



active 80 PLUS

valuing and
valorizing
the knowledge
and skills of
people 80+

Policy Recommendations



Policy Recommendations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge, assessment and practice examples concerning the potential of very old people to learn and be active members of their communities.

Active 80+ is an *Erasmus+* project carried out between October 2014 and September 2016. The Active 80+ project aims at developing and testing a research-based training for care staff and volunteers, enabling them to function as coaches for very old people. Using methods and tools of the training, the coaches support older and very old people in developing and realising their own ideas of learning and active citizenship. Extensive dissemination, including the policy recommendations presented in this document, aim at raising awareness of the potentials of very old people.

The Active80+ research and pilot training and implementation work, whose detailed results are available on the project website (www.act-80plus.eu), has mapped existing knowledge and project examples. It has documented that:

- The number of old people is on the rise in all countries of the European Union (EU), with the share of people 80+ especially growing: while in 2001 only 3.5% of the Europeans were at this age, more than 12% are forecasted in 2060.
- The promotion of lifelong learning and voluntary engagement among older people, as well as active ageing, are some of the most important goals on the EU political agenda. With the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity having as objectives: to promote active ageing in employment, to promote active ageing in the community including through active citizenship, volunteering and caring, to promote active ageing at home through enabling healthy ageing and independent living, to enhance cooperation and solidarity between the generations. But:
- In official European policy documents, no concrete measures or recommendations specifically regarding 80+ citizens were found.

- In research and at the political level, full awareness exists on the benefits of a youth-oriented Third age ('forever young').
- Efforts are focusing on stretching the healthy, vital and active Third age and shrinking the Fourth age connoted with loss.
- In research, as in politics concerning the Fourth age, the 'vulnerability perspective' prevails over the 'potential perspective'.

***"We need to search for a community-approach
and a continuous change of perspective;
our focus should be on wellbeing,
not just health and physical aspects."***

(Care organisation professional -
Participant at the Active 80+ training)

- Negative stereotypes associated with very high age discriminate against the 80+ citizens who might need, like people in other age groups, some facilitating to enter and stay in the realms of active citizenship and learning in later life.
- Learning and active citizenship are closely connected and both result in personal development.

2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE EU LEVEL

The legally-binding, relevant EU Charter of Fundamental Rights articles (Art. 21 - Non-discrimination - Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited. Art. 25 - The rights of the elderly - The Union recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.) are still largely disregarded.

- › **The approval of specific EU 80+ programmes to promote very old citizens > active ageing and citizenship engagement should be foreseen.**
-

Contrary to the goal to increase the Healthy Life Years indicator by two years by 2020, set with the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, it has decreased over the most recent years.

- › **Within the EFSI, European Fund for Strategic Investments, significant social and public infrastructure investments in favour of the old and very old EU citizens should be earmarked, so that demographic changes may turn into an opportunity towards a more and more inclusive EU society.**
-

Pension reforms and cuts in public social and health care expenditures decided at the EU level have been increasing poverty risks and undermine the satisfaction of the very basic needs of many old and 80+ citizens.

- › **There should be a shift from current EU economic priorities towards socially inclusive policies, bridging inequality gaps and supporting active citizenship by old and very old people so that a dignified later-life may be guaranteed to all.**
-

EU decision-making on old and very old citizens-related policy priorities is de facto, top-down, with consultation processes restricted to collecting opinions, with very limited impact from the expertise of the NGO networks working for the rights of old and very old people and the 80+ citizens themselves.

- › **The European Council, Commission and Parliament should involve European NGOs, working with and for old and very old citizens, in their decision-making processes and a DG on Ageing should be established within the European Commission.**
-

New research is needed on the structural changes to be implemented towards a society for all ages and on the removal of the current obstacles for 80+ active participation in public life and in socially useful projects.

- › **Within Horizon 2020, research funding should be earmarked on structural changes needed, by 2050, in pension, fiscal, building, transport, health and social infrastructures, as well as targeting old and very old citizens in public, private and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) spending and investments.**
-

3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The perception of 80+ citizens is still too often based on negative stereotypes.

- › **National government-supported radio, TV and social network campaigns should be launched to change the 80+ persons' perception and self-perception by portraying them as resources for their communities and making their knowledge and skills valued and valorized within an overall socially-inclusive approach.**
-

*"One longs to remain meaningful to other people;
we could visit people in hospitals,
visit someone at home and drink a cup of tea,
accompany someone to the hospital, those kind of things."*

80+ participant of the Active 80+ project
exchanging ideas about active citizenship in Joint Strength80+

Current national measures do not include old and very old people's skills and expertise.

- › **The active citizenship and life-long learning of old and very old people should be fostered in national governments' programmes with the aim to value and valorize their experiences and potentials.**
-

With the current demographic trends, 80+ citizens are going to increase in numbers and needs: their impact, and the opportunities derived from it are not yet anticipated by adequate policies and legislation.

- › **Diversity policies should be approved to improve the 80+ economic living conditions and their active citizenship opportunities.**
-

The competences of paid and unpaid staff in supporting the active citizenship of old and very old people are not sufficiently developed.

- › **Relevant competences should be included in training programmes for staff and volunteers engaged with and for 80+ citizens.**
-

National decision-making on old and very old citizens-related policy priorities is almost solely top-down.

- › **Representatives of NGOs working with and for old and very old citizens should be included in all national decision-making bodies concerning policies on active citizenship in later-life.**
-

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

There is a lack of legislation / regional framework programmes fostering specific 80+ active citizenship: a gap which should be bridged.

- › **Medium and long-term 80+ active citizenship-supporting legislation / regional framework programmes should be introduced.**
-

NGOs working with and for old and very old citizens still have, at most, a consultative role in current regional policies, when existing, for older people and active ageing.

- › **Representatives of NGOs working with and for old and very old citizens should be included in all regional decision-making bodies on old and very old age policies.**
-

Local transportation, including inadequate traffic light phases, curbs, pavements etc., remains one of the areas in which 80+ citizens are most heavily penalised. The lack of adequate transport means excludes them from social participation.

- › **Barrier-free footways, local public transportation and PPP schemes supporting 80+ citizens' mobility, with personalised approaches made possible by ICT and other services, should be launched.**
-

A group of 80+ participants of a Joint Strength80+ dialogue-table formulated the following recommendations to their municipality:

- *Invest in easily accessible meeting places nearby home, in the neighbourhood, such as 'public living-rooms';*
- *Provide for small-scale and affordable district-transport, including accompaniment for people with walking problems;*
- *Commission local welfare organisations to make an overview of the most important recreational, educational and meeting activities for 80+ people, referring to information channels, not just apps, leaflets and especially personal conversations close to home.*

80+ citizens living in rural areas are particularly affected by the lack of services.

- › **Innovative accessibility to services for old and very old people should be developed in rural areas, involving 80+ citizens as experts.**
-

Practice examples and initiatives for the 80+ well-being and active citizenship efforts documented by the Active 80+ project offer stimulating inputs for new local policies and programmes by regional authorities.

- › **Learn from existing best practices and pilot activities carried out by regions in other EU Member States, share them within your own twinning networks, let your region develop and share your own new 80+ active citizenship success stories!**
-

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

*"If you are 80+ and willing to contribute to public life,
local institutions ignore you."*

Volunteer for the Active 80+ activities

- › Municipalities should have 80+ active citizenship among their policy priorities, taking into account old and very old citizens' contributions, also in the overall city planning.
-

*"Why did municipalities close down so many community centers"?
I walk in the park often noticing many frail older people sitting on a bench,
even when the weather is bad. These people use to go to a day-care center
or community center. If activities and meeting places would be facilitated,
many 80+ people would be very happy to think along and become engaged."*

80+ participant of the Active 80+ project dialogue-table

Groups and organisations working with and for old and very old citizens, have still, at most, a consultative role in current local policies for older people and active ageing.

- › Old and very old citizens' NGO representatives should be included in all decision-making bodies on local policies.
-

Existing local 80+ active citizenship best practises are not disseminated and replicated and their results multiplied within local authority networks at regional, national and EU level.

- › The valuing and valorizing of the 80+ knowledge and skills should be generalised at the local level, including both successfully implemented practices and new ones to be developed in close co-operation with the 80+ people themselves on the basis of their interests and needs.
-

Isolation, with all it implies in terms of self-esteem loss and waste in potentials, is one of the structural problems affecting old and very old people as well as their communities.

- › **The interaction among different age groups should be promoted inside and outside of care settings. Intergenerational co-housing and increased personalised health and social care offers should be foreseen with staff and volunteers acting as motivators, providing adequate learning environments.**
-

"Bringing different generations together works very well: the young and the (very) old are interested in sharing experiences, problems. They ask questions; it makes them curious, wanting to learn from each other."

Manager of a residential home concerning a meeting of children from a nearby school interviewing 80+ residents about the bombardment of the city in the 2nd World War

Old and very old citizens' contributions are still mostly ignored by political actors at the local level.

- › **The active citizenship and life-long learning of old and very old people should be fostered at the local level.**
-

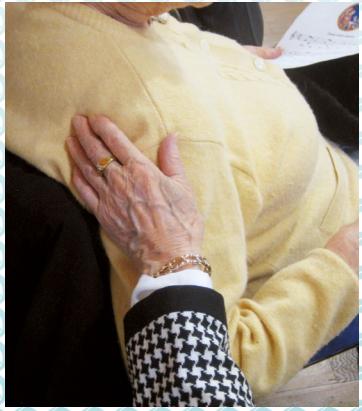
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Erasmus+

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<http://www.act-80plus.eu>