to die in dignity at home. Sufficient social protection (e.g. pensions and social security measures) are necessary for older persons to take advantage of these services which contribute to the ultimate aim to help them remain integrated into their community.

²⁰ Wilkinson, R. and Marmot, M. (2003). Social determinants of health – the solid facts. Second edition. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe.

²¹ Vaupel, J.W. (2010). Biodemography of human ageing. Nature. Vol. 64, pp. 536-542.

Successful practice for the elderly through gerontology centres in Croatia

Gerontology centres in Croatia aim to keep older persons at home in the local community as long as possible by offering multifunctional immediate care adapted to the needs of the individual. The approach of the centres is to promote non-institutional care for the elderly in their local community in order to allow healthy, active and productive ageing. This is a particular achievement for the region as previously only institutional or family care was available.

Croatian Gerontology centers:

- ensure immediate health care for functionally active or functionally disabled older persons
- offer programmes of primary, secondary and tertiary disease prevention for them
- serve as meeting places for the older persons, where they can take part in various activities in an intergenerational setting
- offer continuous education for older and younger people about old age, ageing and the preparation for retirement is offered.

Sources: For further information, please contact Spomenka Tomek-Roksandić at spomenka.tomek-roksandic@stampar.hr, or gerontologija@stampar.hr

Recommendations

The concept of active ageing aims to change the prevailing paradigm from policies that merely provide for older persons to policies of empowerment. For this a political and legal framework in which older person could take responsibility for their own quality of life and well-being has to be created. However, policies on active ageing should not discount a need to provide for frail older persons.

Labour market participation

It is desirable for persons to be able to remain in employment as long as they are fit enough and wish to work. Abolishing mandatory retirement might be seen as an important step in this regard. Adjustments to statutory pensionable age and/or years of contributions may provide for smooth and gradual retirement options that leave room for personal choice with the ultimate aim to allow persons to promote their own well-being and quality of life.

On the other hand, in order to prevent an early exit from labour markets of older employees, who have not yet reached the retirement age, it is necessary to develop appropriate labour market instruments. These instruments shall be geared towards the establishment of incentives to stay in the labour market and the creation of an age-friendly working environment including age-adapted workplaces. Life-long learning programmes as part of comprehensive education strategies are beneficial for improving the employability of all generations.

Social inclusion

Social networks are crucial to pursue a process of active ageing, therefore it is necessary to support social inclusion through various programmes, such as volunteering or projects that foster intergenerational solidarity. Here, family networks are as relevant as non-family community networks.

Health

The promotion of preventive health measures and community care services are essential for allowing persons to age healthily. This may involve programmes that offer concrete assistance to stop the misuse of tobacco and alcohol. It may also involve awareness-raising programmes that inform about the positive effects of a physically active life style and a healthy diet. Whilst active and healthy lifestyle is desirable, it has been noted that disability and frailty may occur despite this lifestyle. For these cases, the establishment of community care institutions shall be preferred to residential care institutions.

Streamlining ageing policies

The implementation of the concept of active ageing requires a cross-sectorial, intergenerational and life-course approach to streamline the above mentioned recommendations into a coherent strategy. An inter-ministerial working group or any other national forum of communication may help to reach coherence and consistency between various involved stakeholders.

Bibliography

- Baltes, P. and Baltes, M. (1993). *Successful aging: perspectives from the behavioral sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Botti, F. et al. (2011). *Active Ageing and Gender Equality: A labour market perspective*. DULBEA Working Papers.
- Cacioppo, J. et al. (2002). Loneliness and health: potential mechanisms. *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Vol. 64, pp. 407–417.
- European Commission (2011). *Public Opinion. Special Eurobarometer No. 378*. 2012. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_379_360_en.htm
- European Commission (2012). *European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations*. <http://europa.eu/ey2012/>
- European Commission (2012). *White Paper. An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions*. COM(2012) 55 final
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2011). *The impact of the recession on age-management policies*. Dublin.
- Ferraro, K. and Shippee, T. (2009). Aging and Cumulative Inequality: How Does Inequality Get Under the Skin? *The Gerontologist*. Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 333–343.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2006). *Violence at work*. http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2006/106B09_110_engl.pdf
- Levy, B. et al. (2002). Longevity Increased by Positive Self-Perceptions of Aging. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 83, No. 2.
- Morrow-Howell, N. (2010). Volunteering in later life. *Research frontiers. Journal of Gerontology: Social Science*. Vol. 65B, pp. 461-469.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011). *Education at a Glance 2011*. http://www.oecd.org/document/2/0,3746,en_2649_39263238_48634114_1_1_1_1,00.html
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011). *Pensions at a Glance 2011. Retirement-income system in OECD and G20 countries*.
- Sen, A. and Nussbaum, M. (1993). *The quality of life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tremmel, J. (ed.) (2010). *A Young generation under pressure?: The financial situation and the “Rush Hour” of the Cohorts 1970-1985 in a generational comparison*. Springer.
- United Nations (2002). *Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*. Second World Assembly on Ageing. Madrid, Spain. 8-12 April 2002.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2008). *UNECE Statistical Database. Gender Statistics. Work and the economy. Economically Inactive population by reason for inactivity, age and sex*. http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/dialog/varval.asp?ma=015_GEWE_Inactivity_r&path=../database/STAT/30-GE/03-Wo rkAndeconomy/&lang=1&ti=Economically+Inactive+population+by+reason+for+inactivity%2C+age+and+sex
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Dykstra, P. (2010). *Intergenerational family relationships in ageing societies*. New York; Geneva: United Nations.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2012). *Ministerial Conference on Ageing*. http://www.unece.org/pau/ageing/ministerial_conference_2012.html

Vaupel, J.W. (2010). Biodemography of human ageing. *Nature*. Vol. 64, pp. 536-542.

Wilkinson, R. and Marmot, M. (2003). *Social determinants of health – the solid facts*, Second Edition. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe.

World Health Organization (WHO). What is active ageing? http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html

Checklist : Active Ageing

Main areas	Areas of implementation	Key elements
Labour market participation	Retirement regulation	Using statutory retirement age instead of mandatory retirement
		Finding gradual and flexible retirement solutions
	Labour market instruments	Promoting education and training throughout the life course
		Encouraging an age-friendly working environment
		Improving images of older employees
		Introducing anti-discrimination policies
Social integration	Instruments that support democratic participation	Volunteering
	Instruments that support intergenerational networks adapted to the respective pattern	Familialism by default: Strengthen community activities and life-long learning
		Supported familialism
		Defamilialization: Create incentives for the exchange of monetary and non-monetary support
Health	Health promotion and disease prevention	Promoting smoking cessation
		Reduction of alcohol consumption
		Encouraging a healthy diet and raising awareness about the consequences of an unbalanced diet
		Promoting physical activity
		Reducing stress, e.g. through improved transport systems and better working conditions
	Community long-term care services	Building a network of out-patient health services
		Providing social services
		Offering day or night care centres for frail elderly that otherwise live with family