



6-7 DECEMBER 2007

European Conference

Anticipating change

effective approaches to lifelong
learning and age management

Conference Report



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**ANTICIPATING CHANGE: EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO
LIFELONG LEARNING AND AGE MANAGEMENT**

CONFERENCE REPORT

Published in December 2007

The contents of this publication were prepared by GHK Consulting Ltd for the European Commission and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the start of European Social Fund (ESF) EQUAL Initiative, the issues of age management and lifelong learning have been a major focus of a large number of funded Development Partnerships: during the two rounds of EQUAL funding, there have been 210 DPs working on age management and over 800 DPs have been active under the (specially designated) Lifelong Learning theme. Clearly, this means that there is significant potential within EQUAL to respond to the European Union agenda on these two important subjects. What is more, age management and lifelong learning constitute critical themes for the new ESF programming period 2007-2013; the situation of older workers and importance of lifelong learning are explicitly mentioned in the new ESF Regulation and consequently Member States are now finalising and rolling out their ESF Operational Programmes with these (as well as other) policy priorities in mind.

Against this background, the Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Protection (Greek EQUAL Managing Authority) organised a European EQUAL conference entitled “Anticipating Change: effective approaches to lifelong learning and age management” on 6 and 7 December 2007 in Athens, Greece. The conference was supported by the EQUAL Unit at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, with the assistance of GHK Consulting, the European technical experts for the Adaptability pillar of EQUAL.

The conference programme was structured according to seven sub-themes, which formed the basis of workshops:

- Engaging employers - especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- Developing intergenerational learning;
- Developing vocational training;
- Validating skills;
- Promoting social dialogue;
- Promoting the use of information and communication technologies and e-learning; and
- National Thematic Networks (NTNs) and other EQUAL networks.

The workshop discussions complemented and built on the ideas and messages featured in the [conference publication](#) entitled “EQUAL: paving the way for lifelong learning and age management.”

To frame all of these workshops, there were a number of plenary speeches and keynote addresses, delivered by high-level representatives of the Greek Government, Greek EQUAL Managing Authority, European Commission and GHK. These interventions reflected the importance of lifelong learning and age management, particularly in the context of the acceleration of demographic ageing and the future of European society, and with specific reference to EQUAL and the new ESF.

The purpose of this report is to present the key messages that emerged from the workshops and the main discussion topics, as well as summarise the keynote speeches of the opening and closing plenary sessions.

The key messages emerging from the conference are presented below.

Engaging employers – especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

- Engage with companies on their territory
- Awareness raising activities are needed to ensure employers are aware of the benefits of lifelong learning and age management policies
- Use champions / advocates to win over other companies
- Following support, companies need to be empowered to take their learning forward themselves
- Public funding can be used to pump prime SMEs’ activities to engage with older workers

- A business case has to be made for a sustainable change to help companies understand the benefits of lifelong learning and age management policies
- Companies should take a more proactive approach in who and how they recruit to ensure equality in opportunity for older workers
- Engage with intermediary bodies as a route to engaging employers

Developing intergenerational learning

- Awareness-raising of the benefits of intergenerational learning amongst employers is needed
- A learning culture needs to be developed within each company
- Preventative and anticipatory measures in relation to an ageing workforce are important
- Knowledge transfer across generations can at the same time preserve traditional sectors of the economy and boost innovation
- Intergenerational learning is most effective when it focuses on the strengths of the target groups concerned
- Intergenerational learning needs to involve three key groups: managers, older workers and younger workers
- Intergenerational learning can help to motivate older workers

Promoting social dialogue

- Social dialogue should be supported at company, as well as national level in the new ESF
- Individuals can be motivated by improving their working conditions
- Flexible working arrangements are a key solution to active ageing
- Legislation should be updated to catch up with current developments in relation to an ageing workforce
- A differentiated approach to age management should be adopted to take account of the differences in the levels of qualifications, sectors, and regions of the individuals concerned
- Awareness-raising – especially that fostered by the social partners - should be a priority amongst employers and employees
- Human resource managers should be more involved in discussions with the social partners at company level
- Social partners can act as agents of change
- Capacity building of the social partners is important
- New roles and profiles can be created so that the position of the social partners is fully recognised
- Social partners are important in providing peer support
- Political will is key in the successful involvement of social partners

Developing vocational training

- It is important to strike a balance between supply (beneficiaries) and demand-side needs (employers)
- Vocational training is particularly effective when, for example, it is delivered in-company, senior managers and employees are trained together or psychological support is integrated.
- Soft skills need to be recognised as a stand-alone skills set to underpin vocational training
- Social partners need to be engaged in promoting and supporting vocational training
- There is a need for formal and nationally accredited systems for recognising vocational training

Developing skills validation

- Common challenges faced by skills validation initiatives include, for example: the time limited nature of the pilot projects and the associated difficulties in ensuring continued for such approaches;
- Key success factors for designing skills validation programmes include, for example: engaging employers early, so that they will want to embrace change; motivating employers to promote training; and involving employers in the design, delivery and implementation.

- Methods to assist people furthest from the labour market to engage in skills validation include, for example: designing holistic approaches, looking, for example, at not only skills validation-related issues, but also at the psychological barriers for individuals in undertaking further training; providing a less formal environment; and underpinning the approaches with the provision of information, advice and guidance.
- Skills validation must go beyond the use of qualifications as a competence measure

Promoting the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-learning

- Tailored solutions and blended learning are effective methods for engaging with and training beneficiaries
- Soft and flexible starts can lead to hard outcomes
- Training offers using ICTs can be used to engage marginalised groups
- Companies who train retain
- Future activities need to consider both demand side as well as supply side activities
- Projects should talk the language of 'business benefits' for companies and their employees when addressing SMEs
- Legislative changes are necessary to accommodate change
- Business associations' have an important advocacy role to play in promoting ICT and teleworking in SMEs

Networking

- Networks help provide answers to policy problems
- An important lesson from networking is involving decision makers from the outset
- Networks can address the need for better policy coordination at national level
- Time and funding is necessary to mainstream via networks
- Resources are an essential issue for networks
- Networks provide a means through which pertinent solutions can be matched to current policy issues
- Networks need to produce results and practical outputs
- NTN must ensure that the products and tools that are being developed are relevant to the needs of businesses
- Merit in regional, national and transnational partnerships
- Network efficiency can be greatly improved when it led effectively by one partner/person
- In looking forward - networks should address the life course rather than focusing on older workers

The full programme of the conference is available in Annex 1. The conference materials, including PowerPoint presentations, are available on the European Commission's [EQUAL website](#) and [Greek EQUAL website](#).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the start of European Social Fund (ESF) EQUAL Initiative, the issues of age management and lifelong learning have been a major focus of a large number of funded Development Partnerships (DPs): during the two rounds of EQUAL funding, there have been 210 DPs working on age management and over 800 DPs have been active under the (specially designated) Lifelong Learning theme. Clearly, this means that there is significant potential within EQUAL to respond to the European Union (EU) agenda on these two important subjects. What is more, age management and lifelong learning constitute critical themes for the new ESF programming period 2007-2013; the situation of older workers and importance of lifelong learning are explicitly mentioned in the new ESF Regulation and consequently Member States are now finalising and rolling out their ESF Operational Programmes (OPs) with these (as well as other) policy priorities in mind.

Against this background, the Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Protection (Greek EQUAL Managing Authority) organised a European EQUAL conference entitled “Anticipating Change: effective approaches to lifelong learning and age management” on 6 and 7 December 2007 in Athens, Greece. The conference was supported by the EQUAL Unit at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG EMPL), with the assistance of GHK Consulting (GHK), the European technical experts for the Adaptability pillar of EQUAL.

The overall aim of the conference was to disseminate the main policy and practice messages from the Adaptability pillar of EQUAL to European, national and regional actors - particularly those involved in the implementation of the new ESF (ESF actors). Framed by the theme of ‘Anticipating Change: effective approaches to lifelong learning and age management’, the specific objectives of the conference were to:

- Disseminate the achievements, lessons and outcomes of EQUAL DPs funded under the Adaptability pillar across both rounds;
- Disseminate the achievements and added value of national and regional networking, as illustrated by the National Thematic Networks (NTN) and other networking structures set up within EQUAL; and
- Formulate and present clear and targeted policy and practice messages – based on the experience of EQUAL - in relation to the implementation of lifelong learning and age management measures within the new ESF.

The truly EU-wide audience included key actors from the European, national and regional levels, including the European Commission, social partner organisations, government representatives involved in the management and implementation of the new ESF, research and policy institutions and of course, the DPs that had tested the good practice models on which the recommendations were based.

Together, these actors explored the opportunities of incorporating EQUAL's principles and good practices into the new ESF and of using them to inform future work within the context of the implementation of their OP. For example, how could these age management and lifelong learning challenges be addressed in the call for proposals under the new ESF? What specific type of projects should be funded? To be most effective, who should they involve? How should they be supported by the ESF Managing Authorities and Intermediary Bodies? And above all, how could EQUAL project experience help respond to these questions?

The conference programme was structured according to six sub-themes:

- Engaging employers - especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- Developing intergenerational learning;
- Developing vocational training;
- Validating skills;
- Promoting social dialogue; and
- Promoting the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-learning.

These sub-themes were seen as 'transversal' – in other words, equally addressing lifelong learning and age management issues – reflecting the fact that, for most DPs, these two themes are closely intertwined. These sub-themes were the basis of two sessions of six parallel workshops held on the first day of the conference.

On the second day of the conference, six parallel workshops focused on a seventh sub-theme, namely NTNs and other EQUAL networks. The idea behind these workshops was to explore the various approaches and benefits of networking, in particular at local and regional levels, to address age management and lifelong learning issues.

Overall, the workshops had a two-fold aim:

- Firstly, to present concrete examples of how EQUAL has effectively addressed age management and lifelong learning; and
- Secondly, to provide a discussion forum to deepen understanding of the 'EQUAL experience' and explore how this experience can inform policy makers and ESF actors concerned with age management and lifelong learning. These discussions complemented and built on the ideas and messages featured in the [conference publication](#) entitled "EQUAL: paving the way for lifelong learning and age management."

To frame all of these workshops, there were a number of plenary speeches and keynote addresses, delivered by high-level representatives of the Greek Government, Greek EQUAL Managing Authority, European Commission and GHK. These interventions reflected the importance of lifelong learning and age management, particularly in the context of the acceleration of demographic ageing and the future of European society, and with specific reference to EQUAL and the new ESF.

The purpose of this report is to present the key messages that emerged from the workshops and the main discussion topics, as well as summarise the keynote speeches of the opening and closing plenary sessions. The structure of the report follows the chronological order of the Conference, structured around the seven conference sub-themes.

The full programme of the conference is available in Annex 1. The conference materials, including PowerPoint presentations, are available on the European Commission's [EQUAL website](#) and [Greek EQUAL website](#).

1.1. ANTICIPATING CHANGE: THE GREEK PERSPECTIVE

Eugenia Karolidou, Director of the EQUAL Unit of the Greek ESF Managing Authority, opened the conference by welcoming participants and then introduced Ms Sophia Kalantzakou, the Deputy Minister for Employment and Social Protection in Greece.

Ms Kalantzakou started her speech by saying that the EU today is confronted by a new phenomenon. EU citizens are living longer and their knowledge needs constant updating. The population aged 65+ is on the increase and will continue to move in this way in the future. Greece is not spared from this trend: currently, people aged 54-64 constitute 10% of the total working population of the country. A multitude of tools to tackle the problems linked to the ageing workforce have been produced at the EU level and lifelong learning programmes have specifically been implemented in Greece. These programmes have been particularly targeted at SMEs, which are the leading force of the country's economy. The Ministry of Employment and Social Protection has also developed and implemented programmes and initiatives to increase the employment rate, as well as the skills of vulnerable workers and job seekers.

Special attention has been given to people aged over 50 as they often face discrimination. Older workers are often stereotyped as employers often consider their skills to be obsolete and their output/performance not productive enough. The ageing workforce requires strong policy responses through holistic, integrated approaches. Age management policies should create a friendly environment for older workers and create opportunities for those who want to remain longer within the labour market.

Mr Konstantinos Tsoutsoplides, General Secretary of ESF funds in Greece, took the floor following Ms Kalantzakou. Mr Tsoutsoplides opened his presentation by saying that the theme of the conference is very pertinent and high on the agenda both at EU and national level. He then went on to describe the key initiatives and measures for age management and lifelong learning supported in Greece, as well as the content of the national ESF OP for 2007-2013. Mr Tsoutsoplides noted that the key principles of EQUAL, especially partnership, innovation and mainstreaming, are integrated in the Greek OP.

A key relevant initiative in Greece is the development of the 'National System for Combining Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA)'. The ESSEEKA system aims to give content to lifelong learning and improve human resources in general in Greece. The OP will promote age management-related measures such as lifelong learning for the self-employed and farmers, quality and productivity at work, innovative forms of work, and health and safety at work. Other issues such as the anticipation of change, improved flexibility for workers and companies, incentives to promote female employment, as well as the adaptability of SMEs to economic change and restructuring will also be priorities for the next programming period.

Mr Tsoutsoplides concluded that in relation to age management, it is important to capitalise on the experience of older workers as well as develop incentives so that they can stay longer in the labour market. Also, attention should be given to the regular update of their skills and the promotion of both geographical and sectoral mobility for older workers. Moreover, emphasis should be put on awareness-raising activities for employers so that they can promote lifelong learning and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices within their companies. To conclude, Mr Tsoutsoplides highlighted the importance of the participation of social partners in initiatives promoting adaptability and adjustment of companies and workers.

1.2. ANTICIPATING CHANGE: THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Following the intervention of the General Secretary, Mr Walter Faber, Head of Unit in the European Commission's DG EMPL, took the floor. Mr Faber started his presentation by stressing the importance of anticipating change. He recalled the words of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "*There is nothing certain or stable except the fact that things change.*" Change is the main feature of today's world: quick technological development, globalisation, geopolitical developments and

societal changes are modern challenges that cannot be underestimated. Demography in particular is also changing. Today, there are four workers supporting one pensioner, while in 2050 only two workers will support one retired person. This is why it is important to start thinking now about the consequences of these changes and to try to anticipate them. One solution to tackle demographic change is to increase the rate of employment of older workers and for this to happen, work has to be seen not as an ordeal but as a form of enrichment. The ability to be responsive to change (that is, the Adaptability pillar within EQUAL) can be improved through training and the continuous updating of skills for older workers. As Mr Faber explained, *“We should learn from Charles Darwin who assumed that ‘it is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change’. One could replace ‘species’ by ‘individuals’, ‘companies’, ‘regions’, ‘countries’, and even ‘EU’. In EU jargon, we have a word for the ability to be responsive to change – we call it ‘adaptability.’”*

Life long learning and active ageing have for several years been embedded in European policies, and it is one of the important pillars of the Lisbon Strategy. The spring European Council in 2006 called for the implementation of age management strategies across Europe, as well as the development links/connections between age management and lifelong learning plans. In this context, incentives for prolonging working lives, gradual retirement, part-time work, improving quality at work and targeted incentives to ensure that the number of older workers participating in training rises faster than that for the overall workforce should be considered. The work at EU level should go beyond theoretical principles and concentrate on practical solutions. For the new programming period, the links between the Structural Funds and the policy framework have been reinforced, focussing resources more effectively on the objectives and targets of the Lisbon Strategy. Anticipation and positive management of change have been set as the most important priorities of the new ESF. In conclusion, there is a large scope for funding opportunities within the themes discussed in this conference.

Mr Faber stressed the importance of the EQUAL results and the contribution of the DPs to the success of this European Initiative. EQUAL has served as a laboratory for social inclusion practices. Now the moment has come to mainstream these results into national policies and Member States should take responsibility for incorporating these practices into policies: *“Now the time has come when the testing phase of the laboratory is over and the experience gained should manifest itself in the main factory – that is, the mainstream policies of the Member States, possibly funded by the European Social Fund”* declared Mr Faber. It also means that, where the European Commission had a big role in making guidelines for EQUAL and being the main motor for innovative actions and transnational cooperation, it is now up to Member States to assume responsibility. This is in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

OPs are only frameworks and much has to be decided in the implementation phase of the ESF. This means that there is a lot of scope to learn from this conference. Most of the OPs have foreseen actions that promote innovation and transnationality. The European Commission will play an active role in facilitating transnational cooperation between Member States. This can take the form of the European Commission helping Member States to create platforms such as networks and organise seminars at national or EU level in order to exchange knowledge and good practice.

In conclusion, Mr Faber stated that future actions always have to take into account the results and the solutions achieved through EQUAL. In looking back at the good practice from EQUAL, the conference could help formulate policy lessons for the future implementation of the ESF.

1.3. ANTICIPATING CHANGE: THE EQUAL PERSEPECTIVE

Following Mr Faber’s speech, Ms Helen Tubb, Senior Consultant at GHK, gave a presentation focussing on the key messages coming out of EQUAL, as well as the seven sub-themes of the conference. Within the context of the ESF, EQUAL has a lot of ‘wisdom’ to offer. *“Since the start of the programme in 2002, EQUAL projects have been providing insights and inspiration. They have really extended the boundaries by testing out new ways and approaches of tackling labour market disadvantage and discrimination,”* explained Ms Tubb. The messages arising from EQUAL projects can be viewed as maxims, kind of like modern-day equivalents to the maxims of the Seven Sages (wise men) during Greek antiquity!

Ms Tubb went on to introduce these messages, linking them to each of the seven conference sub-themes and the Seven Sages of Greece. These messages were drawn directly from the [conference publication](#) "EQUAL: paving the way to lifelong learning and age management" and illustrated by short EQUAL examples.

Ms Tubb emphasised that the new ESF has to be seen as an opportunity to take forward the lessons and good practice of EQUAL. If this opportunity is not seized, then we will only end up wasting the significant human and financial investment in EQUAL - and worst of all, simply re-inventing the wheel for another six years of ESF funding (2007-2013). There are encouraging signs that this message is being heeded: mainstreaming can already be seen in some of the national and regional ESF OPs for 2007-2013. In particular, GHK has just completed a screening exercise of 14 new ESF OPs and found that all of them refer to building on the lessons and good practice of EQUAL. Many of these OPs feature partnership, transnationality and innovation as cross-cutting principles for funding and there are even a few OPs with dedicated axes or actions linked to EQUAL principles (e.g. Italy – Lombardy, Malta, France, Germany - Brandenburg).

Ms Tubb stressed that the key challenge today is to translate these intentions on paper into practice - in other words, not to pay lip service to EQUAL, but to implement EQUAL-type actions on ground in the new ESF. As she explained, *"The new ESF is ideally placed to support projects that take forward the innovations developed through EQUAL. If this doesn't happen, we are just starting from scratch again!"*

She encouraged ESF actors in the audience to use the conference as an opportunity to find out what EQUAL DPs have done and learnt. The DPs that the ESF actors meet and hear about should help them to decide on a range of issues for the successful implementation of the new ESF programmes. These issues include the assessment criteria for new ESF projects, the types of partners that should be encouraged to take part, the type of ongoing support offered to project promoters and the types of actions that are prioritised for action.

Ms Tubb's full PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).

2. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 1: ENGAGING EMPLOYERS – ESPECIALLY SMES

2.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The first workshop on Engaging Employers started with the Greek DP *Technognosi*, ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)) represented by Ms Tzoulia Dohara from the lead organisation Technopolis Vocational Training Center. The DP promoted an integrated and multidimensional approach to lifelong learning in companies, supporting tools for enterprises who wished to develop into learning organisations. The DP relied extensively on the active engagement of employers and human resource managers and close cooperation with consultants.

Mr Sławomir Łais and Ms Krystyna Morawiec then presented the DP *New chance for transnational job market and economy in the Euroregion Nysa* (Poland) led by the Foundation for Entrepreneurial Support, which aimed to raise awareness of the need for lifelong learning in small companies, and empowered company managers to implement lifelong learning policies ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

During the second workshop Mr Nick Heard presented the DP *SWOOP* (GB), led by the University of Exeter, which sought to modify employers' attitudes and practices through workshops, intensive action learning activities, and by working with intermediaries, and delivering training for ageing public sector workers ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

Mr José Antonio Miranda then presented to DP *ADAPTI+D* (Spain). The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Jaen led the project, which promoted viable alternatives improving labour and business, encouraging and supporting the adaptability of workers and enterprises to develop new technologies, new ways of organising work and new professional backgrounds, from the perspective of sustainable development and equality between men and women ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

The discussions focused on how to raise awareness and stimulate the interest of small and medium sized enterprises in lifelong learning, and how to ensure employer commitment. The usefulness of incentives for employers to provide training was considered, as well as the role of public sector in terms of providing funding to encourage training (e.g. tax rebates).

Participants also identified the necessity to engage with SMEs on their territory, especially through existing networks, and to convince them of the benefits of recruiting older people to fill local skills gaps. The discussion then examined the relevance of using intermediary bodies (brokers) and awareness raising measures undertaken in cooperation with, for example, Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations.

2.2. KEY MESSAGES

Engage with companies on their territory – It is essential to communicate with businesses using language they understand (e.g. profits, workforce satisfaction) and de-jargonise the language used when talking to companies on the issues of lifelong learning and age management. A good example can be to present lifelong learning as a quality management process for increasing profits, rather than simply talking of 'training'.

Awareness raising activities are needed to ensure employers are aware of the benefits of lifelong learning and age management policies – Employers are not fully aware of the benefits of engaging in lifelong learning and age management policies. Reviewing HR practices can have significant benefits such as higher productivity, lower employee turnover, financial savings, valorisation of non utilised skills, and improved image of company.

Use champions / advocates to win over other companies – Engaging 'champions', e.g. companies that have successfully introduced policies, can help persuade other companies to take forward lifelong learning and age management practices. Similarly intermediaries, such as employers federations or trade associations, also have an advocacy role to play in attracting companies to engage in these types of activities.

Following support, companies need to be empowered to take their learning forward themselves – It is important to ensure that when the support provided to companies ends, company are sufficiently empowered to take things forward themselves – e.g. exit strategies and tools that can be used without further external assistance.

Public funding can be used to pump prime SMEs' activities to engage with older workers – Funding could help put older workers on the SMEs' agenda, and 'open a door' – however such funding cannot be a long term strategy.

A business case has to be made for a sustainable change to help companies understand the benefits of lifelong learning and age management policies – Again the benefits for companies to engage in lifelong learning and age management policies have to clearly understood by all parties.

Companies should take a more proactive approach in who and how they recruit to ensure equality in opportunity for older workers – Employers need to ensure that they are using non discriminatory recruitment strategies in recognition of changes in the labour market and the availability of 'typical' staff (e.g. conscious choice in their hiring policies). Preventive approaches to age management within HR strategies should be encouraged.

Engage with intermediary bodies as a route to engaging employers - EQUAL engaged with local or regional authorities and helped open their minds to different solutions. Using the intermediary bodies, such as the Public Employment Services, as a point of reference proved a successful approach in attracting employers and employees to participate in project activities.

3. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 2: DEVELOPING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

3.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Ms Margarida Segard (Portugal) presented the *B-Sapiens* DP ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The main emphasis of this DP was on finding solutions for tackling the discrimination of older workers, especially in relation to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The DP set up a workplace training methodology and tested it within three SMEs. The idea behind this methodology was to train older workers to become coaches for younger workers. Successively, these coaches worked with younger employees and spread/transferred their knowledge to them. Tools based on the assessment and portfolios of competences were used in order to capture and retain the knowledge of the older workers so that it could be used by the company and not lost when the older worker retired.

Ms Joanna Pasierb (Poland) presented the work of the *Dynamism and experience* DP ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). Technological breakthrough has affected every sector of the economy in Poland, and these rapid changes are causing generational conflict between younger and older workers. In particular, the 50+ have the fear that they will be replaced by the younger generation who often have a better education and new skills. The DP created an Intermentoring Model built around 'training blocks' which enabled managers and workers over 50 and under 35 years of age to identify barriers and transfer knowledge between the various groups. The model was not expensive and did not take up much of the employers' time. These were two key issues that helped to convince employers to implement different types of training within their business.

During the afternoon session, Mr Carsten Krauß (Germany) presented the experience of the *InnKoop* DP while Ms Anabela Herculano (Portugal) presented *Projecto RITA*.

The *InnKoop* DP was working to tackle the lack of integration of older workers in various industries (especially in the automotive sector), as well as the restricted access of older job seekers to the labour market. Moreover, the DP sought to offer training, fight the stereotypes related to older workers, and raise employee and employer awareness about the need for active ageing interventions in the region's engineering sectors. Each of the seven *InnKoop* partners led one sub-project focusing on keeping the older employees' competences up to date by providing them with technical, ICT and soft skills. To date, the DP has trained 337 female and 583 male engineers in SMEs and has also delivered training to 246 unemployed engineers and others ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

The *RITA* DP focused on reviving and valorising traditional gastronomy in the Algarve region. The local traditional food production units were on the verge of disappearing as they were mostly constituted by older, rural workers, whose skills were not recorded or passed on. The DP developed an intergenerational learning methodology called the Intergenerational Platform. In this platform, food engineering students and older workers in food production SMEs worked closely together to transfer the knowledge across the generations. The intergenerational exchange of competences made the traditional gastronomy more competitive and attractive to customers and businesses in the region. A mediator was also used to tackle the difficulties in the communication between the two generations, and helped in the process of transferring the knowledge from one generation to another ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

3.2. KEY MESSAGES

Awareness-raising of the benefits of intergenerational learning amongst employers is needed – SMEs have little human and financial resources and often managers have little time to engage in training practices, hence, engaging employers is a challenge because the majority of them are not aware of the benefits of intergenerational learning and coaching methods. For employers to support intergenerational learning, it is important to convince them that:

- The business-benefits are significant e.g. retaining tacit knowledge;
- Intergenerational learning can be delivered in a cost-effective way; and
- The senior management has to come on board.

It is important to engage employers by making sure that the learning practice is cost-effective, as well as time and resource efficient.

A learning culture needs to be developed within each company – The development of a learning culture within companies is an underpinning element that should precede any learning action. This culture constitutes the background for knowledge-exchange between the different generations.

Preventative and anticipatory measures in relation to an ageing workforce are important - Workers need to be supported before they become old. The effects/consequence of an ageing workforce should be anticipated and intergenerational learning should therefore also involve workers from 45 years of age or even earlier.

Knowledge transfer across generations can at the same time preserve traditional sectors of the economy and boost innovation – Capturing and transferring the knowledge of older workers can both help to preserve traditional industries/sectors and to encourage innovation by transferring the knowledge from one generation to another.

Intergenerational learning is most effective when it focuses on the strengths of the target groups concerned – e.g. that older workers have know-how and experience and that younger workers have technical skills and flexibility.

Intergenerational learning needs to involve three key groups:

- Managers;
- Older workers; and
- Young workers.

A fourth group can also add value, that is, a mediator or intermediary who will facilitate the process of intergenerational learning between the three groups.

Intergenerational learning can help to motivate older workers - Last but not least, intergenerational learning provides a way to motivate older workers since it brings their value and experience to light, both to their peers and to their younger colleagues.

4. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 3: PROMOTING SOCIAL DIALOGUE

4.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The DP *Empeiria*, represented by Mr Apostolos Xyraphis from the Economic and Social Council of Greece (E.S.C.), developed an integrated approach towards the issue of active ageing for all sectors of the economy. He emphasised the lack of adequate collective agreements on active ageing at company level in Greece, as well as the lack of adequate legislation which is too often lagging behind current developments ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

Mr Alexandre Milheiras from the organisation ARETE presented the French DP *Ageing at Work* and focused on the problem of early retirement, an issue that social partners are still reluctant to tackle in France. The key element of the DP was to empower social partners and give them the tools to make constructive proposals to the management. An interesting aspect of this approach was the setting up of working groups involving trade unions and experts in age management policies, from which emerged a series of recommendations or practical measures to set up in the work place ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

In the second workshop session, Mr Stratis Kalligeris from Neorion KEK presented the DP *Navigator* ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)) and their work in the context of social dialogue, in the Support Centre that they had set up, hosted by the Labour Centre of Cyclades in Syros and inside Neorion Shipyards (advisory station).

Mr Joe Fearnough from the Trade Union Congress presented the *High Road* DP ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). In particular, he introduced the role of Union Learning Representative, established in 1998 (initially union activists promoting learning to fellow workers). Since these representatives obtained statutory rights in 2003 (entailing time-off to get training, to carry out their duties etc),

their role has been fully recognised at company level and reinforced by the activities of the *High Road* DP. UnionLearn, the TUC's learning and skills organisation, is the structure that supports the development of the ULR.

The workshop discussions focused on the best ways to convince older workers that they have to work longer, and that they should undergo training. The issues of employee motivation, as well as capacity-building for social partners were examined. Finally, the participants discussed the importance of the political context and the role of policy makers in supporting social dialogue.

4.2. KEY MESSAGES

Social dialogue should be supported at company, as well as national level in the new ESF – Social partners are ideally placed to facilitate attitudinal change amongst employees to engage in learning and work longer. Therefore, they should be given the means to do it.

Individuals can be motivated by improving working conditions – Emphasis has to be put on the issue of working conditions (e.g. work organisation, health and safety, etc) so that the idea of working longer is not seen as an ordeal.

Flexible working arrangements are a key solution to active ageing – Within the context of age management, flexibility should be increased in relation to work organisation, the transition into retirement, career progression, infrastructure etc.

Legislation should be updated to catch up with current developments in relation to an ageing workforce – Legislation is too often lagging behind reality (e.g. special transition arrangements to manage the transition into retirement).

A differentiated approach to age management should be adopted to take account of the differences in the levels of qualifications, sectors, and regions of the individuals concerned – Not 'one' age management policy, but tailored policies should be designed. In terms of the target group for instance, it is important to distinguish between low and highly-skilled employees; they do not have the same problems in relation to training or the motivation to stay into work.

Awareness-raising – especially fostered by the social partners - should be a priority amongst employers and employees – Social partners should be encouraged to tackle sensitive issues (e.g. early retirement). Employees should be informed to gain a better understanding of the rationale for the reform of pension systems. More communication at EU/national level is necessary to challenge entrenched positions on both sides. At company level, communication is essential to raise awareness of the opportunities for lifelong learning, for career mobility and for employees' needs in terms of work organisation.

Human resource managers should be more involved in discussions with the social partners at company level – This would improve the practical application of the measures agreed upon.

Social partners can act as agents of change – Social partners should be empowered to take proactive, not reactive approaches (e.g. making proposals to the company management instead of only reacting to management positions). A more constructive approach is needed.

Capacity building of the social partners is important – More support should be provided to help the social partners take a proactive approach at company and national level (e.g. setting up a coordinating/support institution and/or providing expert input).

New roles and profiles can be created so that the position of the social partners is fully recognised – Union Learning Representatives (as illustrated in the *High Road* DP example) are agents of change in the company, identifying learning or training needs, supporting, coaching, and mentoring, providing information about learning or training, arranging learning or training in consultation with employers, and negotiating learning agreements with employers.

Social partners are important in providing peer support – By developing agents of change such as ULRs, organisations can offer more and better peer support, by helping employees to

overcome barriers to access training; e.g. union activists are able to promote learning to fellow workers in a non-threatening way and can identify the right incentives for them. Trust is a key element to bring about a change of attitude in employees.

Political will is key in the successful involvement of social partners – e.g. legislation recognising roles of social partners: the partnership with the Government was key in the success of the ULR in the UK (in particular by obtaining statutory rights). It is also crucial that governments are open and flexible enough and listen to actors on the ground, who know what works/ does not work.

5. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 4: DEVELOPING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

5.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Ms Eva Hoerwick (Germany) presented the work of the *FAIRplus* DP in the Nuremberg Region. The DP aimed to reintegrate older workers into the labour market through tailored vocational training. The DP identified training needs, implemented concepts and instruments within businesses, promoted self-directed learning methods, created a mentoring system for training recipients and ensured that awareness of ageing issues was raised within the management structures of enterprises. The DP identified experienced workers of all ages and enterprise managers as its target group to tackle the misconception that the problems highlighted by future demographic trends are less linked to age and more linked to the lapses in training provision over the life of employees ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

Ms Lucia Volekova (Slovakia) presented the *Silver Heads Club* project (Slovakia). The DP supported the adaptability and mobility of disadvantaged groups (including workers over 50) through training and by encouraging flexible working patterns alongside the introduction of ICTs. The project carried out a range of research activities looking into training provision and data on the demography of Slovakia's workforce. The demographic patterns resulting from this research highlighted the fact that Slovakia's older workers had found the transition to a market economy far from seamless in comparison to those in younger age-groups. The DP then carried out an information campaign to promote the findings of their initial research before recruiting of the potential target groups and developing activities aimed at increasing mobility and adaptability of these groups ([presentation](#))

Ms Aline Bingen (Belgium) presented the *Décrire la convertibilité* DP which focussed its activities on supporting Belgian workers facing redundancy. Reconversion units were put into place for a period of 12 months to cater for 2,776 workers that had been or were facing redundancy. The units were managed by Forem (careers advice service) with support from trade union organisations. The DP offered a range of different activities which included information sessions on job searches, training opportunities and financial benefits and individual activities such as job-seekers profiles, the development of competencies statements and vocational skills development. In association with local training providers, the DP also tried to involve beneficiaries in suitable vocational training activities to equip them with the requisite skills to move their careers forward ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

Mr Anastasios Vasiliadis (Greece) presented the *Entrepreneurship Promotion Network* DP. The project presented aimed to support very small enterprises (VSE) in promoting lifelong learning through vocational training. The DP developed a training package based around an initial consulting phase, followed by distance learning concluding with a final consulting phase. Beneficiaries' training was specifically designed to address a number of key thematic areas, including; new technologies (ICT), the entrepreneurial environment, functions of an enterprise, health and safety, business planning and the role that employees play in furthering the development of an enterprise ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

5.2. KEY MESSAGES

It is important to strike a balance between supply (beneficiaries) and demand-side needs (employers) – Both employers' and employees' needs have to be taken into account when

formulating vocational training programmes. Employers' needs have to be met to ensure full cooperation. Vocational training involving representatives from employers and employees can also be beneficial as it allows both to appreciate each other's perspectives and promotes a better understanding of what is required to take the enterprise forward.

Vocational training is particularly effective when:

- It is delivered in-company (e.g. Training centre in the workplace which proved very effective with certain target groups)
- It is delivered collaboratively, using for example mentoring and group-based learning (moving from the traditional format in the classroom to more interactive sessions). Collaborative learning processes can be useful tools in empowering disadvantaged groups to undertake vocational training as it takes the pressure away from the individual and allows for a dialogue between beneficiaries to identify the solutions to various problems and questions.
- Senior managers and employees are trained together
- Psychological support is integrated
- It is delivered in 'blended' formats: a mixed approach to vocational training involving distance learning techniques coupled with consulting, debate and peer discussion. Such approaches allow learners to set personal goals and provides the opportunity for developing transferable skills as well as vocational skills.

Soft skills need to be recognised as a stand-alone skills set to underpin vocational training - Delivering training in interpersonal skills, communication, team work, and leadership can help get individuals get the most out of vocational training.

Social partners need to be engaged in promoting and supporting vocational training – They are key actors in advocating training to employers.

There is a need for formal and nationally accredited systems for recognising vocational training - Workshop participants highlighted how the **lack of national accreditation** hindered the progression of vocational training and also how the lack of regulatory structures with regard to the provision of such training had a negative impact. There needs to be a way of formally recognising skills development through vocational training to ensure that progression can be evidenced and measured. A formal and nationally accredited system would be more likely to increase participation from both employers and employees.

6. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 5: DEVELOPING SKILLS VALIDATION

6.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Ms Ioulia Englezou (Greece) presented the DP *Get Trained* ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The DP focused on the adoption of mechanisms and lifelong learning programs to enable the SMEs' certification of training packages and recognition of their acquired knowledge in ICT and technical professions. The learning activities were designed as a result of the DP identifying and defining clear training targets, and ensuring the desired knowledge and skills required for the beneficiaries. This process included the following steps: questionnaires; interviews with experts; interviews with employees from the target group; using prior reports, studies, training packages; defining job profiles; defining training needs and desired competences; and defining existing knowledge and competences.

Ms Lucia Barbieri (Italy) presented the DP *Investing in People* targeting disabled people and workers over 45 ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The DP activities included direct experimentation within companies of the Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) model: recognition, evaluation and validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning in working organisations; design of tailor-made training, mostly carried out on the job; transfer of the model to the employment services (training of operators and direct implementation of activities) and to the system (3 thematic working groups active throughout the project: Adaptability, Business, Mainstreaming); and an

intense communication campaign (incl. also talk-shows, thematic weekends, company dinners, guide for companies, transnational booklet “Valorisation of human resources”, final publication).

Ms Margarita Michael (Cyprus) presented the DP *DIPA*. *DIPA* is a collaboration of seven public and private organisations who work together to achieve their aim of creating a framework for the recognition of the skills of unemployed people who are far from the labour market ([presentation](#)). The main strengths of this project were identified as: the project’s focus on individual development, offering a detailed training record which combines a description of the employee’s skills with those required for the desired job. Beneficiaries were involved in the design of the service from the beginning, which made it more suited to their needs. The current pilot project covers training for two career paths: web designer and hotel receptionist.

Mr Folke Brolin (Sweden) presented the DP *Life competence – a plus for 50+*. This DP developed Life Competence Analyses, which incorporated an individual’s whole life experiences (including their knowledge, professional skills and 14 key competencies). It identified the ‘development journey’ needed from an individual’s present state to where they want to be with regards to the employment market. A development plan was then developed, with the help of a professional trainer. This holistic approach improved the employees’ confidence and motivation and encouraged them to seek skills valorisation ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

6.2. KEY MESSAGES

Common challenges faced by skills validation initiatives include the:

- Time limited nature of the pilot projects and the associated difficulties in ensuring continued for such approaches;
- Problems in finding ways to record and evidence the impact that skills validation projects have;
- Difficulties associated with vertical mainstreaming and the challenges of changing legislation.

Key success factors for designing skills validation programmes include:

- Engaging employers early, so that they will want to embrace change and that skills match needs;
- Motivating employers to promote training;
- Involving employers in the design, delivery and implementation;
- Presenting a business case and again, ‘speaking the employers’ language’; and
- Offering the employers the means to accredit soft skills. In particular, soft skills are harder to valorise compared with professional skills and the knowledge gained from formal education. This means that the valorisation of knowledge, and professional and soft skills needs to be balanced.

Methods to assist people furthest from the labour market to engage in skills validation include:

- Designing holistic approaches, looking, for example, at not only skills validation-related issues, but also at the psychological barriers for individuals in undertaking further training.
- Providing a less formal environment;
- Involving local actors;
- Providing a range of progression pathways;
- Encouraging bottom-up, practical solutions; and
- Underpinning the approaches with the provision of information, advice and guidance. Suitably skilled support staff offering information, advice and guidance are also essential to the engagement and continued motivation of people entering training. The staff need to be non-judgemental and fair, and sensitive to the needs of clients. Additionally, they themselves need to be constantly motivated and appreciated to ensure they are giving the best service.

Skills validation must go beyond the use of qualifications as a competence measure – In terms of validating non-formal and informal skills, qualifications do not always guarantee that employees possess essential practical skills, hence other measures are required to reflect the full range of skills and competences that an individual has. In this respect, an interesting French

'jury' model was highlighted, whereby a 'jury' examines the skills and experience portfolio of an individual in order to validate them.

7. THEMATIC WORKSHOP 6: PROMOTING THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND E-LEARNING

7.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Mr Dave Ellis presented the DP *ECUBE* (UK) which developed new strategies to promote ICT use and e-learning with marginalised groups. The DP's approach to training was flexible, access to training was on a drop in basis, any time, each day from nine to five. The DP, led by Toucan Europe, successfully engaged with the local communities and have promoted ICT training through interpersonal communication in non-formal settings ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#))

The main objective of the *IRAKLITOS* DP (Greece), presented by Mr Nicos Rompapas, was to implement blended learning in the Greek tourism industry. The lack of the on-the-job training has proved a real problem in the tourism sector as most people gain skills through everyday work experience. 'Blending' allows training to be delivered in the 'best' possible way to fit the needs of businesses and individuals. The DP, led by PLIROFORIKI S.A. has made such training financially and technically accessible for SMEs ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

During the second workshop session, the DP *Multiplic@* (Spain) was presented by Mr Paco Prieto. It aimed to improve the business performance of the Asturian enterprises using ICTs and e-company methodologies. This methodology was developed by 20 experts and involved the assessment of the level of digitalisation of a company and according to this, the training of its workers. An important aspect of *Multiplic@*'s work was the development of a standardised methodology to assess the effectiveness of SME digitalisation. The standardisation of assessment not only improved and further developed the methodology, but also contributed to its transferability: the 'digitalisation' assessment can be done in any company of any sector ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

The DP *Your Home – Your Enterprise in e-europe*, presented by Ms Zuzana Simova (Association for Development of Upper Nitra Region - ZRRHN), developed solutions in Slovakia to improve the adaptability of older workers with the help of ICT tools, in particular through the promotion of the use of teleworking among the target audience ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). Teleworking and other, new and flexible types of work organisation may constitute a solution for returning older workers to the labour market. However, these approaches require good ICT skills, mutual agreements between employees and employers as well as a regular use of such new work solutions for these to be effective and gainful. In moving forward the DP plans to conduct practical research to find out whether teleworking is an effective way of involving and returning older people to the labour market.

The discussion focused on the development of a methodology to assess the digitalisation level of SMEs, and the importance of involving business associations, who can advocate the digitalisation assessment approach. In relation to teleworking, participants discussed the need for awareness raising activities, insofar as teleworking may be perceived by employers as a 'loss of control' over workers hence the most challenging aspect of future work is to convince employers of the benefits of the teleworking..

Participants also discussed the advantages of blended learning which uses a variety of tools and approaches targeted training, depending on the needs of beneficiaries. One of the major advantages of ICT training is the flexibility and the diversity of the offer. Access to training – at a time and place which suits beneficiaries and using a variety of tools means that training can be fitted in around other activities.

7.2. KEY MESSAGES

Tailored solutions and blended learning are effective methods for engaging with and training beneficiaries – Blended learning uses all the possible means and tools for training in a

targeted way, tailored to the needs of the beneficiary. Using ICT means that targeted, flexible and tailored training is available at a time which suits the needs at individuals and employers. While technology provides a flexible training platform, it is important that blended approaches include a 'human' dimension peer learning and tutor support provides an important complement to ensure motivation and a supportive environment for learners.

Soft and flexible starts can lead to hard outcomes – EQUAL projects have showed that softer and flexible routes into learning can be used to engage, spread interest and develop tangible hard outcomes. Direct and informal contact between potential project beneficiaries and training providers can facilitate beneficiaries' access to ICT training and help to remove the initial psychological barriers.

Training offers using ICTs can be used to engage marginalised groups –ICTs can be used an effective tool in empowering and involving individuals in (in the labour market or community). This is especially true for giving voice and engaging marginalised groups.

Companies who train retain – Many prejudices still exist around training, e.g. once employees are trained, they demand higher salaries, leave the company or start their own businesses. While these are possible, training can be used as a means retaining employees if it is linked to their professional development. The image of a company as one which promotes employee progression will further contribute to attracting new employees and thus contributing to the business growth.

Future activities need to consider both demand side as well as supply side activities - While much focus has been placed on supply side issues (empowering people and marginalised groups) *demand side* issues also need to be taken into account to ensure that training and development meets the needs of employers. Employers need to be involved in the planning of training from the very outset to ensure that their needs are met. Similarly there is merit in training for managers/employer(s) to accommodate labour market change in the future.

Projects should talk the language of 'business benefits' for companies and their employees when addressing SMEs – An assessment of business needs or analysis of a more general situation with respect to project activities constitutes a strong case and a solid basis for a project. In dialogue with enterprises bottom line business benefits (profits, business efficiency, sales) are key in encouraging SMEs to participate in project activity. Projects need to talk 'business language', emphasising the benefits of participation for employees the company as a whole.

Legislative changes are necessary to accommodate change – To introduce new and flexible work methods (e.g. teleworking), a number of legislative changes are necessary. Article 52 on teleworking introduced in Slovakia for instance officially recognises teleworking as one of the forms of work and grants teleworkers the same rights as other workers. At the moment e-learning is excluded from SME training in Greece hence legislative developments are required to afford e-learning the same recognition as other learning methods.

Business associations' have an important advocacy role to play in promoting ICT and teleworking in SMEs – Business associations play an important advocacy role in establishing the initial link between a project and companies, ensuring business involvement and lobbying policy changes.

8. WORKSHOP 7: NETWORKING

8.1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

8.1.1. Workshop A

Ms Ioulia Englezou presented Greece's *National Thematic Network 'Lifelong Learning'* ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The Network aimed to overcome the disparity between the needs of enterprises and employers and VET policy in Greece. Key issues identified included the length

of training, the difficulties of employers and employees taking time off work for training and the reluctance of learners to attend repeat training sessions.

Ms Gabriella Bettiol then presented the Italian DP *Learning to Innovate* which gathered key messages from the partner DPs which it hopes will be mainstreamed into national or regional policy ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The key policy lessons learnt to date include the adoption of competence based training design models, where training objectives are described as activities that can be carried out following training completion. Additionally, policies should strengthen links between research institutions and industry in order to develop innovative training environments. Finally, policy should encourage cooperation between businesses, workers and training agencies to allow employers to link training needs to strategic business objectives.

8.1.2. Workshop B

Mr Marek Mitosinka (Slovakia) presented the *NTN Adaptability* ([presentation](#)) which helped to mainstream good practices and develop different strategies depending on target groups (dealing with employers/dealing with ICT and Innovation) for participating DPs with the mainstreaming.

Ms Victoria Berrocal (Spain) added that the first step for them in their *NTN Adaptability* was engaging the policy makers and selecting policy relevant themes pertinent to their needs and DPs' outputs and results. They then organised events for benchmarking good practices and the promotion of experience exchange between the Adaptability DPs (38 DPs) and developing products (publications and recommendations) resulting from the thematic workshops ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)).

8.1.3. Workshop C

The *Age Management NTN* was presented by Mr Gregory Andronikos (Greece). The ageing workforce is a phenomenon, which is gaining visibility and importance in Greece. However, there are few age management strategies at sectoral/enterprise level and those that exist are neither coordinated nor harmonised ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The Greek NTN endeavoured to address this lack of targeted and integrated approaches to age management. More specifically, its objective was to give an integrated picture of policies and practices on age management, as well as import the know-how and successful practices from other Member States. The NTN also analysed and summarised tools and lessons from the participating DPs, which resulted in common national policy proposals on age management.

The European Age Management Network was then presented by Mr Anders Ostebo who talked about the *Competence 50+ conference*, held in Sweden in June 2007 which constituted the starting point for the European Age Management Network ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The conference was attended by about 200 EQUAL DPs from 25 Member States and disseminated projects' results. Leading on from the conference, the founding meeting of the European Age Management Network took place in Brussels in November 2007. This meeting, which was attended by 30 people from 11 Member States agreed on the Network's statement of intent as well as a common definition of age management. As the members of the Network agreed, age management promotes longer and better quality working life across the life-course in a way that is favourable for employers as well as individuals and society. In effect, age management is for everyone, not only the elderly workforce.

8.1.4. Workshop D

The network *ALTERnativen re-integration – inclusion – qualification NTN* (Austria) was presented by Mr Dirk Maier from the Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) Co-ordination Unit ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The ALTERnativen network consisted of four DPs focusing on different problems that elderly people face in the Austrian labour market and developed tailored solutions which strengthened the employability of elderly people, supported age management in enterprises, and implemented awareness raising measures for important stakeholders.

Mr Stefan Ekenberg, from Luleå University of Technology, then presented the network *NTG-Learn* which comprised eight round 2 DPs. The main tasks were to make learning environments transparent, deepen reflection and the development of theory concerning learning, develop

methods for documenting informal learning, expand the conditions and environments for learning, and influence policy, structures and the institutional conditions for learning.

The discussion focused on the multidimensional/ multi-departmental aspect of age management, involving a number of inter-related policy areas (education, health, employment etc), and the need for policy coordination between different policy areas/ departments.

8.1.5. Workshop E

Mr Uwe Jager presented the German *National Thematic Group on Lifelong Learning*. This network operated from Eichenbaum in Germany and focused on creating 'Early Warning Systems' for SMEs to allow them to predict and adapt to future changes ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The Early Warning System was based around promoting lifelong learning, age management, competence based learning, strategic management and enterprise sustainability to help SMEs adapt to change.

The Adaptability and Lifelong Learning NTN in the Czech Republic was presented by Mr Zdenek Karasek ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). The learning tools and products developed resulted from a joint mainstreaming strategy prepared by the network as a means of creating an evaluation framework for proposals to contribute to the competitiveness of human resources in Czech Republic and Europe. The project team developed 14 key lifelong learning competencies following extensive consultation with employers and HR departments about desirable skills for employees.

The group discussion looked at what makes an effective network, and what lessons have been learned from taking part in Equal networking. It was agreed, for example, that tension and constructive arguments do not necessarily damage a network and can in some cases strengthen the network as outcomes developed are often better thought out and more robust.

8.1.6. Workshop F

The network *EQUAL SAXONY* (Germany) was presented by Ms Susann Thiele ([presentation](#) – [synopsis](#)). Their aim was to stimulate mainstreaming among regional EQUAL DPs, where network partners had experience in specific fields and worked on different themes. This created synergies in the network via information change and enhanced the capacity of the DPs in mainstreaming their work to the policy makers.

The *EQUAL Age network* was presented by Ms Irene Heller (UK GB). The *EQUAL Age network* stemmed from the regional regeneration project in Kent ([presentation](#)). It also had a strong transnational dimension through cooperation with the Age Alliance transnational partnership working with older people. The network sought to develop sustainable services to support older people in and out of work. It has a wide regional coverage and covers DPs in EQUAL Themes E and F.

The discussion focused on the importance of coordinating partners inputs and the choice of appropriate partners to be included in the network. The best ways to ensure the sustainability of the solutions that networks developed were considered, as age management is recognised as a continuous challenge.

8.2. KEY MESSAGES

Networks help provide answers to policy problems– Networks have provided a one-stop shop to DP's solutions/ propositions/ experiments and a single route into actors that have developed these outcomes. Opportunity structures are created by networks: engaging policy makers for targeted and effective networking, in terms of pull and push (political demand and projects supply) dimension is a key point.

An important lesson from networking is involving decision makers from the outset - This is an essential element to generate an impact from policies. Especially important, as showed by the European Age Management network, is the added value of transnational networking.

Networks can address the need for better policy coordination at national level - National and European networks should be supported by the new ESF as they are an excellent means to work thematically with policy makers and increase policy coordination.

Time and funding is necessary to mainstream via networks – Networks need time to form, make and reinforce their point through creating public awareness. Up to five years may be necessary to establish, create public awareness and recognition of the network. By joining and sharing knowledge among partners, networks increase the value of the message and add value to individual project's dissemination capacity. To achieve their goals and improve visibility networks need commitment in terms of time, expertise and funding.

Resources are an essential issue for networks - Not only the financial aspect is important but also the engagement, personal will and enthusiasm of the members are vital for the development of common activities.

Networks provide a means through which pertinent solutions can be matched to current policy issues – Lifelong learning is a cradle to grave process. Because age management is a continuous issue, there is a need for sustainable solutions, hence an ongoing need for cooperation and networks. Networks need to be proactive and find 'golden nuggets' among the products, services and key messages emerging from project activities pertinent to addressing policy issues. These 'golden nuggets' need to be fed directly to key policy makers as tailored solutions to address current concerns. . This information has to be presented in a format that summarises or crystallises the main network messages for the policy makers.

Networks need to produce results and practical outputs – It is essential that networks produce tangible outputs and have results to showcase. Tangible outputs will help to ensure future sustainability. To maximise their full potential, networks should be carefully structured and managed with a work-plan and an 'outcome approach'. Networks should develop critical mass, which is essential in order to strengthen policy impact.

NTNs must ensure that the products and tools that are being developed are relevant to the needs of businesses – Consideration of supply and demand side issues is vital in ensuring that the products and services created add value to the lifelong learning agenda and make a difference to business.

Merit in regional, national and transnational partnerships – The geographical approach to networking may make the coming together of network partners easier, however it is important to consider the benefits of working across regional and national borders (for example the exchange of practice, peer learning and motivation).

Network efficiency can be greatly improved when it led effectively by one partner/person – Networks need effective management and coordination. Good management is essential for networks to operate effectively. The need for common goals and a clear and structured division of tasks is also essential. Whilst networks can be most effective if they include a range of organisations from different sectors, it is important to ensure all partners are working towards the same ultimate aims.

In looking forward - networks should address the life course rather than focusing on older workers - Activities need to look beyond older workers. Age Management is an issue across the lifecourse: it is not simply an issue for older workers.

9. CLOSING PLENARY

9.1. WORKSHOP CONCLUSIONS

Ms Eugenia Karolidou, Director of the EQUAL Unit of the Greek ESF Managing Authority, opened the session by giving the floor to Ms Pat Irving and Ms Cécile Mathou from GHK Consulting Ltd who presented the conclusions from the thematic workshops.

Ms Irving started the presentation with a maxim that could be applied to the learning experience resulting from the conference 'cherish wisdom'. The knowledge, know-how, products and services that have been developed by the EQUAL DPs need to be well-regarded by policy makers who should incorporate them into the activities of the new ESF Operational Programmes. The wisdom generated needs to be taken forward.

As Ms Irving stated, many common themes and messages came out from the eighteen workshops that have been held during the conference. One of the most significant is: **'companies who train retain'**. In fact, companies that engage in lifelong learning and age management activities, experience long term positive effects. For SMEs in particular there is a need to focus on the business benefits of training and development rather than seeing training as a burden or a means through which their employees find new work.

The rapporteurs then fed back the workshops' key messages, as presented in Sections 3 – 9.

To conclude the presentation, Ms Irving and Ms Mathou presented the common message that emerged from all the thematic workshops, which can be seen as 'conclusions' of the conference. Firstly, **special attention should be given to the empowerment and engagement of individuals** (the supply side). It is important to offer psychological support and provide the beneficiaries with soft skills to allow them to participate in vocational training and enter in and remain in the labour force.

Secondly, **it is vital to engage companies (the demand side)**. This can be done by presenting a business case and talk in a business-friendly language (presenting clearly the benefits of lifelong learning and / or age management activities).

Thirdly, **actions should focus on the territory and actors should be encouraged to 'think big'**. If legislation needs to change to accommodate new and flexible forms of working or lifelong learning (e.g. e-learning), then projects should be encouraged to lobby for such change. DPs also found that working in partnerships produces particularly effective and sustainable results. Partnerships should therefore be encouraged and developed on the ground.

The final message which emerged from the workshops is that programmes and projects funded by the **ESF should endeavour to reconcile labour supply and demand so that policies and measures implemented to address age management and lifelong learning respond to business needs and contribute to company growth**.

The rapporteurs then gave the floor to Ms. Irene Heller, from the *EQUAL Age Network* (UK). She started her presentation by introducing two main challenges for networks: having a common vision amongst the members and obtaining the involvement/engagement of key partners, especially, employers. As she explained, it is vital to get partners on board from the outset in order to increase the benefits of networking. Finally, Ms Heller stressed the importance of awareness raising activities. Networks can play an important role in further promoting the issues of lifelong learning and age management amongst employers and workers. An example of this is the European Age Management Network; this network is currently being developed as a transnational platform to take forward and build on the work of EQUAL, as well as the work of other individuals and organisations engaged in age management issues.

9.2. CLOSING ADDRESS

Following the presentations, Mr Konstantinos Tsoutsoplides, the General Secretary of ESF funds in Greece, stressed the importance of having clear and structured conclusions. As showed by the

workshops, successful and effective results have been produced through EQUAL. Now it is time to mainstream these results into policies at the national and European levels. It is important that policy makers pay attention to the methodologies that have been created under EQUAL and make the best use of them. Mr Tsoutsoplides asked the **national Managing Authorities to act as 'intermediaries' between policies and projects and stated that Managing Authorities should play a key role in developing the sustainability of EQUAL results.**

ANNEX 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2007

19.00	WELCOME BUFFET AND PRE-REGISTRATION <i>Informal event to welcome participants and enable pre-registration</i>
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DAY 1 - THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 2007

9.00	Registration					
10.00	WELCOME AND OPENING PLENARY SESSION Sofia Kalantzakou, <i>Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Protection, Greece</i> Konstantinos Tsoutsoplides, <i>General Secretary of ESF funds, Greece</i> Walter Faber, <i>Head of Unit at the Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission</i> Helen Tubb, <i>GHK Consulting Ltd</i>					
11.30 12.00	Coffee break					
12.00 13.30	THEMATIC WORKSHOPS – Morning session <i>The thematic workshops will focus on the experience of DPs in terms of the six conference sub-themes. They will present concrete examples of how EQUAL has effectively addressed age management and lifelong learning, and explore how this experience can inform policy makers and ESF actors concerned with age management and lifelong learning.</i>					
	Developing intergenerational learning	Developing skills validation	Developing vocational training	Engaging employers, especially SMEs	Promoting social dialogue	Promoting the use of ICTs and e-learning
	<i>B. Sapiens</i> Ms Margarida Segard (Portugal)	<i>εκπ@ιδευτείτε (Get Trained)</i> Ms Ioulia Englezou (Greece)	<i>FAIRplus in the Nuremberg Region</i> Ms Eva Hoerwick (Germany)	<i>Technognosi</i> Ms Tzoulia Dobarra (Greece)	<i>EMPEIRIA</i> Mr Apostolos Xyraphis (Greece)	<i>ECUBE</i> Mr Dave Ellis (UK GB)
	<i>Dynamism and experience</i> Ms Joanna Pasierb (Poland)	<i>Investing in People</i> Ms Natali (Italy)	<i>Silver Heads</i> Ms Lucia Volekova, Slovakia	<i>New chance for transnational job market and economy</i> Sławomir Łais and Krystyna Morawiec (Poland)	<i>Ageing at Work – From Talk to Action</i> Mr Alexandre Milheiras (France)	<i>IRAKLITOS</i> Mr Nicos Rompapas (Greece)
	<i>Facilitator:</i> Helen Tubb	<i>Facilitator:</i> Barbara Orthodoxou	<i>Facilitator:</i> Antonis Aniftos	<i>Facilitator:</i> Brendan Doyle	<i>Facilitator:</i> Anna Manoudi	<i>Facilitator:</i> Pat Irving
13.30 14.45	Lunch					

14.45 16.15	THEMATIC WORKSHOPS – Afternoon session					
	Developing intergenerational learning <i>InnKoop – Innovation by experience and cooperation</i> Mr Carsten Krauß (Germany)	Developing skills validation <i>DIPA</i> Ms Margarita Michael (Cyprus)	Developing vocational training <i>Décrire la convertibilité</i> Ms Aline Bingen (Belgium)	Engaging employers, especially SMEs <i>SWOOP - South West Opportunities for Older People</i> Mr Nick Heard (UK GB)	Promoting social dialogue <i>Navigator</i> Mr Yannis Stefanou (Greece)	Promoting the use of ICTs and e-learning <i>Multiplic@</i> Mr Paco Prieto (Spain)
	<i>Projecto RITA</i> Ms Anabela Herculano (Portugal)	<i>Life competence - a plus for 50+</i> Mr Folke Brolin (Sweden)	<i>Entrepreneurship Promotion Network</i> Mr Anastasios Vasiliadis (Greece)	<i>ADAPTI+D</i> Mr José Antonio Miranda (Spain)	<i>HIGH ROAD</i> Mr Joe Fearnough (UK GB)	<i>Your Home – Your Enterprise in e-urop</i> Ms Zuzana Simova (Slovakia)
	<i>Facilitator:</i> Helen Tubb	<i>Facilitator:</i> Barbara Orthodoxou	<i>Facilitator:</i> Antonis Anifitos	<i>Facilitator:</i> Brendan Doyle	<i>Facilitator:</i> Anna Manoudi	<i>Facilitator:</i> Pat Irving
16.30 18.00	Exhibition					
20.00	Dinner					

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER 2007

10.00 11.30	WORKSHOPS: EFFECTIVE NETWORKING <i>Workshops presenting the benefits of and approaches to regional, national and European networking to enhance age management and lifelong learning interventions on the ground.</i>					
	Workshop A	Workshop B	Workshop C	Workshop D	Workshop E	Workshop F
	<i>National Thematic Network "Lifelong learning"</i> Ms Ioulia Englezou, Greece	<i>Adaptability NTN</i> Mr Marek Mitosinka, Slovakia	<i>Age management NTN</i> Mr Gregory Andronikos, Greece	<i>ALTERNativen – Re-integration–inclusion–qualification</i> Mr Dirk Maier, Austria	<i>National Thematic Group "Lifelong Learning"</i> Mr Uwe Jäger, Germany	<i>Network EQUAL SAXONY</i> Ms Susann Thiele, Germany
	<i>Learning to innovate</i> Ms Gabriella Bettioli, Italy	<i>Adaptability NTN</i> Ms Victoria Berrocal, Spain	<i>European Age Management Network</i> Mr Anders Ostebo, EU	<i>NTG-Learn</i> Mr Stefan Ekenberg, Sweden	<i>NTN "Adaptability and Lifelong Learning"</i> Mr Zdeněk Karásek, Czech Republic	<i>EQUAL Age network,</i> Ms Irene Heller UK(GB)
	<i>Facilitator:</i> Antonis Anifitos	<i>Facilitator:</i> Brendan Doyle	<i>Facilitator:</i> Helen Tubb	<i>Facilitator:</i> Anna Manoudi	<i>Facilitator:</i> Stuart Russon	<i>Facilitator:</i> Pat Irving
11.30 12.00	Coffee break					
12.00 13.30	CLOSING PLENARY SESSION <i>Presentation by the workshop rapporteurs, Pat Irving and Cecile Mathou, GHK Consulting Ltd Irene Heller, EQUAL Age Network Closing Speech: Konstantinos Tsoutsoplides, General Secretary of ESF funds, Greece</i>					
13.30 14.45	Lunch					