

SUMMARY DOCUMENT ON THE COMPETENCE 50+ 2007 CONFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides a summary of the conference entitled “Competence 50+ 2007: age as an opportunity”. The conference was held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 18 – 20 June 2007. It was organised by the EQUAL [Life Competence 50+](#) Development Partnership (DP), with the aim of bringing together decision-makers, researchers and practitioners, especially those from the EQUAL community, to

“gain a broad picture of European developments within age management...and learn about the conditions that apply for future European investment to combat discrimination against older people in the labour market.”¹

The conference was centred on three main themes:

- Learning and Qualifications;
- Workplaces in Change; and
- Altered Conditions and Attitudes in the Labour Market.

Owing to the scale of the conference, it was not possible to attend and capture information from all of the seminars, workshops and other activities that took place. However, an interesting selection is presented in this document, focusing in particular on the sessions relating to the idea of setting up a European Age Management Network – which was a key outcome from the conference.

The document is structured according to the conference agenda, as follows:

- Section 2 presents messages from the opening session and several of the seminars from day one of the conference;
- Section 3 focuses on the seminar and round-table discussions relating to the European Age Management Network that took place on day two of the conference; and
- Section 4 summarises the messages from one workshop and the closing session held on the last day of the conference.

The [full agenda](#) and [further information](#) on the conference can be found on the Competence 50+ 2007 website. Moreover, further information on the European Age Management Network – especially how to contribute – can be found in the EQUAL article 50+ in 2050.

2. DAY ONE: SEMINARS

2.1. OPENING SESSION

Presenters:

- Eva Bertilsson-Styvén, Mayor, Tjörns Kommun (Chair)

¹ Competence 50+ Programme and Abstract Book, June 2007

- Sven Otto Littorin – Minister of Employment, Swedish Government
- Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General, European Commission
- Anne Marie Guillemard, Professor, Sorbonne

2.1.1. Key points from Eva Bertilsson-Styvén's presentation

- The Stockholm European Council established the new European Union (EU) target whereby 50% older workers should be in employment by 2010.
- There is political responsibility concerning: economic growth, future workforce and social cohesion.
- Every man and woman, who can work - and who wants to work - should be provided with the opportunity to do so.
- It is important to acknowledge the diversity in the group – gender differences, cultural differences and health issues – as well as the fact that different groups among the 50+ age group have different needs.
- Age management is important to the German presidency.
- EQUAL has played an important role in terms of providing an opportunity to test new methods of tackling inequality in terms of innovative approaches achieved through partnership working and the *"free movement of good ideas."*

2.1.2. Key points from Sven Otto Littorin's presentation

- There needs to be tax and economic incentives for people to remain in (and re-enter) the labour market i.e. the removal of disincentives.
- Pension reform should encourage labour market participation and postponement of the retirement decision by removing upper age limits for workers and offering the possibility of drawing down a pension in 'portions.'
- It is essential to develop policies concerning activation whereby the 50+ age group is judged in terms of competence rather than perception.
- There is an increasing need for people aged 50+ to remain in the labour market from different perspectives:
 - Society perspective;
 - Business perspective; and
 - Individual perspective - while people are ageing, they are typically healthier. They need a right to remain in work, though they should also have a duty to remain in work.

2.1.3. Key points from Lenia Samuel's presentation

Introduction

George Burns once said:

"Age to me means nothing. I can't get old; because I'm working. I was old when I was twenty-one and out of work. As long as you're working, you stay young."

Someone who has done hard manual work for 40 years may not agree with the above statement. However, what is key is how work can be made pleasurable.

It is paramount that in developing policies and practices on active ageing, individuals' views are taken into account as well as the needs of society.

The European challenge

Demographic change is one of the most important challenges in the EU. In 2010 the baby boomers will start to retire. By 2030 there will be 6.8% or 20.8 million people of working age. Four workers support one retired person today, though by 2050 (given increased life expectancy and a retirement age of 65 years) two workers would have to support one retired person. Keeping people in employment longer is a necessity for both individuals and society.

The EU has acknowledged ageing as an issue and started to tackle the associated challenges since the mid 1990s. The Lisbon European Council in 2000 addressed the low participation levels for older people and accordingly the 2001 Stockholm European Council set the 50% participation target for the 55-64 age group by 2010.

The EU is moving towards this target. The gap between the current position and the target has reduced from a 13.1 percentage point difference in 2000 to 7.8 percentage points in 2005. Provisional figures for 2006 show a 6.5 percentage point lag, and with economic growth forecast, further improvements are anticipated for 2007. Clearly the EU is on the right track, though there is diversity in the national situations across Member States: many of are far below the target, and efforts must continue.

In 2002 the Barcelona European Council stated that the average exit age from the labour market should be increased at least by five years by the year 2010: progress against this target is limited to date. The average exit age has only increased by 1.5 years.

These targets are embedded in the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the employment guidelines' call on Member States to develop and implement comprehensive active ageing strategies based on a life cycle approach.

In its Communication of October 2006 about the demographic future of Europe, the Commission invited Member States to take the necessary measures to respect their commitments vis-à-vis the Stockholm European Council. Next year the Commission will examine the results obtained in each Member State with regards to the employment rate for men and women aged over 55 and the age of withdrawal from the labour force, and will report on specific examples of best practice from the Member States in promoting active ageing.

The EU has also taken legally binding steps on community level to strengthen individuals' rights. The Directive from 2000 on the equal treatment in employment and occupation bans discrimination on a number of grounds, including age: age discrimination in accessing jobs or training is therefore by now prohibited across the EU.

Key messages on initiatives for active ageing

Awareness-raising is a key and targeted at three groups:

- Politicians, social partners and other stakeholders involved in policy making. Much progress has been made about the necessity to introduce initiatives concerning active ageing and a lot has been done. Strategies have to be coherent and to date there have been inconsistencies.
- Older workers – have to be convinced that they have the capacity to do a good job, that they have competencies and are able to learn new things.
- Managers – have to be made aware of the benefits of attracting and keeping older employees in employment. Those who start now or have started already will have an advantage in some years when labour supply will decrease. An ageing population in leaves many companies facing the prospect of labour shortages when their traditional labour pools reduce. A study on the 'Business Case for Diversity', carried out for the Commission in 2005, showed that demographic change is acting as a catalyst for the development of age-related diversity strategies in some businesses.

What is central to awareness-raising campaigns is getting rid of negative stereotypes that surround older employees. However, having said that, we must take advantage of the fact that

different age groups have different competences. At the same time, companies have to adapt to the needs of individuals by introducing:

- New ways of organising the work, such as job rotation and multi-skilling;
- Flexible working time arrangements;
- Targeted health and safety provisions; and
- Targeted training.

We have to remember that older workers are a very diverse group. Any characterisation or generalisation concerning their work ability, motivation and receptivity to training and change can be misleading.

Efforts at the company level must be underpinned by national policies and framework conditions to facilitate the process of adaptation: for example, institutional support for targeted training and national legislation and collective agreements concerning flexible working time arrangements. Incentives must be built into social security schemes and tax rules in order to favour active ageing. Support also needs to facilitate re-entry into the labour market for people out of work.

Member States that have tackled active ageing comprehensively are those that have generated good practice examples. To help develop comprehensive approaches we need pilot actions and innovative approaches involving different stakeholders. This is where EQUAL has a lot to offer.

Examples from EQUAL

Many projects of EQUAL deal with age management. The good examples are numerous and examples are particularly strong in the area of human resources management e.g. job rotation schemes, systems for knowledge transfer in the work place and awareness raising. A differentiating characteristic of EQUAL is its transnational cooperation and the opportunity to transfer knowledge and expertise across Member States.

The future use of the European Social Fund

The legal framework for new European Social Fund (ESF) pays tribute to the lessons learnt from EQUAL. This programme has served as the laboratory and test bed for new ways of delivering labour market and social inclusion policies. Now the time has come for these lessons to be integrated into ESF programming.

2.1.4. Key points from Anne Marie Guillimard's presentation

- The age management challenge involves a cultural revolution requiring new instruments and systems. A solution is necessary for the functioning of the knowledge society.
- Ageing as an issue increases in significance when the baby boomers start retiring. Labour shortages are anticipated, as is a loss of skills (whereby knowledge is not transferred from one generation to another).
- It is important to accept demographic transition: with more and more elderly people, it is paramount that people work longer. There has to be a shift away from the pension culture and especially early retirement/premature exit.
- The issues associated with ageing affect all parts of society.
- The suggested way forward concerns the life-course dynamic whereby ageing is actively managed as part of a wider lifelong career plan.
- There needs to be a shift in the dynamic involving a pressure on companies to be attractive to older workers. Companies that provide job satisfaction are those that will attract older workers.
- There also needs to be a shift in the dynamic so that it is a case of a 'right to work at any age' rather than a right to early retirement

- Scandinavian countries have been successful with 50+ strategies and have a good appreciation of what can be achieved from such approaches: countries in continental Europe can learn from them. In France, for example the retirement age is 58.
- There is no single response, although the challenge of revolution has to be embraced. The approach has to be medium and long term, and needs to involve co-ordination.
- Finland is highlighted as an example of good practice and has changed course completely: the country is identified as an 'active manager of age diversity' which has contributed to an increase in the proportion of older people in work.
- The Beatle programme in Finland concerns making work attractive to all age groups, thereby demonstrating the importance of the life-course approach
- The future of Europe rests on the life-course approach which comprises five factors:
 - Professional perspectives – redesigning professional life;
 - Developing training programmes in line with career paths;
 - Improving working conditions;
 - Recognising experience as an asset for companies and ensuring that such experience can be transferred; and
 - Rethinking labour organisation.
- The starting point – in moving forward – is dialogue among all actors. It's about getting a 'win-win' approach. Investment is necessary in terms of human resources and mobility. Social protection is also needed.

2.2. SEMINAR: UNION-EMPLOYER-STATE: THREE PARTS IN ONE PLAY

Presenters:

- Bernt Schiller, Sweden (Moderator)
- Mattias Thorns, BDA, Germany
- Roland Gauthy, ETUI-REHS, Belgium
- Anne Marie Guillimard, University Paris-Descartes/Institut Universitaire de France, France

Key points from the seminar

- The EU 50% target seems beyond reach. Political frameworks are required as competition for labour intensifies.
- There is a need for new training/career pathways.
- It is important to consider flexicurity.
- Red tape must be reduced to allow participation.
- Companies have to be supported in developing broad activities to retain workers.
- It is important to consider the health and safety dimension, including the ergonomic and physiological perspective.
- Four key themes drive age management:
 - Individual choice – adaptability;
 - Well being of the workforce;
 - Intergenerational gap; and

- Physiological aspects of ageing.
- Part of the answer is to consider one's health throughout working life. This provides a non-discriminatory approach (insofar as it's too late by the time one gets to 50 to redress issues that have been coming up earlier in working life).
- Access should be facilitated for those people who want to continue to work, but this should happen at the same time as eliminating the deleterious effects of work.
- There needs to be a 'new intergenerational contract' whereby co-operation at work/competence transfer facilitates intergenerational solidarity. To this end, it is important to ensure that arenas exist in which new solutions and new measures are negotiated involving employers, trade unions and researchers – in other words, a new pact between the generations facilitated by pro-active government.
- There needs to be a win-win situation that benefits employers and workers, underpinned by age management policy linked to flexicurity.
- A key issue to address is the job quality: quality of work is the constraint on active age management. Participation will be lower if job quality doesn't attract participation (either by people staying in work or returning to the labour market). This is coupled with a return on investment – employers won't participate if there's no return for them. However, restructuring is key – it's a determinant of creating quality jobs.
- An integrated, multidisciplinary approach is needed.

2.3. SEMINAR: HEALTH AND WORKING IN AN AGEING EUROPE

Presenters:

- Peter Westerholm, Sweden (Moderator)
- Per Erik Solem, Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) Norway
- Judith Sluiter, Coronel Institute of Occupational Health, Netherlands
- Claes Håkan Nygård, University of Tampere, Finland

Key points from the seminar

- The starting point concerns two tensions: the lack of labour and barriers to employment. 17% of those out of work say they want to work and this group needs to increase. However, a quarter of those out of work have health problems that prevent them from working.
- The barriers to participation are identified as follows:
 - Recruitment:
 - Negative stereotypes;
 - Self stereotypes (people who put themselves down);
 - Lack of confidence; and
 - Lack of openness about ageing.
 - Workplace:
 - Lack of adaptation (of person concerning health and functional limitations); and
 - Lack of adaptation in the working conditions.
 - Retirement:
 - Fewer challenges for older workers;

- Mandatory retirement in some cases (tends to be specialist occupations); and
 - Expectation of voluntary exit.
- The 65+ group has seen a dramatic drop-off in participation. This is to be expected for some in that they have worked in high demand (and high-risk) jobs. Health monitoring needs to start at an early age.
- To moving forward, it is important to redress the balance between work demand and capacity in terms of:
 - Resources vis-à-vis work demand;
 - Health vis-à-vis environment;
 - Competence vis-à-vis job content and demand; and
 - Values vis-à-vis community/organisation.
- The aim is to capitalise on the positives, but to recognise that work ability diminishes with age.
- Work demands don't necessarily change over time. What changes is one's ability, meaning that the following are key:
 - Match work demands to functional capacity – replace physical demands with social/mental challenges; and
 - Workers' responsibility to maintain their functional capacity.
- In terms of barriers to work, health is recognised as a barrier to work though people work despite their illness; a 1/3rd of people say that illness prevents them from working.

Questions raised

- How do you change attitudes? By adopting an 'all age approach' which fosters positive self image, confidence and behaviour. And by keeping the management informed and training managers to understand and appropriately deal with ageing.
- What does ageing mean? Ensuring tolerance towards diversity and integration.

3. DAY TWO: SEMINAR AND ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS ON THE EUROPEAN AGE MANAGEMENT NETWORK

3.1. SEMINAR: A EUROPEAN AGE MANAGEMENT NETWORK: THE WAY FORWARD?

Presenters:

- Helen Tubb, GHK Consulting Ltd, Belgium/UK
- Pat Irving, GHK Consulting Ltd, UK

Key points from the presentation:

Introduction

GHK Consulting Ltd provide the European thematic expertise for the Adaptability pillar of the EQUAL initiative. They have been invited by the conference organisers and EQUAL Unit of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to explore the question:

“Would it be a good idea to establish a European network on age management borne out of EQUAL?”

This question can be explored via a three-way model:

- *Demand* - What age management policy and practice problems are there that the network could address? Are there policy makers and practitioners who would be interested in what the network does? Would these actors find a network – as opposed to other types of action – beneficial? etc.
- *Supply* - Is there a good source of activities, information and ideas to populate the network (and ultimately respond to the Demand)? Who could contribute to and/or be actively involved in the network? What specifically can EQUAL offer? etc
- *Strategic and operational aspects* - What would the network do exactly? Who would the network members be? What would be its aims and objectives? How would it operate? etc.

Using this model, GHK Consulting was tasked (by the EQUAL Unit) with undertaking some preliminary research and analysis, focusing mainly on EU policy developments and EQUAL. The results of this research/analysis are presented in the publication [“A European Age Management Network: the way forward?”](#) and form the basis for the presentation.

Understanding ‘age management’

There is no single or commonly accepted definition for the term ‘age management’, but it can be broadly understood as ‘proactively managing age trends in the working population.’ The term can also be understood at three levels:

- Individual – in terms of how (often older) individuals actively make choices and respond to whatever way their age affects their working life;
- Enterprise – which relates to a company’s strategies, approaches and attitudes towards the age profile of its workforce; and
- Labour market policies and frameworks – which relates to broader issues of demographic change and the engagement of stakeholders at the sectoral and/or territorial level.

It is important to acknowledge that age management is not necessarily only about older people, nor just about people who are in work. Depending on what definition one takes, age management can also encompass younger people – indeed people throughout their working life – and the unemployed. Age management is also not solely the domain of employment policy. As reflected in the Commission Communication “The Demographic Future of Europe”, age management touches on other policy areas, such as education and training, justice and home affairs, regional affairs, and financial and regulatory frameworks.

Demand: EU policy agenda

In terms of the EU agenda, it is clear that demographic ageing is an absolutely key priority for policy-making. This was echoed in Lenia Samuel’s speech (see Section 2) and is reflected in the:

- Commission Communication “The Demographic Future of Europe”;
- EU targets for the employment rate of older workers, average exit age and lifelong learning participation;
- EES (2005-2008); and
- ESF Regulation (2007-2013),

to name but a few. However, it is also apparent that Member States are making variable progress in reaching the above targets and in implementing the various EU guidelines and measures geared towards demographic ageing. Of particular note, the 2006 Joint Employment Report expressed a number of areas of concern, including:

- Insufficient lifecycle approach to work;
- Insufficient promotion of ‘flexicurity’;

- Low participation of older workers in lifelong learning;
- Low employment rate of older women; and
- Lack of emphasis on the 'adaptability' strategic priority of EES.²

² Joint Employment Report 2006/2007, 6706/07

Supply: age management in EQUAL

There is significant potential within EQUAL to respond to the above EU policy agenda on demographic ageing, and thereby contribute to a European network on age management. There have been over 210 DPs working on age management issues during the two rounds of EQUAL. The number and proportion of these DPs has doubled in the second round, meaning there is a large community of projects active right now! The thematic profile of these DPs is also highly relevant: they are most active under the:

- Lifelong learning;
- (Re-)integration to the labour market; and
- Adaptation to change

thematic fields of EQUAL - which offers a direct fit with the areas where the EU has expressed concern.

EQUAL already has tangible insights and outcomes in relation to age management, which could be used as a starting point for the network. In the first round of EQUAL, a European working group on age management was set up, called "EQUAL@Work". The themes that the working group focused on again offer a good fit with the EU policy agenda, namely:

- A lifecycle approach to working life;
- Crossing the generations; and
- SME investment in human capital.

Moreover, the working group produced a range of outcomes that could be used within the network. It captured and disseminated key messages, identified innovative examples and success stories, prepared 'Policy Briefs' and organised a large-scale European conference in June 2005 entitled Agora "Experience is Capital".

GHK was asked to analyse in greater depth the 55 age management DPs funded under the second round of the Adaptability pillar. The results of this analysis are very encouraging in terms of the EU policy agenda. The DPs have a significant SME, regional and sectoral foci, and the following key:

- Target groups: older workers, older female workers, employers, public administrations and social partners;
- Methods: vocational training, awareness-raising, guidance and counselling and skills audit; and
- Tools: research, evaluation and studies, methodological development, networking and mentoring schemes.

It is also worth remembering the National Thematic Networks (NTNs), networks of DPs (and other actors) that have been set up in the individual Member States. Across the two rounds, EQUAL has established no less than 33 Adaptability NTNs, 7 of which have focused specifically on age management. Clearly, the fact that the DPs are already actively 'networked' provides a favourable environment for an 'umbrella' European network.

The verdict?

On both the demand and supply side, it is possible to conclude that there is a strong basis for establishing a European network on age management. Stakeholders in the EU policy agenda are 'calling out' for ideas, information and actions that can help to respond to the challenge of demographic change. And EQUAL has a ready-made community of innovative projects addressing age management, many of which are still active in the second round.

It can also be said that a European network provides an ideal vehicle within the context of the new ESF: it provides a much-needed platform for transnational cooperation, exchange and

learning at a time when (based on the subsidiarity principle) Member States have increased responsibility for ESF management and implementation - and therefore could tend to work more in isolation.

The timing of a European network is also ideal. EQUAL DPs are still active and can therefore provide a 'bridge' by offering *live* examples and ideas to ESF programme and project managers who will have to address age management issues (underpinned by EQUAL principles) in the new programming period.

Although the signs for a European network are good, there is a big caveat. The success or failure of the network very much depends on the strategic and operational aspects (the third part of the three-way model). For the network to be effective and sustainable, it is important to:

- Discuss and agree the details of the network;
- Have personal commitment and backing;
- Identify and secure resources; and
- Not reinvent the wheel!

Given this critical message, the final part of the presentation presented ideas for the network's objectives, thematic focus, activities and resources. As these ideas were discussed and refined in the round-table discussions, they are presented in Section 3.2 below rather than this section.

To develop the network idea further, the following next steps were proposed:

- Call on the views, comments and ideas of the seminar participants;
- Establish a working group;
- Identify interested parties via a mailing list; and
- Draw up a network:
 - Declaration; and
 - Action Plan.

3.2. ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Facilitators:

- Helen Tubb, GHK Consulting Ltd, Belgium/UK
- Pat Irving, GHK Consulting Ltd, UK
- Anders Östebo, Life Competence 50+ DP, Germany

Key points from the discussions

Understanding 'age management'

- There are different views on how to define age management. These are dependent on the national policy context and underpinning legislation.
- Some people see the term as 'a policy for older workers', 'senior policy' or 'an awareness of age (as part of management)'.
 - Motivating people to stay in work longer;
 - Capturing knowledge; and
 - Dealing with transition periods.
- Employers are critical to age management measures. The term therefore needs to include the company perspective, which is about:
 - Motivating people to stay in work longer;
 - Capturing knowledge; and
 - Dealing with transition periods.

- There is the question: ‘What age?’ Does the term encompass the young, as well as the old?
- The term raises the issue of workability and the importance of changing attitudes.
- Age management is a joint responsibility between the manager/employer and the individual.

Network objectives

- The following objectives were agreed upon:
 - To promote and facilitate mutual learning, benchmarking and knowledge transfer;
 - To aide communication and cooperation;
 - To collate and disseminate good practice and innovation; and
 - To raise awareness of relevant issues (initially amongst the network members, but in the longer term to external audiences).
- Current discussions and measures are dominated by policy-makers and researchers. The network could therefore fill a critical gap by focusing more on employers.
- Employers are in need of practical information, examples etc., in other words, things with an operational value. To meet this need, it is important to build an evidence base that can be tested, evaluated and replicated by others. With this in mind, the network could provide an ideal forum for employers and researchers to meet.
- The network could also aim to promote:
 - Evidence-based management;
 - On-going research; and
 - Evaluation – not just one single evaluation, but several to truly validate activities and findings.

Network thematic focus

- The following foci were agreed upon:
 - Employment and social policy, framed by the EES and ESF; and
 - All three levels of age management (individual, enterprise and labour market).
- Depending on the network’s definition of age management, the focus could adopt a lifecycle perspective – which is at the forefront of EU policy on age management.
- It would be advisable for the network to identify a number of sub-themes to frame and coordinate its day-to-day activities.

Network activities

- The network could develop:
 - Thematic working groups;
 - Thematic seminars;
 - Peer reviews (maybe with a link to the EU Mutual Learning Programme);
 - Regional conferences for awareness-raising;
 - A website; and
 - A newsletter.

- There is strong support for the network's own European Age Equality Award, based on the successful experience of the German company, CC:B.
- Reflecting the desired focus on employers (see Network objectives above), company-to-company seminars are seen as a very good idea; employers can best learn from each other. The seminars could be helped by:
 - Capitalising on the existing links that EQUAL DPs have with companies; and
 - Engaging human resource managers.
- The network must not forget about engaging individuals and the general public.

Network membership

- The following network members were agreed upon:
 - Policy makers and practitioners;
 - European Commission;
 - National/regional government, especially those responsible for employment policy and the ESF;
 - Social partners;
 - Practitioners;
 - Representatives from other existing networks; and
 - Employers.
- It was noted that the social partners were the only group not represented in the round-table discussions.
- Clearly, all of these members will have varying interests and expectations. It will therefore be important to coordinate the network in a multi-dimensional fashion – maybe as an 'umbrella of networks.'

Network resources

- The following potential resources were identified:
 - New ESF project;
 - New ESF technical assistance;
 - Membership subscriptions; and
 - National or other funding.

4. DAY THREE: WORKSHOP AND CLOSING SESSION

4.1. WORKSHOP: TURNING BACK THE CLOCK: THE REBIRTH OF OLDER WORKERS

Presenter:

- Stylianos Mavromoustakos, Intercollege, Cyprus

Key points from the workshop

Introduction

The 50+ age group is increasing in significance because of skills shortages. Time is ticking away and it may be too late in the future. So why are we in this predicament?

The main causes of the ageing population are:

- Fertility rates are dropping rapidly;

- Increasing life expectancy;
- Changes in immigration patterns – asylum seekers are a separate issue; and
- Coming of age of the baby boomers.

The effect will be felt in terms of social security in retirement. When there are fewer than four people per retired person, this means that pension funds are not sustainable.

“We will be talking about the same problem in 10 and 20 years. Hence it’s necessary to take measures now.”

Solutions

In terms of managing the problem, the shrinking workforce means that new groups need to be brought into the labour force from under-represented groups (e.g. women in Cyprus). This approach needs to be coupled with increased productivity.

Potential solutions include:

- Immigration;
- Employment of “other groups” e.g. women and older people;
- Increasing fertility rates;
- Changing the education system; and
- Extending the working life of individuals – though the key question is to what age are people willing to work?

Emerging issues

While anti-discriminatory legislation is in place, discrimination is still common practice. Employers/organisations appear not to be interested in this age group. There is little investment in retaining/retraining older workers: no programmes are specifically designed for this age group. Efforts are required to help train people in the 50 + age group to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This is also needed for the 40+ age group too.

Key messages need to be communicated to employers about the skills/competence of older workers, such as they:

- Bring experience;
- Are skilled, competent and knowledgeable;
- Are flexible;
- Recognise and respond to emergency situations;
- Have human insight and an understanding of the service business;
- Are loyal and bring a sense of responsibility;
- Provide mentoring opportunities.

There are examples of companies that appreciate the richness of the contribution of older workers. Nokia is one example. These appreciations include:

- Rewarding older workers for their experience;
- Actively recruiting older people;
- Offering continual training;
- Offering flexible working hours;
- Redeploying staff to use their skills effectively; and

- Taking care of people's health and wellbeing (before they turn 55/60).

Key players who can contribute to the solutions are:

- Government;
- Industry; and
- Vocational education and training institutions (including training institutions/universities).

It is important to position lifelong learning at the heart of strategies; participating in lifelong learning for the 50+ age group is poor. This raises the question: how can we keep people in work if participation in lifelong learning is virtually zero? It is the countries with well developed vocational training systems that are well ahead of others in terms of 50+ lifelong learning participation systems. The rest have a long way to go.

Key issues to address are as follows:

- Older workers are not always apparent as a target group in lifelong learning strategies. This group needs a different teaching/learning approach; in general, people in this group find courses unattractive and dislike traditional teaching methods.
- Participation in lifelong learning decreases with age.

There is a need to change the whole approach to engage with this group.

Good practice

Good practice, drawn from across Europe, include the following:

- SOS Lavoro – Italy - Government pilot project from Italy;
- Mentoring – Austria;
- Dresden Electronic – Germany;
- Agrolinz Melamin – solving health problems;
- Shell and Delta Industries – both Greece – flexible working hours;
- Shell – Greece – ICT;
- Education and training – Netherlands – training people to change skills;
- E&T – Austria - designed courses specifically for the 45+ age group; and
- European Digital Older Workers EDOL – Netherlands - giving new language and ICT skills, and using past experiences to learn language skills.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations were identified:

- *Act now!* Change is necessary to hit the 50% target – 8 countries have achieved this already. The measures suggested have to reflect the different needs of different countries. Utilise people of all age groups.
- *Start to target measures on the 40+ age group.* It is important to start preparing this age group for the future. It is important to promote vocational education and training as there is a shortage in technical skills. Competencies have not been developed and need to be developed: vocational education and training/technical skills need to be moved from being 'second class' behind higher education.
- *Change the educational systems.* Younger generations need to be better prepared for the labour market. Education needs to reflect the needs of the labour market and young people need to integrate into the world of work more quickly than the 12 months currently estimated.

- *Proactively increase the fertility rate.* There is a need to balance the needs of the labour market and the fertility rate.

The final message was as follows:

“In twenty years – the 50+ generation will not be big enough in order to help”.

4.2. CLOSING SESSION: FEEDBACK ON THE EUROPEAN AGE MANAGEMENT NETWORK

Presenters:

- Anders Östebo, Life Competence 50+ DP, Germany
- Barbara Wagner, CC:B, Germany
- Helen Tubb, GHK Consulting Ltd, Belgium/UK
- Caj Skoglund, Age Management i Sverige (AMSAB), Sweden

Key points of feedback

The idea for the European Age Management Network was presented in a Dialogue Seminar by Helen Tubb (see Section 3 above). At the end of the seminar, approximately 25 people decided to hold a series of round-table discussions to further develop the network idea.

The following countries were represented in the group:

- France;
- Portugal;
- Denmark;
- Great Britain;
- Germany;
- Belgium;
- Sweden;
- Finland;
- Norway;
- Italy;
- Poland; and
- Austria.

And the following organisations:

- EQUAL National Support Structure;
- Consultancy company;
- Research organisation;
- Employer;
- Local authority;
- Training provider
- National labour ministry;
- Economic interest group;
- Higher education institution; and

- Regional network representatives.

The overriding conclusion from the round-table discussions was that there is a keen interest in age management and the idea of setting up an Age Management Network, both from the EU and conference delegates.

The target groups for the network mirror the conference delegates, namely: researchers, practitioners and decision-makers. The mix of these groups will be a key success factor for the network.

The issues and themes that the network could focus on again mirror the conference themes:

- Workplace in change;
- Learning and qualifications; and
- Altered conditions and attitudes in the labour market.

The network is expected to operate at three levels:

- Systematic – national and EU levels;
- Organisational; and
- Individual.

The discussions started to consider the question: what is age management? It was concluded that it would not be possible to answer this question within the scope of the conference. However, the question was an important one and would need to be taken on board by those developing the network.

The network needs to focus on problems and the needs for companies – in other words, identifying what problems companies have and what solutions exist to respond to these problems.

Another aim for the network is to ensure that knowledge is transferred via:

- Company-to-company seminars;
- Researcher networks; and
- Seminars bringing all groups together.

There was also a suggestion that a European Age Equality Award could be created and awarded to companies showing good practice on an annual basis.

The following next steps were agreed upon:

- A mailing list will be drawn up (starting with the business cards of conference delegates interested in the network).
- Funding needs to be identified and secured. To this end:
 - Barbara Wagner is attending an event with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs during which she will try to discuss the network and ascertain their interest in joining the network.
 - Anders Östebo has a meeting set up with the Swedish ESF council on 22 August 2007.
 - There is an opportunity for the West Sweden Organisation to set up a meeting to discuss the network with the European Commission.
- The network could seek opportunities to further develop and disseminate its work at:
 - DG Regional Policy's Open Days: European Week of Cities and Regions. The EQUAL Unit of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has

scheduled a seminar on age management as part of the Open Days on 11 October 2007.

- An event organised by the Greek Equal Management Authority on “Anticipating Change: effective approaches to lifelong learning and age management.” The event will be held in Athens on 6 and 7 December 2007.