

AGE Annual Thematic Conference

“Toward an age-friendly EU by 2020”

17 May 2013, Hotel Husa President, Brussels

BACKGROUND NOTE

Introduction

AGE Council of Administration decided to organise in 2013 an open conference back to back with AGE annual General Assembly (16-17 May 2013, Brussels) on the theme “Towards an age-friendly EU”. The conference is organised in the framework of the EY 2013 of Citizens and will bring together more than 100 delegates from our member organisations representing all together more than 30 million senior citizens across the EU, as well as external stakeholders working with AGE to promote age-friendly environments across the EU.

The objective of this conference is to give the opportunity to AGE members and interested stakeholders to discuss with invited panellists various approaches taken across the EU to promote and support older people’s participation in society as equal citizens through the support of age-friendly environments (AFE). Through three panel discussions, participants will discuss different examples in the field of employment, social protection reforms, use of new technologies, adaptation of transport, housing, tourism and social participation.

This first annual conference will build on the outcomes of AGE work during the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, as well as on the three thematic seminars that AGE co-organised last year with the Committee of the Regions. It will be also the occasion to present and discuss the recommendations presented by AGE in the new publication “Towards an Age-Friendly EU by 2020” produced to support our on-going campaign for an EU Covenant on Demographic Change.

Session 1: age-friendly labour markets and work places

Context

Governments all over the EU are promoting longer working lives to help reduce the demographic pressure on public budgets. However, the inclusiveness of the labour market has been increasingly challenged since the crisis started. Younger and older workers are the first ones to be made redundant in case of restructuration. According to the Eurostat survey carried in 2012, just above two-third of Europeans (67%) believe that the economic crisis is

contributing to more discrimination against “older” workers (those aged over 55). Yet age discrimination in employment is the area where member states appear to be devoting least efforts. Having a high education or many years of experience is no longer a passport for a good job, when at the same time employers struggle to find the necessary skilled workforce they need to remain competitive.

Aim of the panel

After having heard examples of initiatives taken at grass-root level by our panellists, participants will have the opportunity to react and make recommendations on how a more active participation of older workers in employment can be supported through specific labour market policies and innovative adaptation of the workplace – paying due attention to the additional barriers faced by older women. This debate should help us clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of decision makers, employers and other stakeholders in promoting longer working lives.

Panellists

- **Ayité Creppy** from the Face Lille Métropole foundation, a club of companies engaged in mobilising enterprises against exclusion, will present their initiatives to promote employment for older workers in the Lille Métropole region (FR). <http://www.clubfacenet.com/>
- **Armelle Ledan**, AEIDL, the European Association for Information on Local Development, representing the Career & AGE Network will provide some examples of initiatives taken by the ESF-AGE Network to promote employment for older workers at local, regional and national level. <http://www.esfage.eu/>
- **Maria Grazia Andali and Andrea Carbone** from Formabilio (IT) will present the initiative taken by their SME to encourage the intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the production of quality furniture. Formabilio is a business start-up with ethical concepts which pinpoints designers through contests to identify the best innovative, eco-friendly and appealing furniture projects which are then made thanks to the expertise of small Italian manufacturing companies. These products are marketed online at www.formabilio.com
- **Delphine Chilesse-Lemarinier** from Edenred European Affairs will share the experience of EDENRED on creating new job opportunities in the care sector and provide some examples of initiatives taken at local level. For more details: <http://www.edenred.com/en/Corporate-social-responsibility/Pages/default.aspx>

Questions for discussion

- How to strengthen the inclusiveness of labour market and facilitate equal participation of older women and men in meaningful employment?
- How should greater intergenerational cooperation and knowledge transfer in the workplace be promoted as a way to boost productivity and support good age management inside the company or at sectorial level?

- What can be done to meet the evolving health and ergonomic needs of older workers in the workplace?
- How to encourage employers to retain and to hire older workers, including those with informal care responsibilities?
- Many older workers would favour the opportunity to move gradually from full time employment to part time work combined with part time retirement. How flexible retirement provisions can be promoted? What about putting an end to mandatory retirement ages?

Session 2: Age-friendly products, buildings, transport, ICT, tourism

Context

In a context of great urbanisation and demographic shift, improving accessibility of our built environment, transport, goods and services will support mobility, independent living, better health, safety and thus quality of life. Doing so, it will also boost innovation and growth potential across the EU and will bring economic benefits at local, regional, national and EU levels. It is worth noting that countries with high accessibility standards in the built environment, transport and ICT are the countries where the highest levels of employment of both older women and men are found and those which perform best in terms of Healthy Life Years indicator (measuring "disability-free life expectancy"). This shows that promoting accessibility in a pro-active way does not hamper the economy, but on the contrary benefits society and the economy in general by lowering the disability threshold which makes life easier for everyone and supports older persons to age actively and healthily in their communities.

Aim of the panel

The objective is to gain knowledge on the existing initiatives from across the EU on how age-friendly environments are already implemented and/or can be further improved at grass-root level in view of adapting goods, products and services to the needs of ageing societies. In today's context of financial constraints, it is more urgent than ever to take wise and sustainable budgetary decisions to invest in solutions which empower all citizens to live more independently, but also participate fully in society. The panel will provide the audience with an overview of initiatives on outdoor and indoor environment accessibility, the role ICT solutions to support active and healthy ageing, as well as the initiative of social participation and leisure for seniors.

Panellists

- **Prof. Catharine Ward Thompson**, OPENspace Research Centre, University of Edinburgh, Co-Investigator on the UK Research Consortium KT-EQUAL, will present the concept of Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors and share the results of her

work with over 3 000 older people across the UK – focusing in particular on what hinders them from easy access to local neighbourhood and its infrastructures.

- **Oscar Almendros Bonis** from European Commission, Directorate-General for Service Industries, Unit E/1 on Tourism Policy will share with the audience information about what the European Commission is planning to promote senior tourism and how local authorities and seniors groups could get involved.
- **Bart Schelfhout** from Philips, Netherlands, will provide some examples of initiatives taken by a multinational company in support to active and healthy ageing, explaining how the industry can help deliver better services to an ageing population.
- **Mari Satur Torre**, Technical Director from the Vodafone Spain Foundation will present the cooperation within the Spanish Red Cross in the framework of the SIMAP project to help older people with Alzheimer retain some autonomy. Other initiatives taken by Vodafone Foundation in support to older people will be also presented.

Questions for discussion

- What roles can/should key stakeholders (EU, national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, industry and research centres/universities) play to promote age friendly products, buildings, transport, ICT or social participation?
- How to enhance a lasting partnership between these stakeholders and ensure better coordination of actions across different governance levels?
- What are the economic and societal benefits you foresee in implementing age-friendly products, building, transport, ICT and tourism?
- How to scale up social and technological innovation in these areas? How to ensure wide access to age-friendly products and services?

Keynote speech

- **Neelie Kroes**, Vice-President, European Commission, responsible for the EU Digital Agenda

Session 3: Age-friendly social protection systems, social inclusion and services provision

Context

When asked about difficulties faced in everyday life, older people first refer to the lack of financial resources and difficult access to affordable health and care services. In time when governments are reducing public spending in all sectors, the disposable income of older people is decreasing not only due to changes introduced in pension or minimum income schemes, but also in the overall social protection systems, forcing them to spend more “out

of pocket' on various services, such as health or long-term care, transport, etc. The trend to shift from pay-as-you-go to supplementary defined contributions schemes will lead to greater risk of poverty among older women if nothing is done to address the discrimination that women suffer in these schemes. Last but not least, with the persistence of the crisis, living conditions are worsening also for a growing number of older people with incomes just above the poverty threshold who are consequently no longer eligible for social transfers.

Aim of the session

The purpose of this debate will be to learn from the panellists' experience how to address the current and future challenges when reforming social protection – in particular through tailor-made response to specific needs of ageing populations at local level. The session will discuss recommendations on how to make social protection systems both financially and socially sustainable on the long-term, and on how to protect today's and future generations against old age dependency. The session should finally address the gender dimension of age-friendly social protection systems to achieve more solidarity and fairness between and within generations.

Panellists

- **Chris Daykin** representing the Groupe Consultatif Actuariel Européen will introduce the overall context for social protection reforms in the EU and the remaining challenges, and will present lessons that actuary calculations can bring to debate on pensions, in particular in view of reconciling the respective needs and interests of pensioners, employers and decision makers.
- **Bev Reategui** from the Older People Commission in Wales will present the 'Ageing well in Wales Programme', which promotes positive attitudes and helps increase the opportunities for people 50+ living in Wales to age well. Bev will present their collaborative and targeted action at regional level that adopts best practice and uses evidence and innovation from other parts of UK and Europe.
- **Matteo Apuzzo** from the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy will share the examples of good practice from local level in the provision of health and long-term care services. The role local authorities can play in enhancing active and healthy ageing will be the focus of his presentation.
- **Veerle Baert** from the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) will present their initiative on the dementia-friendly communities. VVSG acts as the representative of local authorities vis-à-vis other public bodies and third parties and provides its members with various support service at local level through information, advice, training etc.

Questions for discussion

- How to better guarantee adequacy of old-age income in order to fulfil older people's needs in terms of what they consider being essential to preserve decent standards of living and personal dignity?
- What policy action is necessary (and at what level) to help the increasing number of vulnerable and frail older people remain involved in their households, neighbourhood communities and in society as a whole?
- How better integrate social protection policy instruments in order to ensure an appropriate balance between public, private and individual efforts to mitigate the impact of ageing and to better seize its potential for overall society?
- Who should be responsible for covering old age risks (pensions, health and long-term care) of our ageing population?
- What can/ should public authorities do at local level to ensure the provision of quality and affordable health and long-term care services?