

CROSSING THE GENERATIONS

A new balance between the generations is needed in the labour market. Partly due to companies restructuring, the participation of older people has declined and there is a tendency to retire early. At the same time young people can find it difficult to enter the labour market, partly because they do not want to take low-skilled jobs and because the labour market tends to favour seniority. By 2015 22% of the working age population will consist of older people, and by 2030 this figure will rise to 28%. Simultaneously the youngest age group will decline by 11% from 2000 to 2015 and continue to do so by 6% until 2030.^[1] All these factors contribute to a possible lack of workforce in the future.

Moreover, there is a risk that the skills and knowledge of older workers will be lost when they retire early, which will have a negative impact on the economy, companies and the younger generations. Many of the life-long learning and retirement policies of companies do not sufficiently recognise, value or exploit human capital in their company. As a consequence older workers are often seen as being fit only for retirement instead of as resourceful people within the company. In addition, tacit knowledge tends to be lost when older workers retire, younger workers do not benefit from such skills for their career development and the motivational and productive benefits of intergenerational learning are not exploited, harming the development of individuals, companies and the economy. Perceptions lie at the root of this problem and need to be changed.

Companies, human resource managers and stakeholders are not sufficiently focused on creating a working climate where knowledge-exchange inspires workers to develop their careers and skills and prolong their working lives. Barriers to starting a career are another factor to take into account. Young workers risk un-employment but must also struggle with low incomes when they do get a job. Many live in one-person households and this may lead to poverty, particularly if they are single parents. The problems of the young can be another source of intergenerational conflict on the labour market.^[2]

The lack of intergenerational knowledge exchanges also prevents younger workers from transferring their skills to older workers who could benefit from, for instance, new technical knowledge.

These challenges go beyond the question of equality into the realm of how employers can successfully capture and build on knowledge and skills.

COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSES TO AGEING

Up to now, the EU has been failing to use its full human resource potential and has not been doing enough to help workers remain employable. This is of particular importance to segments of the older workforce, which have traditionally become marginalised from mainstream employment for a variety of complex reasons (pressures for early retirement, perceived skill needs, changing forms of work organisation). Yet there is also a pressing need for people to work for longer and for the proportion of older people in employment to increase. These needs are expressed in the Stockholm target and Barcelona objective of the European Council for 2010.

The Communication from the Commission on strengthening the European Employment Strategy^[3] raises strong concerns about whether the 2010 target will be reached, stating *'it is now clear that the EU will miss the intermediate employment rate target for 2005 of 67%. Without further action the 2010 target will also be missed'*.

There are clear indications from EU policy makers about what is needed to address this situation. The development of *'comprehensive strategies in response to ageing'* is a key priority set out by the Employment Taskforce.^[4] It relates to the provision of incentives for workers, access to training and improving the quality of work. But the opportunities to systematically test new, more comprehensive measures are rare. This is where EQUAL has been able to play an important role.

Intergenerational learning, as a means to responding to labour market inequality, also encompasses two of the key European challenges set out by the Stockholm European Council^[5], namely increasing cross-age participation in training and increasing cross-age participation in the labour market. As emphasised by the Employment Taskforce, older workers'

skills deserve to be both valued and enhanced. At the same time, steps should be taken to prevent a segmentation of the labour market between different types of workers.

This is supported by the latest report^[6] of the High Level Group on the future of social policy which suggests transforming the existing fears of our society into positive perceptions of the future and a new intergenerational balance: older workers should not fear for their pensions and the young people should not see their careers as uncertain.

EQUAL: SHARING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ACROSS GENERATIONS

Shifting the focus from age to skills
EQUAL has addressed failure of some human resource managers to create quality jobs or to enable and inspire workers to work for longer, regardless of age, gender, disability etc.. The key has been a shift in focus from age to valuing skills, knowledge and personal abilities.

It has worked on changing the belief that older workers are too old for the work they do and the sectors in which they work. Through its activities on changing attitudes and perceptions in this field, it has realised that age is a relative concept and must be regarded in combination with other aspects such as health, gender, disability, race and seniority^[7]. If attitudes focus on skills and diversity of the workforce, age becomes less of an issue^[8]. The innovative activities of EQUAL increased awareness that all workers possess skills and these may be exchanged through intergenerational learning to benefit both individuals and the company. The transfer of knowledge and know-how to younger workers means that it is not lost when older workers retire^[9]. Simultaneously, older workers are better able to keep up with developments by learning new techniques and other skills from younger workers. This process^[10] also reduces the intergenerational gap.

EQUAL has also experimented with introducing trainers/co-coordinators for intergenerational learning^[11]. In Denmark the proven benefits have inspired employers to take over this task when EQUAL funding ends^[12]. Diversity approach models to human resource management^[13], developed and tested in several Member States showed that a precondition for successful intergenerational learning is that all stakeholders work together with the same goal in mind.

Developing and applying innovative intergenerational learning tools
EQUAL has developed existing approaches and created new ones to enable intergenerational learning in the EU. Employers need to choose which tools to use, depending on the particular sector, the company size, the context and culture as well as the national legal framework. The examples below illustrate various ways that tools for intergenerational learning can be developed and applied.

- *In-depth self-assessment* to capture *tacit knowledge* brings greater awareness of the worker's own skills and this has an empowering effect. EQUAL in France^[14] set up *self-assessment in working groups* along identified themes to define needs in new jobs and invited employees aged 50+ from various levels of the company to take part. This, although demanding much organisation and time, has proved efficient in enabling interaction between different groups, the sharing of experiences and recognition of tacit knowledge^[15].
- *A learning platform*, a sort of discussion forum, has been established by EQUAL where newcomers and older workers exchange and transfer their knowledge and experience in order to evaluate global solutions for training and work organisation. In this way businesses develop a capital of transferable competencies, which are recognised and valued^[16]. The platform or competence network between the new and senior employees allows the recognition, value and transfer of knowledge in-house.
- *Coaching* of older workers has helped them express their ideas and views on possible solutions to their employer^[17]. Based on dialogue, coaching sessions have been developed for mentors to reflect their tacit knowledge and to transfer it to the younger generation. This has proved to be empowering and has led to an increase in job satisfaction, as the older workers felt that their experience mattered and that they were being listened to and taken seriously.
- *Tutoring and mentoring models* have been developed in several European countries as a way to support the flow of knowledge between older and younger workers^[18]. EQUAL in Denmark^[19], for instance, has demonstrated the advantages of a model that emphasises

the move away from the traditional one-way learning. Instead, it showed that an empowering *two-way intergenerational learning process* can take place where the parties learn from each other. *Tutoring* has also been successfully applied to focus on the validation of learning and to help develop "a second career" by defining future job aspirations and linking them to appropriate trainings^[20]. It proved that the tutor role works best when it is not seen as an extra task, but as an integral and necessary part of the employer's practices. It is also important that the tutor role is flexible and adapted to the actual people and circumstances involved.

- *Rethinking information and communication channels* can increase the flow and the quality of exchange between workers and generations of workers. In France, EQUAL developed multimedia working groups adapted to the older workforce. These groups allowed workers to identify key competences for a job and further training that could help them adapt to new technologies or define a new career^[21]. Elsewhere, EQUAL found that virtual information sharing can be used to set up platforms encouraging interaction with older people^[22], develop virtual spaces for interactive demonstrations of ICT applications and create multimedia tools for the self-diagnosis of ICT training and adaptation needs^[23].
- EQUAL has also helped to develop *an overarching approach* that works with several different partners^[24] at all levels in order to find solutions for companies, job agencies and local organisation. This approach has helped to motivate companies and older workers to re-enter the labour market through skills assessments, adjustments of work organisation, and positive communication stressing the competencies gained through experience. It can be reported that international cooperation^[25] allows for transferring good practices into new cultural contexts because it is clearer, against the cultural differences, which conditions need to be met in order to put a specific system into place.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Intergenerational learning is a "win-win" situation for workers, companies and the economy. Employees learn to value their own skills by exchanging them and become motivated to develop their careers and work for longer. Employers benefit from better motivated and more efficient staff that apply all their skills within the company. Improved awareness of existing skills enables efficient investment in skill development that can promote competitive advantages to the benefit of the company and the growth of the economy.

Key messages from the EQUAL experience include:

- **EU institutions, national governments, social partners and key actors** at local and regional levels should work together to reinforce the focus on skills, tacit knowledge and the benefits of intergenerational exchanges and away from 'age'.
- **Member States, Employers and Social Partners** could use make use of the EQUAL experiences by creating an intergenerational pact.
- **Governments** can make use of the EQUAL experiences by formulating and supporting strategies for intergenerational learning.
- **Social partners** should take the initiative to develop networks and raise awareness of the benefits of intergenerational learning, and the different techniques available to value, exchange and transfer knowledge.
- **Employers** could make use of the EQUAL experience by:
 - Developing strategies for intergenerational learning within their companies with the help of social partners and training networks.
 - Making use of the whole internal capital of knowledge. This can lead to a reduction of training costs and early retirements and reduce the risk of workforce shortages.
 - Choosing and adapting intergenerational learning tools that suit their circumstances. Self-assessment tools can help workers acknowledge and value the knowledge they have and inspire them to develop this knowledge and transfer it. Coaching, tutoring and two-way mentoring are examples of other empowering ways to motivate workers to develop their careers and work for longer.

Endnotes

[1] Report of the High Level Group on the future of social policy in an enlarged European Union, May 2004, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Strengthening the implementation of the European Employment Strategy, Communication from the Commission, Brussels, 7 April 2004, COM(2004) 239 final.

[4] The Commission established a European Employment Taskforce, headed by Wim Kok, to carry out an independent examination of key employment-related policy challenges and to identify practical reform measures to support Member States in implementing the revised European Employment Strategy and to achieve its objectives and targets. (Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. Creating more employment in Europe, November 2003).

[5] Joint report from the Commission and the Council: 'Increasing Labour Force Participation and Promoting Active Ageing', Brussels, 8 March 2002.

[6] Report of the High Level Group on the future of social policy in an enlarged European Union, May 2004, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs.

[7] **Paradox DP**

[8] **TRED**

[9] **FOREM - Tutorat mode d'emploi** (BEfr-19) Belgium , supports workers and companies with innovative actions in order to empower older workers' experiences amongst young people with an optimisation of the concept of mentoring. The project wants to transfer invisible know-how between workers. The action consists in the creation of collective knowledge and in the transfer of expertise from experienced workers to young workers.

This project is achieved together with the Employment Agency, Forem, and with the IFAPME and the CEFORA, both responsible for companies' training. The aims of the project are:

- to promote the value of the experiences of older workers towards young workers
- to develop a methodology to optimise the concept of mentoring / tutoring

The partner IFAPME will set up on its Internet platform Plei@d a page, which will support the activity of tutors' awareness rising within companies.

[10] **Atout Age Lifelong Human Resources** ([FR-PCH-2001-10839](#)) France , **Vers des entreprises pour tous les âges** ([FR-IDF-2001-11082](#)), France , **Adaptation professionnelle des travailleurs âgés et transmission des connaissances** ([FR-AUV-2001-10974](#)), France, **Agés et Travail dans le Bâtiment Travaux Publics** ([FR-NAT-2001-10381](#)), France, **Didact, Dispositif d'activation des compétences transversales et tutorales** ([FR-CEN-2001-11184](#)) France, **Part'@ge**, ([FR-RAL-2001-10033](#)), France, **Synergie-Creation** ([BEfr-32](#)) Belgium; **The extended tutor function**, (DK-18), Denmark, **Offensive für Ältere** (DE-EA-43385) Germany

[11] **Building London Creating Futures** (UKgb-11) United Kingdom . The innovation is process-oriented as it develops new methods for labour market integration. These methods include making available one-to-one, face-to-face support for local residents in the form of a Workplace Co-ordinator (WPC). The WPC therefore acts as one point of contact for local residents, able to advise or put them in touch with advice on everything from job search techniques, job opportunities, career progression, benefits advice, language support etc. The WPCs support individuals beyond the initial job accessing, for a period up to six months. This means that retention rates are extremely impressive, and the programme is securing real, long-term benefit rather than re-cycling a core of unemployed through support programmes. Innovation is also demonstrated by the fact that the WPCs are employed by construction companies, rather than by government-funded agencies. The commitment that WPCs manage to engender from these construction companies means that the project is innovative as the created job opportunities do not relate purely to temporary, site-based, manual-type work, but also to permanent, office-based, skilled opportunities. The latter will continue within companies beyond the ten-year construction period applied to one of the regeneration sites covered by this project (Paddington Basin).

His transnational partners **Agés et Travail dans le Bâtiment Travaux Publics** ([FR-NAT-2001-10381](#)), France applied this methodology.

[12] **The extended tutor function**, (DK-18) Denmark , has developed and introduced a tutor function in 50 private enterprises in Aarhus County . Almost 300 employees have been trained as tutors. Trainings and new positions are planned by the company itself.

The tutorial function is a direct tool in terms of putting the learner at the centre. The activities work fruitfully thanks to the following:

- The tutors are given a great responsibility when receiving new colleagues
- The tutors are relevantly trained for the function and they are very motivated
- The tutors are already employed in the company. They know the working places well and the written as well as the unwritten (cultural) frames of the company
- The new-comers feel safe in the hands of the tutors

[13] **Equality** (FR-NAT-2001-11006) France , is working on the opportunity of a workforce management as well as on a need accommodation for all workers in relation both to job and life situation in general.

The project sets up some experimental training programmes, which are aimed to foster the empowerment and self-confidence of workers. These programmes are an effective solution to integrate older workers in the labour market and to allow them to develop a second career. The DP is developing a multimedia kit for Progressive Learning by working and cumulating experience (Apprentissage Progressif par le Travail et l'Expérience, APTE). This method will be used for managers who faced major work organisation changes. The method is ensuring work and working environment quality. The Equality project also worked on "career points": at every important stage of the professional career (between 5 and 8 years of seniority, in the middle of the working life and at the end of the career), meetings were organised to define new challenges, to introduce new job position and to highlight the disappearing jobs. These meetings are also an opportunity to set up a professional project and to build and accompanying the project plan through training or other actions. For further information, <http://www.equallite.com>

The Power of the Experienced (FI-21) Finland . The DP supports supervisors and other personnel, particularly within SMEs, to recognise existing tacit knowledge in the workplaces. It developed, jointly with work communities, some tools, which help to promote understanding of how a person's work practices affect working culture and to support work communities to utilise personnel's diversity of skills. The DP is using a portal, which, in the context of ICT companies, helps to sustain older workers in the business and also to share their experiences. The portal is a critical tool for assisting the workers to stay in touch with each other and share skills and experiences.

This portal covers three aspects:

- Academy lessons: face-to-face lessons where older people can verbalise how they would tackle or manage a particular ICT project. This is based on a bottom-up approach, more about sharing information rather than lecturing.
- Practising environment: a box of tools can be used to build and share knowledge. The staff is invited to practice applications using the range of tools, guidance and case studies held on the server.
- The forum: young and old workers exchange views freely as it is anonymous, removing the potential for discrimination.

For further information, please read the [DP visit](#) or the [Adulta](#) website.

Offensive für Ältere (DE-EA-43385) Germany. The objective of the project is to set up qualification workshops for older unemployed from 50 years and up as well as to enhance their integration in the labour market by working with assessment centres and enterprises. Both older unemployed and employers shall reach the successful reintegration in a common process. The instruments used are: motivation seminars, specific assessment programmes, training on specific jobs, mediation and accompanying of unemployed persons during and after the qualification. One of the major objectives is to involve employers into a social dialogue and to work on a positive image of older employees. A film has been produced in cooperation with the French television France 3 to show to employers good examples (employers and employees,

mixed age groups). The DP is collecting available information on workplace design or health care and offers its expertise to employers.

[14] ["Moderniser sans exclure les Seniors"](#)

[15] For more information on self-assessment see the Policy Brief on Empowering and Motivating.

[16] **Part@ge**, (FR-RAL-2001-10033) France. The DP aimed at building intergenerational links between the older and the younger employees within French enterprises in the Rhones-Alpes region. The platform "Part'@ge" is a comprehensive and integrated HR process which includes the identification and recognition of competences of older workers, the identification of the new competences needed, and the set up of systems promoting the transfer of competence, new work organisation, ergonomics of the job positions as well as the tasks of the job.

The platform has the following aims:

- to collect studies and diagnostics on the HR projects visited by the DP in order to have a better knowledge of the older workers' issues
- to allow the companies' HR policies to evolve to an internal identification of the competences capital which is transferable and valuable to the company. This new concept allows creating a competence network between the new comers and the senior. The new comers may get new qualification and competences through the support of employees who cumulate experiences via the transfer of that experience and savoir-faire. In order to tackle the digital divide, the system is also allowing the transfer of ICT technology from young people to older employees.

TCA **Solidage** (TCA. id 2501). The transnational partnership between GENERA (German) and ATOUT AGE - Lifelong Human Resources (France) is developing guidelines, which will help local and regional actors, representatives from trade unions and employers associations to create innovative models for inter-generational cooperation within the workplace and across the local economy.

[17] **The Power of the Experienced**, (FI-21) Finland, **Atout'Age: la gestion des ages en PME-PMI, toute l'entreprise y gagne!** ([FR-NPC-2001-10505](#)), France

Adattabilità dell'impresa e dei lavoratori all'innovazione e alla flessibilità (IT-G-EMI-031), Italy operates in Emilia Romagna and promotes strategic resource planning in enterprises in the light of social cohesion. A number of interviews were held with employers and employees to collect information and define learning needs with an approach aimed at ensuring that the learning is meaningful for both employers and employees.

[18] **Agés et Travail dans le Bâtiment Travaux Public**, (FR-NAT-2001-10381) France; France **Building London Creating Futures** (UKgb-11) United Kingdom , **The route of a professional shipyard worker**, (FI-22) Finland .

[19] **The extended tutor function**, (DK-18) Denmark , **The Inclusive Workplace**, (TCA Id Code: 272), Denmark .

[20] **Développement et valorisation des métiers de la maîtrise du bien vieillir** (FR-NAT-2001-10820) France, **Part@ge**, (FR-RAL-2001-10033) France, **Didactt**, Dispositif d'activation des compétences transversales et tutorales (FR-CEN-2001-11184)

[21] **Moderniser sans exclure les Seniors** (FR-NAT-2001-10811) France.

[22] **NETAP**, (PT-2001-281) Portugal . The DP seeks to sensitise, to inform the employers and managers of the companies about the problems of motivating, training and improving the competencies of the workers with longer experience (workers in the range of 45 years or older) and also to increase their receptivity to training actions in new technologies.

[23] **DP Zurekin Sarean** (ES-ES69) Spain. The DP provides an on-line self-diagnosis tool to assist with business and training decisions and processes aimed at small businesses run by disadvantaged people including women and older entrepreneurs. Businesses can easily access the tool on-line and for free. Advices are tailored to the individual business depending on need and technology. Instruments, processes and resources are also customized to satisfy the different beneficiary groups, including women, older workers and people with disabilities.

[24] Atout Age - Lifelong Human Resources (FR-PCH-2001-10839) France, brings a special regional approach to the integration of interests and support for different local actors. The outcomes of an appropriate regional strategy initiated with trade unions and social partners should open up negotiations to new considerations and concerns that recognise the connection between paid work and other active employment. Such new approaches to negotiation will be particularly important for the equal treatment of women and over 50s. Atout'Age is promoted by CISTE (The Forum for Social Innovation in Work & Employment) an Association funded by an official Regional contract. It's Board of Directors unites all the trades unions (CFDT, CGT, FO, CFE CGC, CFTC) and the employers representatives (MEDEF, FRSEA, UPA, CGPME). There are also two representatives of the social economy and several public and private bodies (ANPE, GIP, Caisse d'Epargne, Comités d'Entreprises, etc.)

Paradox DP (Paradox, (BenI-01/EQ/1.A/002) Belgium This DP has a particular structure with regard to its partnership. The core partners are Randstad (private employment agency), Ideconsult (a consultancy), VDAB (public employment services already involved in a pilot project concerning older workers) and Vitamine W (Socio-economic organisation which functions as a mediator for training or employment for disadvantaged groups). Local authorities, employers organisations and representatives for minority groups have been very closely involved for several tasks as experts.

[25] European Work-Life Futures (TCA code 1961) The TCA's aim is to exchange knowledge and experience at international level in order to ensure the transfer of best practices and change the attitude of employers towards lifelong learning and diversity management accross UK and Sweden. This TCA is composed by two DPs:

- Workforce Futures Partnership (Ukgb-54)
- People (SE-1)

The TCA was set up in 2002 and will continue its activities until June 2005. The transnational cooperation has a very positive and educational effect. It gives the opportunity to learn about different school systems and learning environments in other countries.

Specific objectives are:

- Exchange of knowledge and experience to ensure transfer of best practices concerning effective approaches to changing the attitude of employers towards lifelong learning and diversity management
- To compare effective support structures for lifelong learning and e-learning
- Joint research and exchange of data on business and training needs among key target groups, consisting of employees and employers

The TCA works on the development of a jointly designed and produced tool for competence assessment and HRM planning. The two DP jointly designed template to conduct case studies and allows for the comparison of support structures. The work is very practical and involves directly beneficiaries from UK and Sweden . A common tool on guidance for adult education including ICT products (web solutions, software) has been developed.

Discussion is still taking place on questions of transferability and mainstreaming but it is already clear at this stage that the employers' organisations participating in the project are taking the good practices forward and are transferring them to other sectors (horizontal mainstreaming). At a local level the public employment services are willing to take over the good practices and to try them out in different sectors and situations. This will be with public and private funding so it is ensured that the projects will continue beyond EQUAL funding. The results have been published in the Swedish Social Partner's annual report.

A conference will be held in Spring 2005 in Stockholm to present the results of the transnational cooperation. The results of the thematic groups will be presented in a publication and a link will be made to the national work. A presentation of the results will take place in both countries.

The two DPs would like to continue their joint activities. The idea was to involve the new members states in the second round and to exchange good practices with them.

For further info, please read the [TCA visit](#), August 2003