

The European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing

Bringing the focus on ageing well in Europe in the 2020s

Executive summary



The 1st edition [of the European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing](#) (EWAHA), took place last week, between 2 and 6 November, 2020 in an online format. The AAL Programme would like to send a big THANK YOU to all of the attendees, who made this week a great success for community building and exchange of many interesting views to foster a happy life at all ages for everybody.

The Week was attended by 800 people from across Europe, Canada, Taiwan, Australia and other countries, and it staged stimulating debates and exchanges with politicians, local and national administrators, practitioners, geriatrics and psychologists providing an exciting environment for exchange between different perspectives across a wide array of topics related to ageing.

The event brought the demographic change issues and opportunities under the spotlight and it was organized by the [AAL Programme](#), jointly with the [EIPA AHA](#) and the [MYBL](#). The week took inspiration from the [WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing](#) to shed light on four main priorities: the sustainability of health and care in an ageing Europe; the intergenerational policies; the promotion of a socio-economic case for an ageing society; and the role of technology for the improvement of the conditions of the older people and their carers.

The three organizing initiatives have all had collaborated closely already in 2019-2020 to unite their efforts for a European ageing society. Now, they have put demographic change more prominently onto Europe's research and innovation political agenda in the form of this European Week.

2 November, Monday



Reflections for an ageing Europe and the world: the opening ceremony

The week began with two high level keynote speakers: the Vice President of the European Commission, Dubravka Šuica, and the Independent Expert for the United Nations on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons, Claudia Mahler. Moderated by Klaus Niederländer, these prominent personalities reflected on the main learnings from the current Covid-19 crisis, the thoughts on how future strategies and activities both from the United Nations and the European Union can pave the way for positive change, as well

as discussing how the various stakeholders can improve and address the demographic change in the upcoming decade. Many cross-cutting areas were put at the forefront as key to create positive change, namely intergenerational fairness and collaboration, life-long learning policies, and the continuous and growing attention to ensuring human rights such as the access to health for everybody, including older adults.

As pointed out by the European Commission's Vice-President Dubravka Šuica in her speech, '*we must work together as much as possible*', and that we have to remember that '*rights have no age limit!*'

[See the full opening discussion here](#)



The decade of ageing– the vision of the World Health Organization

The second session of the week focused on how the WHO's Decade of Healthy Ageing aimed to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live. Ritu Sadana gave a presentation highlighting the Decade, the areas of action

and the upcoming baseline report. In the report **to be launched on December 8th, 2020**, the WHO is expected to share how they are getting ready for the decade with older adults driving the change. Manfred Huber shed light on European implementation plan for the Decade which he considers to be a continuation of the current strategy action plan on ageing. The plan is part of the united action for health which focused on how the Life course approach

contributes to healthy ageing. Action areas of the European implementation plan are Age friendly environments, services for older people (esp. gaps) and integrated care. Heidrun Mollenkopf addressed the improvements in the lives of older persons expected from the decade of ageing. She stated that to achieve healthy ageing for all, actions to improve healthy ageing will be needed at multiple levels, in multiple sectors, creating enabling environments, abolishing ageism, promoting health and functional ability and maintaining intrinsic capacity to empower older men and women to live their lives as equal members of society.

[See the full discussion here](#)

3 November, Tuesday



Accelerating market adoption of digital solutions for healthy ageing

The week continued with a session focused highlighting the success stories in the market adoption of digital solutions for active and healthy ageing. Maite Ferrando gave an insight to the key characteristics which can contribute to the uptake of AHA solutions in the

European market highlighting the trends in financing and procurement mechanisms such as pre-commercial procurement and innovation procurement. Alternatives to public procurement were also mentioned including outcome-based financing models, value-based care and personal budgets. Javier Quiles del Rio and Elias Castro discussed the demand and supply sides of the market (respectively) stressing the need for a multidisciplinary approach, such as ecosystems, to engage successfully with innovative companies. From the discussion it was clear that there are many barriers that need to be overcome to facilitate the uptake of innovation digital solutions, such as more funding for innovation, new models for public procurements and a reduction in bureaucracy. Finally, Maddalena Illario spoke about the need to strengthen ecosystems developed around the innovation quadruple helix. Other enablers mentioned included fostering challenge-driven co-creation, bridge multiple levels (local, regional, national, international) and the sharing of good practices such as the ProMIS network in Italy.

[See the full discussion here](#)



The Senior Entrepreneurship Smart Ageing Prize Award: the AAL way to support happy and independent ageing

A special session took place on 3 November, when the Smart Ageing Prize Award Final reached the finish line of a contest that lasted many months full of hard work by our contestants. This

edition of the bi-annual prize was dedicated the very timely topic of **Senior Entrepreneurship** and gathered innovators from various European countries to foster their ideas and support their journey with a prize pot worth 50 000 euros. As highlighted by Constance Agyeman, Head of International Development and Communities at Nesta Challenges, *'Senior enterprise is a powerful way to empower older adults to contribute to society and form meaningful connections. This in turn helps to create resilient and sustainable businesses and social ventures, as well as leveraging the complementary skills and knowledge of younger adults for intergenerational collaboration.'*

Congratulations to **Diaspo** winning the main prize of 35 000 euros, as well as the runner-ups **Grandnanny** and **Parlangi**! Read more about the finalists [here](#).

Watch the Award ceremony [here](#)

4 November, Wednesday



Building and consolidating regional innovation ecosystems for active ageing

In this session, the panel focused on the journey of an ecosystem, including how they collaborations are developed within and between other ecosystems in Europe, the strategies that are being applied and the challenges that are being

faced. Ivan Kjær Lauridsen from the municipality of Aarhus highlighted a number of key tools to keep ecosystems motivated and working in a cohesive way including education and training initiatives, the creation of a specific teams to ensure a well-functioning ecosystem, the direct incorporation of older adults into local government through senior councils and the use of innovative Innovation technologies and methods. Brian O'Connor, Ursula Hultkvist Bengtsson and Dr Rachele Kaye stressed the importance of initiatives that support the development of

ecosystems such as ECHalliance, Twins' International MultiHelix supercluster and EHTEL, respectively. They support ecosystems through the exchange of best practices, networking for funding opportunities, learning exchange, benchmarking, identification of cutting-edge trends, data collection and consultation and support. The panel concluded that the main benefits of ecosystems include cross-sectorial collaboration, co-creation, a wider outlook on common challenges, knowledge sharing and the ability to stimulate innovation and break down silos in health and care. However, there is no one magic recipe for success, you need people, a vision, direction, effective planning and infrastructure. Above all, flexibility is key.

See the full discussion [here](#)



Good life, ageing & technology – Creating a vision of care in times of Digitization

The session on Good Life presented the attendees with a common vision of care in times of digitization. It explored what contributions emerging technologies could bring to achieving better care, both social and healthcare. The session also

explored how policy could help to foster this interaction of technology used and achieved resulting in more freedom and more healthier years for all. Introductions were given by Anne Meissner and Paul Higgs and moderated by Peter Allebeck. Two things that became clear during this session namely, the notion that there needed to be a better understanding of who the user of the technology is, as it might not be the older person. The second was that technology was only part of the solution Policy needed to consistently bring together/ align their care strategies and digital strategies to ensure e.g. good service provision.

Vision presented by Anne Meissner *‘the development, implementation and evaluation of technologies in care will be based on the extent to which they contribute to securing good later life as understood by older persons and their caregivers in all their diversity, and in conformity with internationally agreed human rights standards.’*

See the full discussion [here](#)

5 November, Thursday



The effects of the pandemic on the older citizens in Austria, France and Italy: economic, health and social aspects

The session on 3 November focused on the main effects that the pandemic has been having on the lives of older adults and the care givers in three different European countries. This 45-minute

moderated session saw a high level of interaction from the audience, who also shared their experiences from various countries.

Giovanni Lamura, Director of (IRCCS INRCA) defined the conditions of the older adults in the home care facilities, during the first wave of the pandemic as a *'inhuman segregation'*, a condition – he continued- the can lead do detrimental mental health. Athanasios Benetos, President of the European Geriatrics Medicine Society, based in France, described that 70% of the total death toll in the Pentagon were people over 80 years old. Ricardo Rodrigues, Health and Care Director, a the European Centre for Social and Welfare policy and Research, in Vienna, presented astonishing, but unfortunately not surprising, figures showing the increasing levels of depression of informal care givers and of the growing financial burden that the care of older adults is building on them.

[See the full discussion here](#)



Political vision for an ageing Europe: a dialogue with Members of the EU Parliament

This political panel aimed at bringing the voices of two politicians representing main political European families to debate about their long-term visions for an ageing Europe and the possible responses to this profound societal shift that is taking place. Both Sirpa Pietikainen and Brando Benifei brought in the different experiences of their Finnish and Italian constituencies, but they also shared a common positive view on the opportunities that longevity offers. The key aspects

presented from both politicians were the need to move to community care systems and

ensure that works in the supporting role of health and care networks, which according to Mr Benifei will also serve as a greater barrier against future pandemics.

A particular focus, according to Ms Pietikainen needs to be on the way our societies sees the elderly adults, *'the key is to develop an truly intergenerational approach to life where the work of the active ages are reworded in the moment of rest, at the end of the life course. Also -she continued- 'we must look into ways to build truly collaborative societies where everybody commits to care for someone', allowing in that way an informal network of caregiving.'*

See the full discussion [here](#)

6 November, Friday



Using capacity-building tools to generate health and care innovation

The final day of the event started with a session about the use of capacity building tools and approaches to generate health and care innovation where 4 speakers gave short pitches focusing on specific EU-funded projects. The first speaker, Odisseas

Raptis gave a summary of the ACTIVAGE project which used the EIP on AHA Blueprint. Francesca Pozzi extended the theme of building the capacity of the care team by providing insights into the ENHANCE project which had used an online platform to develop and deliver education and training to establish the role of Family and Community Nurses (FCN) which included an eHealth module. It was clear that the innovative nature of the course delivery had widened its reach in terms of training and supporting nurses to become FCNs. The focus for the session then moved into looking at the wellbeing aspect of our service users, caregivers and care teams with Martin Hayes sharing Northern Ireland's approach to social prescribing, including the promotion of and signposting to wellbeing Apps, and how Project ECHO® had been used to train and support the link workers. The final speaker was Javier Ferrero who provided details of the Appsaludable initiative in Andalusia, which has developed quality standards for health and wellbeing Apps to help organisations with their procurement and mHealth care delivery. Javier wrapped up the short pitches by providing a reality check reminding the participants of the importance of quality and safety when considering the deployment of innovations and digital solutions.

See the full discussion [here](#)



Understanding wellbeing in an ageing society: how appropriate are current measures of wellbeing across the changing life course?

This session explored how research could improve our understanding of wellbeing as it impacts on people across the expanding lifespan. Ritu Sadana, Head of Unit Ageing and Health at the World

Health Organization stated that *'Healthy Ageing is the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age.'* The key is to optimise functional ability especially the ability to meet basic needs because this influences the older persons view on wellbeing. A more person-centred approach is needed.

Johanna Cresswell-Smith coordinator of the EMMY project shared that several high-quality instruments existed for evaluating mental wellbeing in old age, although none focused on the 80+ age group on wellbeing. She also signalled a general trend towards including mental wellbeing within policy most commonly in relation to health and social welfare. She had three messages for the audience one of them was that regarding mental wellbeing the oldest old age group needs to be included in mental health promotion and research actions, especially in relation to the demographic transition.

[See full discussion here](#)



Interview with Esko Aho: The Future of Health and Care in Europe

To close the European Week of Active and Healthy Ageing, Jose Usero interviewed Mr Esko Aho, former Finnish Prime Minister from 1991-1995. Jose and Mr Aho highlighted the major systematic changes needed in active and healthy ageing and the silver economy including the move from standardised to personalised products and services, a greater focus on ecosystems and the need to actively involve the private sector and people.

'Crisis' can be healthy, crisis' can provide opportunities' stressed Mr Aho when discussing the COVID-19 situation. He stated that there is a

need to urgently improve productivity in the healthcare sector through investments in digital infrastructure, coupled with a need for training to develop multidisciplinary talents that combine healthcare professionalism with knowledge of digital technology. These are the investment areas that should have high priority when Europe begins to recuperate after the current pandemic.

When looking at ensuring the ageing population has access to accessible, usable and affordable products and services in the future, Mr Aho said *'We have to be able to create a diversified selection*

of products, solutions and services for the 65+ market'. A one size fits all approach will not be sufficient. Also, the demand and supply sides have to come together to build the market for silver economy products. There is a huge potential not only in Europe but everywhere in the world and the European Union should promote market creation for the silver economy products.

'*Silver is the next green*' stated Mr Aho when talking about the common aspects between the green and the silver economy. Both challenges need to be addressed immediately and both could present a huge risk for Europe if we fail to change existing systems. However, just as Europe is doing with the green economy, Europe can turn the risk of demographic change into an opportunity.

See the full interview [here](#)

Thank you for attending EWAHA 2020