

How do we want to grow old?

Campaigning for a better society
for old and young



European Year for **Active Ageing**
and **Solidarity between Generations 2012**



Populations are ageing, and so are we

The European Union is experiencing significant population ageing. This demographic shift is the inevitable consequence of major achievements within our societies – greatly reduced mortality and therefore higher life expectancy.



The average age in the European Union is 39.8 (Eurostat statistics), but by 2060 the average age of the EU citizen will be 47.2. Those aged 65 years or over will account for almost 30 % of the EU's population by 2060 (16 % in 2010).

Within a few years from now, the European working age population will diminish, while the population aged 65 and over will continue to increase by up to two million people a year. By 2060, there could be one elderly person (65+) for every two people of working age.

An older Europe presents various challenges: to our job market, to our health systems and to our living standards after we retire. Many fear that life will get worse for older people; others expect older people to look out for their own interests and impose a heavy burden on the younger generations.

Do we really have to fear the future in our ageing societies? Definitely not if we preserve our health for longer, if we create more opportunities in the labour market for older workers; if we remain active members of the community; and if we can live in an environment where growing old does not mean becoming dependent on others – in short, if 'active ageing' becomes a reality for all of us. Let's make sure that we have the best possible chance to remain healthy, active and independent as we grow older!



The **2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations** raises awareness of the contribution that older people make to society and how this can be supported. It seeks to encourage and mobilise policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take action with the aim of creating better opportunities for active ageing and strengthening solidarity between generations.

Active ageing: What does it mean?

Active ageing means growing old in good health and as a full member of society, feeling more fulfilled in our jobs, more independent in our daily lives and more involved as citizens. No matter how old we are, we can still play our part in society and enjoy a better quality of life. The challenge is to make the most of the enormous potential that we harbour even at a more advanced age. The Year seeks to promote active ageing in three areas:

Employment

As life expectancy increases across Europe, pension ages are rising, but many fear that they will not be able to stay in their current jobs or to find another job until they can retire on a decent pension. We must give older workers better chances in the labour market.

- Lifelong learning and acquisition of new skills
- Healthy working conditions
- Age management strategies in companies
- Transfer of experience
- Employment services for older job seekers
- No age discrimination
- Employment-friendly tax / benefit systems



Participation in society

Retiring from one's job does not mean becoming idle. The contribution of older people to society as carers for others, typically their own parents or spouses and their grandchildren, is often overlooked; and so is their role as volunteers. The European Year seeks to ensure greater recognition of what older people bring to society and create more supportive conditions for them.



- Income security in old age
- Support for social participation and volunteering
- Support for carers
- Reconciliation of work and care
- Solidarity and dialogue
- Bridging the digital divide

Promoting independent living

Our health declines as we grow old. But there is much that can be done to slow down this decline, and environments can be made much friendlier towards people suffering from various health impairments and disabilities. Active ageing also means empowering us as we age so that we can remain in charge of our own lives for as long as possible.

- Health promotion and preventive health care
- Accessible and affordable transport
- Age-friendly environments, goods and services
- Maximising autonomy in long term care
- Tailoring technology to boost / encourage independent living
- Adapted housing





Never too old ... for active ageing

The European Year is a unique opportunity to jointly celebrate and mobilise the experience, wisdom and many other qualities mature citizens bring to society. The European Year challenges our perceptions of older people as a burden on society by focusing on potentials and opportunities rather than impairments and obstacles. We have potentials for a more active and fulfilling life at any age – and these need to be realised for our own benefit and for that of society as a whole. Even an older Europe is full of opportunities!

Bridging the generational divide in schools

Since 2009, Europe has celebrated a European Day of Solidarity Between Generations on April 29th. In 2012, the focus is on bringing together pupils and older people to engage in a conversation about what it means to get older and how older and younger people can collaborate for a better life. Around April 29th, all schools in Europe are invited to open the doors of their classrooms to older generations and to explore how the dialogue between generations can contribute to a better education.

Share your experience of ageing, tell your story!

Throughout 2012, life stories and testimonials of European citizens of all generations will be showcased and shared on the European Year website. We are particularly interested in presenting how older people can support the young and strengthen the bonds between different generations.



Committing to change



The Year is about taking action and making change happen so that we can build a more inclusive society for people of all ages. This won't happen by decree. It requires a sustained collaborative effort in which many have to play their part.

The Year should be an opportunity for you – as a citizen, as an employer, as an elected representative – to think about what you can do to promote active ageing and strengthen solidarity between generations. It is an invitation to you to commit to specific actions that will contribute to these goals.

A commitment can take many forms, and every commitment counts. Any individual, any public or private body, company, association or municipality, large or small, can set and reach attainable goals to promote a more active role for senior citizens. From policy makers implementing legislation or comprehensive action programmes to companies improving workplace facilities and working hours... the possibilities are endless – and so are the needs for improvement!

Share with others what you are doing on the website for the European Year – and get inspiration for your own work from there!

What can we do?

Staying fit – both physically and mentally – is essential, both to profit from opportunities in the labour market and to enjoy a good quality of life. This means preventing diseases and injuries caused by poor working conditions as well as promoting healthy lifestyles. Life-long learning ensures that we have up-to-date skills right to the end of our careers. Employers can adapt working conditions, hours and arrangements, to better suit the needs of older employees. Governments should review their tax and benefit systems to ensure that work pays at any age.

Unpaid work provided by older people as volunteers in associations and as carers must be recognised and supported, for instance by providing training to carers as well as respite care to ensure that the burden does not become unbearable and isolate carers from the rest of society. In associations, younger people have much to gain from the experience, skills and cultural heritage of older people.



Honouring outstanding achievements

We will not be finished building a better society for ageing populations by the end of 2012. But the end of the European Year will be a moment to take stock of what has been achieved so far by a wide range of stakeholders. The most outstanding contributions to active ageing and solidarity between generations will be honoured at a European awards ceremony. Make sure your achievements don't go unnoticed!

Stay in touch!

The website is the central meeting place of the European Year. There, you'll find detailed information on all commitments and initiatives being undertaken to foster active ageing in Europe, plus news, events and inspiring intergenerational life stories. Click on 'get involved' to share with others what you are doing. Identify yourself as a partner of the European Year by using the logo in your activities!



Get Involved

Throughout the European Year, events and activities will take place in all 27 Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The website puts them on the map. Find out more about what's happening near you, about your country's national coordinator and about organisations working on active ageing and solidarity between generations on

www.active-ageing-2012.eu



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