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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rising life expectancy combined with low birth rates will result in a considerable ageing of Europe's population. The fact that ageing is first of all a major achievement, in particular as it reflects successes in reducing mortality, and the potentials of a growing number of fit and healthy older people tend to be overlooked. Instead, this is often perceived as a threat to the dynamism of the economy and the sustainability of Europe's highly developed welfare systems.

In this context, the Commission had proposed, in September 2010[1], to designate the year 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing. It stressed that the preservation of solidarity between generations will in particular depend on ensuring that the baby-boom cohorts stay longer in the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous as long as possible. The Council and the European Parliament adopted the decision on this European Year in September 2011[2], adding 'solidarity between generations' to its title.

In accordance with the Decision establishing the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (hereafter the 'EY2012' or 'the Year'), this report reviews the implementation, results and overall achievements of the Year, building on the conclusions of an external evaluation[3].

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Preparation of the Year

The first calls for a European Year for active ageing and solidarity between generations were made during the Slovenian presidency in the first semester of 2008. In June 2009, the Commission launched a public consultation with the aim of collecting ideas and suggestions from the key stakeholders and experts on how to achieve the greatest possible impact with a European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity.

The Council signalled its interest in such an initiative in November 2009 when it invited the Commission to develop awareness-raising activities to promote active ageing, including through a European Year.[4]

The choice of the themes had a comprehensive approach – employment, health and independent living, participation, intergenerational solidarity – and was consistent with prior

[1] COM(2010) 462 final of 6 September 2010

[2] Decision No 940/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2011 on the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012), Official Journal L 246, 23/9/2011, p. 5-10

[3] Evaluation of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, Ecorys, December 2012, based on the analysis of data from surveys with National Coordinators and national stakeholders, interviews, desk research, social media analysis and case studies.

[4] Council conclusions of 20 November 2009 on healthy and dignified ageing

analyses and policy initiatives conducted on active ageing at EU level and internationally, but also with issues of immediate concern, notably in the context of the Europe2020 strategy. The inclusion of solidarity between generations was promoted by the European Parliament5.

The European Year coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing[6] which stressed that persons, as they age, should enjoy equal access to active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies as a main development objective.

2.2. The European Year 2012 and its objectives

The EY2012 sought to address the challenges of an ageing Europe through active ageing in the areas of employment, participation and independent living, looking both at the needs and rights of older people as well as their potentials and their contribution to the economy and society.

The overall objective of the Year was to mobilize relevant actors in the promotion of active ageing and intergenerational solidarity. These actors include the Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners, civil society and the business community, including small and medium-sized enterprises.

The specific objectives are set in Article 2 of the Decision and can be summarized as follows:

- to raise general awareness of the value of active ageing and ensure that it is accorded a prominent position in the policy agenda;
- to stimulate debate, exchange information and develop mutual learning to promote active ageing policies;
- to create a framework for commitment and concrete action by Union and Member states with the involvement of stakeholders;
- to promote activities which will help to combat age discrimination[7], to overcome age-related stereotypes and to remove barriers.

2.3. Resources

The decision on the EY2012 defined a budget envelope of five million euro for the period between January 2011 and December 2012. No new credits were allocated to the European Year, and the money was taken from existing financial appropriations. The budget for the European Year was mainly used to finance the communication activities of the Year (EU website, communications support to Member States, publications, videos, press work, etc.),

[5] European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2010 on the demographic challenge and solidarity between generations (2010/2027(INI))

[6] United Nations Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002. A/CONF.179/9

[7] See Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation

with smaller amounts being reserved for the opening conference in Denmark and the closing event in Cyprus, as well as the external evaluation of the Year.

Compared to other recent European Years, the EY2012 had a much lower budget. As a result, direct funding to Member States was not available. However this did not diminish their commitment to the EY2012. The money allocated to communication activities was used to support numerous activities at the national level.

Management structures and tools employed at EU level were found appropriate and well-functioning by the external evaluators.

3. EUROPEAN YEAR 2012 IMPLEMENTATION AND KEY ACTIVITIES

3.1. Activities at EU level

Most of the activities at the EU-level were designed to support stakeholders in the Member States and facilitate their participation in the European Year. The EU programme was thus implemented in close cooperation with national coordinators for the European Year and the Stakeholder Coalition. The main activity at European level was a communication and promotional campaign implemented by a contractor.

The central hub of this campaign was the EY website[8] which presented information in 23 languages, although much of the content on specific initiatives could only be made available in the national language of the country concerned as well as in English. The website also proposed promotional material for use by stakeholders at their own events.

The communication contractor maintained a media relations network with the aim of maximizing the outreach to media (print/online/audiovisual) around key events; these were also presented in a monthly newsletter.

Five publications were released to support stakeholders. Two of them were ready before the Year and offered facts and figures: the "Eurobarometer Special Survey on Active Ageing" (covering 27 Member States and five non-EU countries with EU country specific fact sheets)[9], and Eurostat released a statistical portrait on active ageing and solidarity between generations[10].

A brochure "How to promote active ageing in Europe" jointly produced with the Committee of the Regions and the Age Platform Europe was also published just before the year to point stakeholders to EU funding schemes that could be relevant to active ageing and invited in particular regional and local stakeholders to make the best possible use of them. Indeed, one of the justifications for not having a bigger budget for EY2012 was that many activities could be funded through existing programmes.

[8] http://europa.eu/ey2012

[9] http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_379_360_en.htm

[10] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/publication?p_product_code=KS-EP-11-001

The Social Europe Guide "Demography, active ageing and pensions"[11] gave an overview of the main demographic trends faced by Europe and the policy responses required to tackle the challenges arising from these trends. The brochure on "The EU contribution to Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations"[12] presented in more detail the numerous EU initiatives that can support policy makers and stakeholders in the Member States in implementing the active ageing agenda. It emphasised that active ageing calls for policy interventions in many different areas such as employment, pensions, education, health, innovation, research, transport ICT and housing.

The European Commission also organized several events and conferences throughout the year. The external evaluation confirmed their strong contribution to the achievement of the EY2012's objectives.

Entitled "Stay Active – what does it take", the opening event took place in Copenhagen on 18-19 January 2012, hosted by the Danish EU Presidency. The two-day programme included speeches of two ministers of the Danish government and of two EU Commissioners. Sessions addressed a range of themes, including labour market issues, staying active and healthy, inclusion and empowerment, innovation and volunteering.

"Reporting on ageing and solidarity between generations" was a conference held in Brussels on the 19th and 20th March with the aim of providing an opportunity for journalists to exchange views on how to cover issues related to active ageing and solidarity between generations in the media.

On 3 April 2012, a Conference on the "European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing: From plan to action" sought to gather stakeholder feedback on how to implement the actions of the Partnership. Commissioner László Andor gave an opening speech highlighting synergies between the EY2012 and the Partnership.

The conference on "Good governance for active and healthy ageing" (Brussels, 4 June 2012) demonstrated that promoting active ageing calls for integrated policy-making, involving different levels of government and different policy areas.

The conference "Active ageing-the potential for society" held on 9-11 July 2012 in Dublin opened by the European Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Ms Máire Geoghegan Quinn, focused on the human and social aspects and implications of active ageing as well as on the relationship between ageing, the economy and innovation. The event also explored further research needs and launched the publication "Population ageing in Europe: facts, implications and policies", presenting the outcomes of EU-funded research on demography.

The Commission conference "One Step Up in later life: learning for active ageing and intergenerational solidarity" (Brussels, 19-21 November 2012) attracted a strong representation from: government authorities including the National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning; international, European and national levels stakeholders; higher education and research; social partners; businesses; and projects funded under the Lifelong Learning Grundtvig Programme. The conference resulted

[11] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6805

[12] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8710&langId=en

in a Memorandum and a series of background papers on learning for active and healthy ageing and employment and intergenerational learning.

An awards ceremony of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations took place on 13 November 2012 in Brussels. It highlighted inspiring people and initiatives that made a significant contribution to active ageing and solidarity between generations. The European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Mr László Andor, announced the winners for the seven award categories.

The annual EU Access City Award, handed over by Vice-President Viviane Reding on 3 December 2012, paid special attention to the accessibility needs of older persons. Representatives of older persons' organisations were included in the EU jury. The EY2012 closing event "From visions to actions" was held in Nicosia on 10 December 2012. It started with a statement from the President of the Republic of Cyprus, followed by a speech by Commissioner László Andor. The programme covered a range of issues including the current situation of ageing in Europe and the still untapped potentials of older people.

Beyond the activities initiated by the European Commission and the Presidencies, some other institutions were also active during the Year, working closely with the stakeholders coalition and civil society.

The European Economic and Social Committee was particularly active during the European Year. It created a group to coordinate activities related to the Year. This group has organized five public events on different themes and a closing conference of the Year.[13]

The Committee of the Regions also made an important contribution to the Year, organizing a Forum on the 14 February 2014[14] with the aim of fostering new initiatives at the local and regional level and building new partnerships for promoting active ageing and strengthening solidarity between generations.

The EY2012 benefited also from the strong support of a broad coalition of civil society organizations, led by Age Platform Europe, which grew to more than 60 members. Members of the Coalition were engaged in numerous initiatives during the European Year and developed a roadmap presented at the opening conference of the Year on 18 January 2012 in Copenhagen.

The external evaluation in chapter 3.6 highlighted the strong complementarity between the EY2012 and other ongoing policy activities, such as the White Paper on Pensions, the Demographic Forum, the 2nd Health Programme, the Accessibility Act and, especially, the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing.

3.2. Implementation in participating countries

All participating countries (27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) appointed each a National Coordinator (NC).

[13] http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-closing-conference-ey2012

[14] www.cor.europa.eu/EY2012

Their work started well in advance of the European Year, with a first meeting held on 30 November of 2010. The NC prepared national activities, promoting local and regional activities and trying to involve all relevant stakeholders in the European Year. They presented national work programmes to the European Commission outlining the national activities planned throughout 2012.[15]

The national work programmes reflected different policy contexts, notably in terms of active ageing needs, policy priorities and distribution of competences, and availability of resources. The Commission proposed, however, some common events and activities and supported in particular the organization national opening and closing events as well as the "Generations at School" and "Seniorforce Day" campaigns and the European award scheme. The external evaluation confirms the relevance of the types of activities carried out.

The opening events involved on the whole 4500 participants with a high level of political support demonstrated notably by the participation of high-level politicians.

Fifteen countries appointed 115 national Ambassadors of EY2012 in order to reach a wider public. They came from varied backgrounds: academics, NGO representatives, journalists, actors, businessmen. The number of ambassadors appointed varied from one (in Estonia, Hungary and Poland) to 38 in Austria.

The "Generations@school" initiative was proposed to celebrate the European Day of Solidarity between Generations (29 April). The idea was to bring older people into schools and to engage pupils and older people in an intergenerational dialogue. It was an effective way to reach out to schools all over Europe and to foster engagement with the Year at local level. It also helped to attract the media attention, notably the local media. The initiative was supported by the Commission through its communication contractor which provided a dedicated website, guidance material, resources and practical support for some local initiatives.

The European "Seniorforce Day" marked the International Day of Older Persons (1 October) and sought to mobilize older people as volunteers. The Seniorforce Day initiative has received wide support all over Europe with flagship events being attended by senior politicians, officials, and NGO representatives and personalities acting as EY2012 ambassadors. The European Commission supported 25 of these events. However, the external evaluation showed that the take-up of this initiative was not as broad as in the case of generations@school, possibly due to the late announcement and less precise format of this initiative (see pages 52 and 79 of the external evaluation).

The EY2012 triggered a large number of initiatives for promoting active ageing in the Member States. A total of 748 national and transnational initiatives were implemented during the Year, counting only those featuring on the EU website. Civil society organizations were the promoter for 291 of these initiatives. Germany, Spain and Italy were the countries with most initiatives on the EU website, followed by France, Austria and Poland. The focus of these activities was mostly on exchanging knowledge and experience and on awareness-raising.

[15] http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012main.jsp?catId=986&langId=en

According to the surveys conducted by the evaluator (see chapter 3.2 of the external evaluation), the topic that received most attention was participation in society, followed by intergenerational solidarity. The fact that the theme of the Year was broad enough to allow a number of different topics to be covered was welcomed, allowing stakeholders to choose something that was most relevant from their own point of view. The evidence from the results of the online survey of National Coordinators indicates that the types of activities undertaken were appropriate to the needs of Member States and EU citizens. National Coordinators and stakeholders responded that they were able to choose and tailor initiatives to their own contexts and priorities, often with the support of the Commission's communications contractor.

3.3. Gender and social inclusion mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming had been considered since the preparation phase of the EY2012 and was well reflected in the Stakeholder Coalition and the work programmes of several Member States, with specific attention being paid to the situation of older women, although little attention has been directed to the experience of older men. Women were well represented among the National Coordinators and among speakers and participants at the events held during the EY (see chapter 5 of the external evaluation).

The EY2012 also covered a wide range of issues related to disability, especially health and independent living of older people. Both at EU and MS level, the initiatives addressed disability directly and indirectly. The activities of the EY2012 by and large ensured the accessibility of the events and considered various aspects, such as sign language and transportation on various occasions. The EU website contained options for larger fonts, but the external evaluation pointed out that it could have been designed in an even more accessible way to a wider range of people with disabilities such as blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss.

4. WHAT DID THE EY2012 ACHIEVE?

4.1. Has the EY2012 reached its objectives?

According to the external evaluation the Year had a positive impact on the conditions for active ageing, both at European and national level. The objectives and the activities of the Year were relevant and the approach was successful in reaching the objectives (awareness-raising, stimulating debate and mutual learning, creating a framework for commitment and concrete action, combatting age-discrimination).

The objective of **raising awareness** has been largely achieved through EU-level and national initiatives and events, which were more often targeted to relevant organisations and civil society groups than individuals.

The Generations@school initiative mobilised around 480 schools and an estimated 27.000 participants while the European award scheme triggered 1300 submissions (including most of the generations@school events). The European "Seniorforce Day" involved over 11.000 participants. These initiatives attracted much media attention to the EY2012, drawing attention to success stories and positive examples highlighted in the award scheme. Altogether, the EY2012 generated significant press coverage with 6162 printed articles, 3432 on-line articles and 329 broadcasts.

While the EU website was an important resource for stakeholders, it attracted with 212,822 unique visitors fewer visitors than the EU websites of previous European Years (400,000 reported for the EY2010 and 366,172 for the EY2011). However, it should be borne in mind that 19 countries had national websites.

The degree of engagement with social media on the part of citizens and stakeholder representatives was limited at the EU level, but more significant in some countries. In Spain for example, Facebook and Twitter accounts were created to share and disseminate information on the EY2012. In the Spanish evaluation, it was estimated that about 700.000 people were reached through these channels.

The EY2012 succeeded in **stimulating public debate** and **fostering mutual learning** around the themes of active ageing and solidarity between generations. In particular, the opening events in Copenhagen and in the participating countries had important multiplier effects. Numerous additional dialogue events were organised throughout the Year in all participating countries. There was also a strong focus on good practice dissemination. The EU database was a powerful instrument to share information on success stories and positive examples. A number of national and transnational projects promoted mutual learning throughout the Year.

The need to combat **age-discrimination** was highlighted in many public events and throughout various projects. In this context, the importance of improving the opportunities for active ageing in employment was particularly emphasized.

The EY2012 offered indeed a **framework to make commitments and to take concrete action**. The mobilisation of civil society organisations around the theme of the EY can be regarded as a major achievement. The involvement of regional and local governments was also significant, but did not happen in all countries.

The EY2012 encouraged some countries to either strengthen an already existing national policy agenda on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity or to develop new strategies. Austria, for example, launched a Federal Plan for Senior Citizens in January 2012. In Spain, a White Paper was adopted. It analysed the main aspects that determine the quality of life of older people.

A number of countries launched policy programmes on the occasion of the EY: Belgium established in November 2012 a new Federal Advisory Council for older people; Ireland decided that every local authority area in the country should have its own age-friendly county programme by the end of 2013; Poland adopted in August 2012 a government programme for senior citizens' social activity for the years 2012-2013.

4.2. What is the legacy of the EY2012?

In the course of the EY2012 several tools have been developed for future policy development. Some successful events and activities had a new edition in 2013, such as the one promoted at EU level "Generations@school". Guidance for the development of better policy responses to ageing was provided through the Guiding Principles on Active Ageing, endorsed by the EU's Social Affairs Ministers on 6 December 2012[16].

[16] Council Declaration on the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012): The Way Forward, Brussels, 7 December 2012.

The 19 Guiding Principles are structured under the headings of the Year: employment, participation in society, and independent living. They are addressed to Member States and other relevant levels of government and organizations which have a role to play in further improving conditions for active ageing. The application of these Guiding Principles would also contribute to the attainment of the employment and poverty reduction targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, notably as a result of more people being able to work longer and earning better pension entitlements.

Another tool for promoting the continued pursuit of the goals of the EY2012 was the development of an Active Ageing Index (AAI)[17] which was presented during the closing event and developed during the EY in close cooperation with the United Nations Economic Committee for Europe (UNECE) and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (Vienna). The AAI measures different dimensions of active ageing and quantifies untapped potentials for each country. The Index should help policy makers to identify challenges and unrealized potentials for a more active participation of older people in the economy and society and allow the monitoring of progress. The development of the index continues, so that the index can be updated on the basis of more recent data and possibly also calculated at sub-national levels.

The EY2012 stakeholder Coalition presented a revised roadmap[18] on 10 December 2012 at the Cyprus Presidency EY2012 closing conference in Nicosia. It included numerous follow-up initiatives which continue to maintain the momentum of the European Year. One of the initiatives is to develop a covenant of mayors on demographic change, following the model of the covenant of mayors on sustainable energy[19]. This would provide a framework allowing local and regional policy makers to commit to taking new measures in response to ageing. This goal of establishing such a covenant is now being pursued in the context of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP AHA) and its action group on 'Innovation for age-friendly, buildings cities and environments'. [20]

The EIP AHA represents a significant contribution from the EU to achieve the objectives of the EY2012[21]. The European Commission has identified an ageing population as a societal challenge common to all European countries and has prioritised this in the Innovation Union, one of flagship initiatives of Europe 2020. The overarching objective of the Partnership is to increase by two years the average number of healthy life years in the EU by 2020. The Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) of this initiative sets out priority actions to meet the challenge of ageing through innovation and focuses on three main areas: prevention, care and cure, and independent living. Actions on active ageing developed in the context of the EY2012 can continue within the wider framework of the EIP AHA and therefore contributing to the Europe 2020 goals.

[17] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1837&furtherNews=yes

[18] http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Updated_EY2012_Roadmap_Coalition_FINALVERSION1.doc

[19] http://www.covenantofmayors.eu

[20] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8710&langId=en

[21] 'Taking forward the Strategic Implementation Plan of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing' COM(2012) 83final

5. CONCLUSIONS

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations has managed to mobilize numerous governmental and non-governmental actors. It has helped convey a more positive image of population ageing by highlighting the potentials of older people and promoting their active participation in society and the economy.

Many Member States and civil society organizations have used the European Year as an opportunity to develop new initiatives or strengthen their existing ones. The activities triggered by the EY2012 demonstrated the growing interest in active ageing. Several tools have been or are being developed for this purpose, and in particular the guiding principles on active ageing, the active ageing index, the covenant on demographic change.

Policy maker in the Member States are invited to make the most of these tools. The EU will continue to support them. This will take the form of policy guidance, notably in the context of the European Semester where recommendations on longer careers have been addressed to most Member States, as well as, more recently, country-specific recommendations on long-term care. Active ageing is also an important area of social investment, as has been emphasized in the Commission's communication 'Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion'[22]. In this context the Commission urged Member States to use the Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations and the Active Ageing index.

Active and healthy ageing is, consequently, one of the investment priorities of the European Social Fund (ESF) in the 2014-2020 programming period. Funding for projects promoting active ageing is available under a wide range of different EU programmes and financial instruments. One of the priorities of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing is to align these programmes/instruments with the identified priorities on Active and healthy ageing avoiding overlaps between the different instruments.[23]

Regarding the independent living pillar of the EY2012, the Commission supports the Social Protection Committee in producing a report on long-term care published in June 2014. It examined how the gap between long-term care demand and supply can be closed through appropriate investment in measures that reduce the need for long-term care and enhance the efficiency of its delivery, including through the use of technology enabled services[24]. It also built on examples from the partners of the EIP AHA. Work on these issues also continues in the context of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing which shows how the EU can assist Member States by facilitating the exchange of best practices, by researching and testing new solutions and fostering technical and social innovation

[22] COM(2013)83 final of 20 February 2013.

[23] COM(2012) 83final

[24] See the research study to support the Social Protection Committee ICT-AGE : Long Term Care Strategies for Independent Living of Elderly People carried out by EC JRC IPTS.
http://is.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pages/EAP/eInclusion/carers_ICTAGE.html

The EY2012 has contributed to establish active ageing firmly on the European and many national policy agendas in a cross sectorial multi-stakeholder approach. This momentum needs to be maintained. The strong solidarity between generations that characterise Europe's societies and welfare systems can only be sustained in the context of ageing populations and tight budgets by promoting active ageing in all its forms.