



Brussels, 1 June 2009
D(2009) 8107

Questionnaire for a consultation in view of a possible designation of 2012 as European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity

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Should this contribution be published anonymously? No

1. IDENTITY OF THE RESPONDENT

Please identify yourself and the organisation on behalf of which you are replying to this consultation

Name	Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH) "Ageing of the workforce" group c/o Prevent, Rue Gachard 88/4, 1050 Brussels, Belgium ID n° EC register: 67192252083-94
Organisation (including a short description of its mission and membership)	The Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH) is a cooperation of 13 Occupational Safety and Health institutes in 12 Member states aiming to strengthen European research in occupational safety and health (OSH). The members aim to cooperate and coordinate their research and development efforts for healthier, longer and more productive working lives. Furthermore they envisage to cooperate with the EU and the national authorities of Europe in order to support EU and national policy development and enforcement. The objectives should be achieved through different

	<p>activities: pooling of resources and sharing of knowledge across institutions and countries, cooperation in and development of joint research and development (R&D) projects as well as cooperation with external research centres and OSH-related institutions and Networks.</p> <p>The PEROSH members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA), Germany · Institut für Arbeitsschutz der Deutschen Gesetzlichen Unfallversicherung (BGIA - DGUV), Germany · Central Institute for Labour Protection - National Research Institute (CIOP-PIB), Poland · Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), Finland · Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL), United Kingdom · Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité (INRS), France · Instituto Nacional de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo (INSHT), Spain · Istituto Superiore Prevenzione e Sicurezza sul Lavoro (ISPESL), Italy · National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE), Denmark · Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Prevent), Belgium · Statens arbeidsmiljøinstitutt (STAMI), Norway · TNO Quality of Work, Netherlands · Occupational Safety Research Institute (VUBP), Czech Republic
<p>Expertise (please precise the area)</p>	<p>There are several working groups in PEROSH, each of them working on its own expertise area. The group "Ageing of the workforce" consists of researchers specialised in occupational safety and health aspects of ageing at work and workplace health management.</p> <p>The "Ageing of the workforce" group gathers representatives from 9 OSH institutes, representing 8 countries: BAuA, Germany, (Mr Götz Richter); CIOP, Poland (Mrs Joanna Bugajska), DGUV, Germany, (Mrs Hanna Zieschang); FIOH, Finland (Mr Tomi Hussi), INRS, France (Mrs Isabelle Titon,</p>

	project leader); NRCWE, Denmark, (Mr Vilhelm Borg); Prevent, Belgium (Mr Lieven Eeckelaert); STAMI, Norway, (Mr Hans Gravseth); VUPB, Czech Republic (Mrs Lenka Svobodova, Mrs Chroma Ludmila).)
Contact details (notably e-mail address)	European Affairs Coordinator: Ms Nele Roskams: nele.roskams@perosh.eu Project leader "Ageing of the workforce" group: Mrs Isabelle Titon: isabelle.titon@inrs.fr PEROSH vice-president: Mr Didier Baptiste: didier.baptiste@inrs.fr

2. THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF AGEING IN RELATION TO INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Please explain briefly how your organisation perceives the challenges and opportunities in relation to intergenerational solidarity in a context of accelerating demographic ageing.

Intergenerational solidarity is influenced by many factors – family upbringing, community, society. It reflects the emotional relationship between parents and children, the frequency and form of mutual contacts, type and structure of family coexistence, to what extent there is an agreement concerning values between generations, mutual cooperation and aid, and an appreciation of joint engagements and duties. The extent of intergenerational solidarity has an effect on how the picture (negative or positive) concerning old and ageing people is created, how negative stereotypes (ageism) are eliminated, or how elderly people movements and associations are created.

The intergenerational relationship is substantially changing, based on a qualitative and historical aspect, especially in relation with modern technologies, globalisation, and the dynamics and speed of changes in every aspect of life. The present period of socio-economic development and success is marked by various phenomena such as: dynamic, change, speed, activity, flexibility, etc. The icon of youth and dynamic is everywhere – celebrating strength, beauty, efficiency and career. Whole-life lasting youth happens to be commonly desired. On the other side, the older generation is often used to more or less accomplished lifestyles and is less willing or able to adapt to changes (for example new work organisation). Experience, wisdom, stability and evenness - concepts that are often associated with ageing - are sometimes counterparted by difficulties to adapt to quick changes. Consideration for age is sometimes fading from societies, and age is a high-ranking factor of discrimination.

THREATS for intergenerational solidarity in the world of work

Generally speaking:

- demographic ageing and the decline in the working population will lead to important challenges for the world of work. Several problems are currently combining: ageing of the workforce, but also high premature retirement rates, difficulties to get employed for the older due to negative cultural representations of

ageing and ageing people, poor continuous training rates in the older employees, few actions to promote successful ageing in the field of health in the companies...hence poor employment rates in the 55-64 years old employees throughout EU (except for a few countries like Finland...).

- the group of "elderly people" varies from different points of view – education, social status, the type of work etc. This group is characterised by: a strong diversity, a high number of women and endangered by unemployment, health changes, change of roles and way of life, economic instability,... The risks and threats concerning this target group are: age discrimination, segregation and generational intolerance, prejudices, long term unemployment, poverty, loneliness, lower adaptability to rapid changes, decline of abilities and motivation to realise the own needs etc.

This takes place in a context of increasing pressure to stay longer at work, where the structure or quality of jobs often do not correspond to the needs of older people, and competition on the labour market is significantly rising (possibility of hidden “age discrimination”).

For the PEROSH group, eviction of the older workers from the labour market is an important factor causing damage to intergenerational solidarity.

In terms of intergenerational solidarity:

- at a company level: loss of critical company-specific competences when older employees retire (especially if they retire early) lead to reduced possibilities for the younger employees to learn from the elders (coaching). Elderly may in some cases feel reluctant to teach the younger, fearing that their specific competences are their only protection against eviction. This also goes against intergenerational solidarity.

- work is also one major place where generations can meet and exchange: once older people are out of work, the opportunities to meet are scarce: the leisure activities are not necessarily the same, the concerns may also differ ... (for example, young people can have children at home while the children of the older workers have already left home).

- at a society level: high retirement rates involve unbalanced social systems: young people who are currently paying for the elders' pensions schemes know they will get reduced financial compensation when they retire. Such awareness can alter their conception of intergenerational solidarity, lead people to save money to ensure their own future pension and refuse to pay for the others. It encourages intergenerational intolerance.

OPPORTUNITIES

A paradigm shift in the world of work becomes more and more necessary: organisations will increasingly be compelled to value and retain their human capital, by putting more emphasis on preventive, age-neutral policies and actions.

As ageing of the workforce can lead to acute economical problems, one cannot escape considering the problem. The opportunity to lead people to reflect on this and change their ways of thinking and acting exists. Social choices and decisions must be questioned: we need to think about the society we want to live in tomorrow,

about the society we want our children to live in, and put intergenerational solidarity back at the core of the debates.

An age-neutral approach implies that the chronological age (calendar age) of workers is just only one aspect in managing ageing at work. Functional age (abilities, health, lifestyle), organisational age (job or organisational tenure, skills, career stage), psychosocial age (self-perception, social perception, age stereotyping/discrimination), and life-span age (home situation, life stage) are other conceptualisations of age, which need attention when aiming at an age-diverse, competent and healthy workforce. A holistic approach of all these aspects taking all age groups into account in an early stage and throughout the working life is essential to maintain workability.

Research findings and experience from practice show that improving workers' well-being, safety and health, provides not only an added value to organisations, but also to society (a.o. an improvement of public health). As work is not only a source of income and control, but in addition provides identity, relationships outside the family, opportunities to develop skills and creativity, and time structure, an increased focus on health at work (in the broad sense of the word, namely a healthy age composition, safe and healthy work, healthy competence base, healthy social relations, healthy work-life balance) can help to deal with the issue of intergenerational solidarity.

3. POLICY MEASURES REQUIRED TO AVERT SUCH THREATS OR EXPLOIT THE OPPORTUNITIES AND HENCE PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

What policy measures would your organisation recommend to preserve or promote intergenerational solidarity? What obstacles need to be overcome to implement such policies; in particular, is there a lack of awareness and resistance to change?

POLICY MEASURES to promote intergenerational solidarity

- An important prerequisite is that measures do not focus on older workers only but on the workforce as a whole. In our opinion, it is very important for any OSH strategy concerning this topic that it actually covers all generations. Focussing on older people only would be misleading. The younger employees should get the chance to get older in a healthy way. A preventive approach integrating all age groups will ensure a good match between the various needs and skills. Besides, improving working conditions for everyone will reinforce intergenerational solidarity.

- We think that maintaining the ageing workers in activity is an essential factor for promoting intergenerational solidarity. To enable older people to remain at work, three tracks can be followed to preserve work ability: health, competence, and motivation. From the employers' point of view, actions must be undertaken to change mentalities and fight against age discrimination.

- To reach such goals, measures should be integrated and coordinated, so that they reinforce each other: for the occupational health and safety sector the "house of work ability" according to Ilmarinen [1] has proven of value. In this context, there are various areas in which actions can be taken to respond to demographic change: health promotion

(implementation of health programs), HR management and corporate culture, work design and organisation (adaptation of the workplace to the workers by means of tailored workplace design (ergonomics), introduction of flexible organisation of working time,...), training and skills development for all workers...

- Older people entering the job market can objectively be “handicapped”. They often have a lower mobility, being locally anchored, have a lack of skills and competency in relation to the use of hi-tech equipment and often a lower motivation for further education (e.g in case of workers carrying out manual labour), etc. Measures can be taken to overcome each of these obstacles.

Examples of measures that could be implemented:

- support of older workers' employment: legal support (restrictive measures), financial support (incentives), support and promotion of individual and collective activities for the elderly (self-employment, education, association and similar activities), which would increase the chances in the job market.

- implementation of health promotion programs, improvement of working conditions, fight against intensive workload and working conditions that cause premature ageing or disability...

- change of mentalities: reaching the employers by informative and educational campaigns (highlighting the advantages of older workers, mutually convenient adjustments of working conditions, alternative work possibilities - flexible working hours, job-sharing, distance working).

Promotion of a positive attitude towards old age: ageing is not only a story of functional decline but also a construction, a gathering of professional and extra-professional experiences, skills and competences that school cannot provide. The employers should be targeted in priority, but the target group should be far larger: occupational physicians, older workers themselves so that they become aware of their own skills, and the other workers...

- support of the process of life-long education: set up of training, education and career development by companies for all groups from the beginning of the career, development of programmes improving qualifications, career advisory support,...

OBSTACLES to overcome

- there is a resistance to change and lack of awareness: it is reinforced by the economic crisis. When the unemployment rate is high and the economic indicators are unfavourable, caring about a vulnerable population group or discussing intergenerational solidarity seems far from daily life preoccupations.

- individual vs. common responsibility: intergenerational solidarity is an abstract concept, individuals may feel powerless to change the situation and may perceive it as a question to be dealt with at the upper level.

[1] Ilmarinen J. 2006. Towards a longer worklife. Ageing and the quality of worklife on the European Union. Jyväskylä. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Gummerus.

4. ROLE OF THE EU IN PROMOTING THE RIGHT POLICY RESPONSES

Is there a specific role for the EU in relation to intergenerational solidarity? What measures could be taken at the level of the EU in addition to the existing EU policies? In particular, is a European Year an appropriate instrument?

- We think that the EU has a specific role to play in terms of change of mentalities, since it has to do with the society we choose to live in. The EU and European institutions play an important integrating role, and apart from economic problems, deal with cultural aspects and values of the entire community. They promote equal opportunities and quality of life for all citizens.
- In that respect, a European Year seems to be an appropriate instrument. Concrete actions should be included, with direct impacts on the citizen. Proper timing is necessary with regard to the economic crisis and its consequences. Priorities should be focussed especially on economy and on the promotion of social dialogue.
- The EU can promote a social policy, flexibility in work arrangements...but framed in a social system, to safeguard intergenerational solidarity.
- The EU Commission could support activities in the various fields of action mentioned above. A common European strategy should be developed and could draw the basis for OSH work for all generations.
- Data should be collected and projects be supported about possible strategies concerning professions which are mainly affected by demographic changes e.g. the care sector (caregivers get older and the cases for nursing care increase), construction work (roofer, tiler). The important contribution of the EU is (and will be) sharing knowledge and experiences regarding population ageing and positive problem solving. The EU could offer opportunities leading to desired goals, identify possible risks and highlight on dissuasive examples concerning bad solutions.

5. TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES FOR A EUROPEAN YEAR

Given the limited resources available for a European Year, what topics and types of intervention should it focus on? How could it achieve the greatest possible mobilisation of stakeholders at all levels (EU, national, regional, local, company, sector) and thus maximise the impact of the European Year?

- Numerous studies and good practice examples on ageing at work have been published throughout the EU. The existing material is not always adapted to the target group or stays largely unused by them. Activities in the framework of a European year should focus partly on synthesising and disclosing the available research and good practice information, and on developing it into practical information and tools for different stakeholders.
- Networks are a helpful basis for dealing with demographic change. Various networks collect examples of good practice, from which companies with similar characteristics can learn. Networks can also be used for sharing knowledge and even for sharing workers in order to secure jobs and ensure an optimum fit between the actual work to be done and an

older worker: a EU year could focus on networks, identify them, promote them and coordinate their actions.

- Specific topics and interventions for the EU year could be designed according to the results of these previous studies and projects. Especially the promotion of new research projects, to address the pending research questions.

- In order to address the prejudices on ageing workers and to change public opinion on the issue, a broad mentality shift should take place. The most effective way to do this is by organising an information campaign towards the general public with targeted actions towards different concerned groups (social partners, policy makers, etc.) on the EU level as well as on the national level. Media such as European TV channels (e.g ARTE) could be invited to participate with thematic programs...

Age-stereotypes towards older workers seem very persistent. There is an awareness on a macro- and mesolevel that something should happen, but in practice very little concrete actions are taken at the work floor: ageing workers still face tremendous difficulties in finding a new job. These information campaigns should focus on the added value and benefits for employers and employees in remaining employed while age increases. Today, there is an increasing recognition of the skills and positive characteristics that increase or evolve as people get older. These include: social skills, effective communication, experience and ability to combine experience of work and life, regained flexibility in terms of time, sense of being part of the company, loyalty and reliability...

- To avoid social marginalisation at company level, measures (in any of the areas of action listed above) should not only target older workers but all age groups. On top of that, the preventive approach should be promoted, since it is beneficial to all generations and ensures a good match between their various needs and skills. It thus appears that prevention should be pushed into focus.

- To cope with demographic change, it is important that all stakeholders, i.e. health insurers, accident insurance institutions and pension providers but also government agencies and associations, pull together and take coordinated actions. The EU year could help coordinate the various ongoing projects.

- Several European OSH institutes work together in a PEROSH group concerning "demographic change". The aim of the group is the exchange of so far achieved results in the participating countries and the common coping with challenges concerning demographic change. The German Social Accident Insurance Institution for example is the roof of the Statutory Accident Insurance Institutions (UVT). It supports its members - the UVTs - by training (e.g. seminars, congresses, work shops), research (e.g. workplace design for older people, work organisation), and consultancy (e.g. lectures, brochures, flyers). The UVT are in direct contact to companies and, thus, circulate the results. The EU year could take advantage of this experience.

- Activities should focus on the promotion of a social dialogue, at all levels.

6. YOUR ORGANISATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO A EUROPEAN YEAR

How could your organisation contribute to the success of a European Year? What activities could it develop?

1. As a partnership of 13 European research institutes specialised in occupational safety and health, PEROSH proposes to organise a EU-wide campaign to raise awareness on active ageing and the quality of working life focussing on the actions that can be undertaken by different stakeholders to improve the functional capacities/well being in general and the physical and psychological well being of an ageing workforce in particular.

Besides that, the campaign will also focus on counteracting the prevailing stereotypes on ageing workers and concentrate on the positive aspects of a mix of different age groups as a way to ensure a stable organisation.

The campaign should be targeted towards different stakeholders and different policy levels; mainly:

- social partners (employee and employers representatives) on a national as well as European level, as mediators between the policy and the company level.
- policy makers and advisers.

Alongside a more general approach towards EU and national stakeholders such as policy makers and social partners, a focussed sector approach will be adopted.

The different target groups will be reached via a

- media campaign
- workshops and/or seminars aimed at the specific target groups
- a closing event with the conclusions/results of the different activities.

2. As a research group, the "Ageing of the workforce" PEROSH group can also perform some research of interest on the topic, if a proper timing can be determined (EU year in 2012). One of the topics could be the overview and comparison of the main issues with regard to the health and safety of an ageing workforce in the 12 European countries represented within the PEROSH partnership.

7. WHAT SUPPORT WOULD YOUR ORGANISATION REQUIRE TO PLAY A MAJOR PART IN A EUROPEAN YEAR?

Please explain what support your organisation would require from public authorities to make a significant contribution to the success of a European Year.

The PEROSH group could benefit from financial means to hire people to lead the above mentioned research project. As for the diffusion of the results, the logistic means of the EU could be of great help.

On the level of each institute, such support could help organise conferences on ageing, for example, or hire people to go on with research.