

Demographic Change in Europe – EC Green Paper on Aging

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12722-Demographic-change-in-Europe-green-paper-on-ageing>

Emerging considerations from the AAL programme

- 1. How can healthy and active ageing policies be promoted from an early age and throughout the life span for everyone? How can children and young people be better equipped for the prospect of a longer life expectancy? What kind of support can the EU provide to the Member States?**

Ageing starts with birth and ends with the death of a person. As a natural biological process it concerns us all and needs to be integrated into a life-course management approach. In light of this, we need to embrace all aspects of ageing, i.e., active & healthy ageing as well as assisted & supported ageing touching on all aspects of life, such as health & care, living at home & in the community, mobility and transport, safety & security or work and leisure as some key examples. It is critical to underline the importance of “social connections”, the quantity, quality, and benefits of human relationships, that became a major focus of the empirical research into the social determinants of health.

Prevention will be key in the future to prepare EU citizens for a longer life and especially for the desired longer healthy life. Health prevention is the primary topic hereby. At the same time increased autonomy of the concerned people will be the key ingredient for achieving better health. This connects the topic of health with education and employment/meaningful work!

The EU will have to take on more responsibility in health & care, employment matters and education to support active & healthy ageing. This goes beyond general policy coordination support, but into actually carving out its own role for all European citizens in concert with countries and regions. In a globalised world with global challenges and threats like the current pandemic, Europe needs to be united in its approach, yet diversified in its implementation.

So, yes, we will need to develop a European policy and action framework in complementarity with national and regional ones based on collaboration, not competition.

- 2. What are the most significant obstacles to lifelong learning across the life-cycle? At what stage in life could addressing those obstacles make most difference? How should this be tackled specifically in rural and remote areas?**

The biggest obstacle of lifelong learning is the lack of an enabling culture. Education needs to be open and accessible to all taking into the changing requirements, interests and aspirations, which come with increasing age. There is no mechanism in place to use people’s experience, in particular that of the older generations, to the benefit of the whole society. Human capital is the essential source of creativity

and wealth, which asks for making better use of it. Yet not to exploit, but to share and collaborate with each other.

Rural and remote areas need to a strong digital infrastructure, which is far less costly than physical public infrastructure, for which there are many good examples in Europe.

3. What innovative policy measures to improve participation in the labour market, in particular by older workers, should be considered more closely?

Access to improving digital skills, flexible job market models (see Scandinavian flexicurity concept), age-friendly work environments and remote work possibilities need to be fostered. At the same time, work/labour needs to be defined larger in line with people's aspirations rather than simply as an economic tool. For example, people who retire from their careers end up embarking on second careers, which can be similar to their previous jobs but more likely will involve some type of volunteerism.

4. Is there a need for more policies and action at EU level that support senior entrepreneurship? What type of support is needed at EU level and how can we build on the successful social innovation examples of mentorship between young and older entrepreneurs?

Just as ageing requires a life-course approach, so does entrepreneurship. Such skills should be fostered at an early stage and continue into old age. So, start-up programmes should be opened up also for older adults to participate in developing digital innovation through their skills and experience.

Removing ageist bias in senior entrepreneurship is key, in this perspective. This would require the promotion of the economic potential of older workers in general, and the promotion of the social appropriateness of older individuals setting up businesses in particular.

5. Which services and enabling environment would need to be put in place or improved in order to ensure the autonomy, independence and rights of older people and enable their participation in society?

There are some key words in this area, such as: age-friendly homes, transportation possibilities, access to health care and services that help to battle loneliness. Encouraging work, remote or part-time. An overall wellbeing approach that starts before pension age and that includes mental and physical life.

Also, the inclusive approach should be added. It is about diversity and ensuring involvement of everyone to the greatest extent possible. In some regions this is also referred to as universal design and design for all.

6. How can the EU support Member States' efforts to reconcile adequate and affordable healthcare and long-term care coverage with fiscal and financial sustainability?

Taking inspiration from the WHO implementation framework (ICOPE – Integrated Care for Older People) a transformative approach is needed in the way health systems and the services within them are designed – to ensure care is of high quality, integrated, affordable, accessible and centred on the needs and rights of older people. Integrated care, particularly for older people and people with chronic health conditions, is widely accepted as a mechanism to improve health outcomes and system efficiency

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