

# Germany and Austria vs. Greece and Cyprus

## Comparing the "North" with the "South" in a Case-Study concerning Active Ageing

Prof. Dr.rer.nat. Basile Spyropoulos

Biomedical Engineering Department, Technological Education Institute (TEI) of Athens, Athens, Greece



### Background

The impressive increase in life expectancy that has been observed since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the high and probably still growing mean population age constitute a "Novum" in human history. The demographic change is not limited to Europe, but rather reflects a global trend. The trend began in Europe and has made particular progress here and in Japan. Within Europe, there are several countries with a relatively high life expectancy and a particularly low birth rate. Demographic change has already set in, on other continents too, and is now making even faster progress there.

### Results

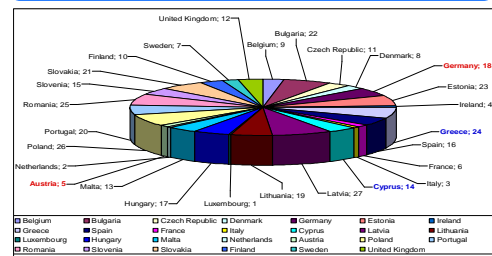


Figure 1. Overall participation in societal activities for male population in the 27 Member-States of the EU.

**Germany** is still the "Locomotive" of the European train, in scientific-technical innovation (rank 5 worldwide), industrial potential and social initiatives, including Ageing. However, the enormous effort to incorporate the former DDR and to include the East-European countries in the EU, allows for rank-9 in total AA and leading position in 4/18 of its components.

**Austria** (rank-10) is leading in 10/18 components; Austrians are working fewer years than Germans and have remarkable rating, almost in anything.

**Cyprus** (rank 7) is the big surprise leading in 4/18 of the AA-components, although they have to pay also for health and social security of the population, living in the occupied 40% of the country. Finally, Cypriots work longer than all other Europeans, second only to Swedish.

**Greece** (rank-24) is not leading in any AA-component, although, for most of them, the corresponding data are rather close to the ones of the other three countries. The rank-24 is rather misleading, because Greeks are able to balance the mismanaged state-economy, with a unique "family socialism"; parents/grand-parents are strongly supporting the ill-paid or unemployed (~27%) younger generations.

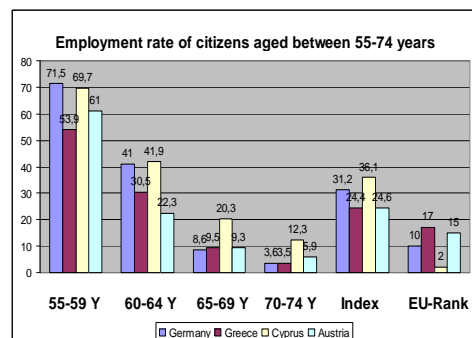


Figure 2. An indicative grouping of the Employment rates of citizens between 55-74 years of age.

### Objectives

It is the aim of this paper to employ the aggregation methodology of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) and the UNECE Statistics data available in:

[www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/IV.+Charts+and+tables](http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/IV.+Charts+and+tables)

to compare two "couples" of European Countries, Germany and Austria representing the "North" versus Greece and Cyprus representing the "South" in a Case-Study concerning Active Ageing of the corresponding populations. The choice of these "couples" was based on the fact that:

**First**, the selected countries, in both couples, are sharing common language, civilization, tradition and mentality, expected to lead to similar attitudes and expectations, for the meaning and the content of an "Active Ageing".

**Second**, the Germany and Austria couple includes two leading countries of the EU in Technology, Economic Prosperity and Competitiveness, since Greece and Cyprus are two Mediterranean countries, facing both for years a serious economic crisis.

**Finally**, the subjective factor of the long personal experience and acquaintance of the author, pertaining to the above mentioned countries.

Table 1. Indicative Participation-forms in the society of the aging population in the four Countries under consideration.

Participation in society (Total)	Voluntary activities	Care to children grand-children	Care to older adults	Political Participation
Austria	32.7	25.0	11.9	17.0
Cyprus	7.6	44.5	9.0	15.0
Germany	18.3	17.9	8.5	16.7
Greece	3.6	34.1	11.3	6.7

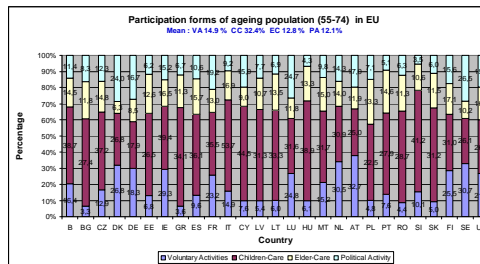


Figure 3. Participation forms of ageing population in the EU.

Table 2. Aspects and data of Active Ageing Capacity and its components in the examined Countries.

Active Ageing Capacity (Total)	Fitness: 50 years at 55 years	Healthy life-years at age 55	Mental well-being	Use of ICT	Social connectedness	Educ. Attainment
Austria	56.2	46.6	75.2	43.0	58.2	70.4
Cyprus	57.0	56.1	56.6	17.0	38.1	-
Germany	55.4	43.1	74.0	49.0	47.8	85.7
Greece	56.0	55.6	48.6	11.0	27.3	39.3

Table 3. Indicative Participation-forms in the society of the Aging population in the four Countries under consideration.

Independent healthy and secure living (Total)	Physical exercise	Health-care needs covered	Independent living	Relative median income	No poverty risk	No material deprivation	Physical safety	Life-long learning
Austria	2.9	94.0	83.4	91.0	94.4	98.0	83.9	5.2
Cyprus	15.9	88.1	89.8	64.0	76.8	92.6	83.3	3.1
Germany	9.2	93.2	95.8	89.0	93.0	97.9	89.0	1.9
Greece	2.2	89.3	77.6	84.0	90.4	87.6	54.2	0.3

### Methods and Resources

The methodology and the available statistical data (AAI Results as of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Revised) of the Active Ageing Index, concerning the four countries under consideration, have been extracted, used and processed, in order to lead to conclusions regarding similarities and dissimilarities among and within the two "pairs" of Countries, related to the present situation, as far as, Active Ageing is concerned.

The Guiding Principles on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (Council of the European Union, 2012) reaffirmed that active ageing need to be promoted in the three domains of **employment, participation** in society and **independent living**. Thus, these principles have served in the present project, as a roadmap for the said Country-groups comparison and the Results are also structured and presented according to them.

### Discussion

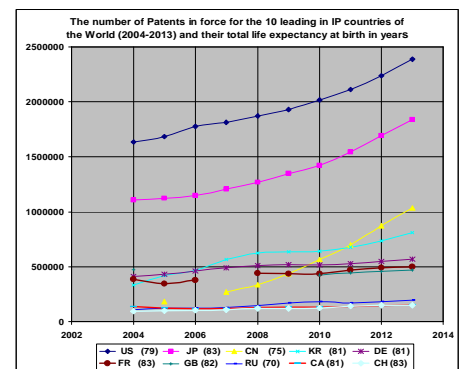


Figure 4. Patents in force vs. life expectancy worldwide.

The emerging major economies (BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South-Africa) and especially China, in spite of their economic growth, are still **deficient** in Health-care and Social Services and especially in healthy ageing. A huge "ageing" market is emerging worldwide, because **prolonging life**, is an enormous medical-managerial, social and economic challenge, analogous to the effort needed to **grow-up children** until entering professional life.

A part of BRICS **surplus**, earned through their "industrial explosion", should be invested for the improvement of the rather **poor living and ageing conditions**, of their own population. The EU has a valuable know-how related to Active Ageing, achieved through high **social expenditure** that combined with the transfer of industrial production eastwards, is one of reasons of the present European **stagnation**.

Endeavoring a large-scale cooperation, between EU and the BRICS, concerning Health-care and Active Ageing, is an **important and legitimate** objective, because it stimulates the prosperity of the ageing population in these countries, as well as, the **economic growth** of the Health-care and Active Ageing related **Industries** in Europe, leading to **mutually beneficial outcomes**.