



## - Consultation paper -

# CENTRAL EUROPEAN AGEING STRATEGY ("CE-Ageing Strategy")

The CE-Ageing Platform published the "[GREEN PAPER CE-AGEING STRATEGY](#)" in February 2013. This consultation paper briefly informs on the core aspects of the green paper to be consulted with the public and lists major questions to be answered.

We kindly ask you to follow the order of the questions, even though you are not required to reply to all questions. You can also submit additional information that you consider relevant and which does not fit any specific question.

Specific privacy statement: The contributions received, together with the identity of the contributor, will be published on the project website [www.ce-ageing.eu](http://www.ce-ageing.eu), unless the contributor objects to publication of their personal data on the grounds that such publication would harm his or her legitimate interests. In this case, the contribution may be published in anonymous form. Organisations are asked to identify themselves.

### About the CE-Ageing Strategy

Based on the joint CE-Ageing Vision<sup>1</sup>, the CE-Ageing Platform identified current challenges and potentials in respect to demographic change, developed trends and scenarios for CE, and established recommendations for policy change; all of which are presented in the "GREEN PAPER CE-AGEING STRATEGY".

The Strategy covers a wide range of policy interventions aiming at sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. The recommendations link policies horizontally but also vertically, i.e. local and regional actions go hand in hand with policy changes at the national and international levels. A set of up to 200 practices are provided out of which CE regions shall choose those fitting to their particular requirements.

### CORE ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY

#### Demographic change requires urgent actions

Over the next decades Central Europe will face unprecedented demographic challenges such as an ageing and shrinking population and "ageing regions" due to demographic factors such as greater life expectancy and decreased fertility of CE citizens, just to name some. Enhanced

<sup>1</sup> The Joint Central European Ageing Vision 2050 was published by the CE-Ageing Platform on 17 July 2012 and is available at [http://www.ce-ageing.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=182&Itemid=357](http://www.ce-ageing.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=182&Itemid=357)



migration to CE as well as within CE to more affluent regions next to changes in family structures are likely to occur.

The CE-Ageing Platform identified five top ranked current challenges faced by all CE regions. These refer to the low labour force participation of particular age groups, the need for modifications with regard to governance systems, in particular the pension, social and health and care systems, changes in family structures as well as the need for a better integration of migrants. The platform, in addition, observes growing inequality across CE as well as within CE regions.

All challenges are to be regarded as cross-cutting policy fields. Consequently, links to various policy fields must be made whenever actions are planned (e.g. the economy, education and health policies are substantial policy fields strongly interconnected with the labour market and are to be connected when designing measures in order to enhance labour force participation). In order to minimise the negative effects on the CE economy and society, successful and effective co-operation of public, private and civil society organizations are required.

Four major areas of concern are in focus in regard to actions to be taken by local and regional public authorities in particular. These comprise:

- *Employability*: Undisputable, employability is the key for labour force participation and social inclusion. Investment in human capital is regarded as the cornerstone for enhancing employability.
- *Migration*: Courageous and proactive migration policies both within CE regions as well as to CE together with measures enhancing the integration of migrants are central to responding to the demographic challenges faced.
- *Family*: Modifications in the field of work and care provision due to changes in the family structures and household communities pose challenges to manage work-life balance. These policies go hand in hand with 'Employability'.
- *Healthy ageing*: Promotion of healthy active ageing is essential for all CE regions in order to enable for longer, healthier and happier lives of CE citizens.

What do you think about this main target course?

### Counterbalancing inequalities

The growing number of persons living in poverty and at-risk-of poverty draws an important picture of an unequal distribution of wealth within CE. The strategy draws specific attention to social justice and cohesion (i.e. reducing regional disparities). Less favoured regions and socially disadvantaged such as low-skilled, disabled and other vulnerable as well as persons confronted with multiple disadvantages are placed at the centre of the strategy.

Counterbalancing inequalities is regarded as "the" big challenge in CE which has to be addressed by the public. The overall policy framework in CE should concern all issues related to reducing inequalities between groups of the society but also between territories, in particular in respect of pension, health, social security as well as care and long term care system/s. The public has to draw specific attention to CE's regional disparities:

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- Rural areas in Eastern CE are most affected as knowledge and human resources next to infrastructure (e.g. health infrastructure) and capital are concentrated in big cities and wealthy rural areas (outmigration from rural areas).
- In rural areas in Western CE, inadequate policies concerning, for instance, the position of women and older workers in the work force are present and social support for families (e.g. early childcare facilities, better work-life conditions, etc.) needed.
- In wealthy urban conglomerates in CE the integration of a large number of citizens of migrant origin into social life needs to be accelerated and the 'care crisis' (formal and informal care) solved.

Building age- and family-friendly (barrier-free) structures and environments and guaranteeing accessibility of the environment and the inclusion of vulnerable people into social life will enhance social and economic participation in all CE regions. In respect to social inequality "active ageing across all ages" is recommended including intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational justice of public policy regimes as well as the better activation of human capital. Fostering social innovation may assist in resolving societal challenges and, in addition, can help to overcome inequalities.

*Should the policies implemented within CE target reducing inequalities between regions and between groups of the society?*

*If yes, how can solidarity between territories and citizens fostered at the best?*

### **Main challenges and actions for less affluent regions**

The CE-Ageing Platform identified the following main challenges faced by less affluent regions (rural and urban areas) in CE:

- Lack of attractiveness and capacities of territories with often poor infrastructure and few investments next to the lack of attractive (high-quality) jobs with low demand for labour especially in remote rural regions resulting also in low labour force participation of particular societal groups (youth, women, older workers);
- Out-migration to more affluent regions and few immigration;
- Lack of age- and family-friendly social structures (for elderly, community, etc.);
- Inadequate health structures and lack of awareness for healthy ageing and of the importance of healthy life course behaviours.

Main actions to be set in less affluent regions (rural and urban areas) in CE concern:

- Active regional development in accordance with the green growth agenda<sup>2</sup> by focussing on strengths and competitive advantages of regions (e.g. touristic attractiveness, regional branding, strengthening local markets, conducting needs analysis and marketability on products and services, establishing 'innovation clubs' for citizens, taking stock of local knowledge through networks and partnerships) and by investing in infrastructure (e.g. age and family-friendly infrastructure, road maintenance, high speed broadband internet, alternative energy production);

<sup>2</sup> EU Strategy 2020; [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm). The EU Strategy 2020 puts innovation and green growth at the heart of its blueprint for competitiveness and proposes tighter monitoring of national reform programmes. This Strategy replaces the Lisbon Agenda (adopted in 2000).



- Setting active labour market measures (training and employment) and promoting age- and family-friendly work places and working conditions (e.g. company kindergarten, part-time work, flexible working hours);
- Improving framework conditions to prevent young people from leaving the region, establishing an immigration strategy and encouraging return migration;
- Promote healthy and independent ageing and support healthy life styles (there is an essential East versus West CE dichotomy recorded; access to and good design of urban and rural infrastructure can foster healthy ageing).

*Which main challenges would you indicate for less affluent regions in CE?*

*What would you recommend to overcome the challenges faced in those territories?*

### **Adaptation of CE governance systems to change**

The CE-Ageing Platform stresses the need for the adaptation of CE governance systems to demographic change as an overall requirement. Courageous democratisation processes and participatory decision making need to be enforced and sustainable social security system/s build. Investments in staying healthy throughout life is regarded the basis.

In regard to the pension policy system, for instance, flexible models (e.g. innovative part-time transition models) should be promoted which support persons willing to work to stay in the work force as long as possible. Policy change is also needed with respect to seamless/smooth transition from work to retirement when reaching the retirement age. Thus, reinforcing sustainable integration of elderly into the labour market should diminish the risk of long-term unemployment representing at the same time a pre-stage to retirement/early retirement.

*Do you see a need in adapting the CE governance systems to change?*

*If yes, where do you see the most urgent need for action?*

### **Investments in human capital**

While the main target course of the Demography Report (2010)<sup>3</sup> was confirmed by the CE-Ageing Platform, the minor role given to human capital was criticised. Investments in human capital, i.e. all forms of education, training and life-long learning should have priority.

The CE-Platform regards developing life-long learning skills so that everyone learns the skills required for acquiring new knowledge and new skills throughout the life course as the base for inclusion and participation in our knowledge and information society. Consequently, there is an urgency seen in rethinking and making major investments in human capital. Investments need

<sup>3</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/documents/Tab/report.pdf>



to rise in particular also for high-quality (publicly subsidized) early childhood education and care service for the age group 1-6 years old.

In addition, proactive employment and active ageing policies need to be undertaken in CE: Although economies in ageing societies will rely on an ageing workforce and older consumers for generating wealth (i.e. companies will have to be proactive to attract and keep older workers), efforts need to be made to overcome negative stereotypes about particular age groups of the society (older workers in relation to productivity and health problems for instance) and to combat ageing discrimination. Working conditions need to be adapted to worker's needs (e.g. enhance possibilities for combining care-giving and learning with employment), employment, especially of particular groups of the society such as women and older persons, encouraged and multiple careers supported.

*Can you agree to the statement "education is the key for social inclusion"?*

*Should the public sector raise its investments in human capital (i.e. all forms of education, training and life-long learning)?*

### **Making work-life-balance happen**

Next to organizing permanent education and training the adaption of the work environment to the capabilities and aspirations of workers including facilities for flexibility and variation in work schedules is recommended. Making work-life-balance happen includes solving the conflict of "work for pay versus work for family" as well as the expansion of work and improvement of health over the life span.

Making work-life-balance happen is not only addressed to the public. Employers will need to be more flexible about how and where people work and how they are rewarded. To this end, solutions have to be offered in order to combine work with family and care. A paradigm shift with respect to organising and valuing work and private life is required and the conflict of "work for pay versus work for family" needs to be solved.

*Which actions are of high importance in order to make work-life-balance happen?*

*How can the conflict between "work for pay versus work for family" be solved?*

### **Joint actions**

Population ageing is a challenge across CE. Immense policy changes are required in the upcoming decades with proactive roles and responsibilities taken by various actors. Their main tasks comprise:

- *steering the processes of policy change:* the public (the CE-states, regional public authorities, municipalities, the EU, etc.);
- *adapting to demographic change within the enterprises:* the private (enterprises, private agencies, industry, private business lobbying organisations, etc.); and

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- *assisting for change, accompanying (and driving ?) the change process: the civil society (Non-for-profit, NGOs, social service associations, volunteers, citizens, etc.)*

All stakeholders are in demand in supporting policy change. It is the CE-Platform's belief that the required policies changes should be implemented in cooperation with stakeholders: a multi-governance matrix is needed in which various perspectives are integrated and efforts as well as responsibilities jointly taken to build a desirable future. A sustainable socio-economic setting for CE and its various regions can be built by setting up bundles of measure at the local and regional levels, aligning regional and local actions with policies to be taken at the national and international levels and, thus, together contributing to minimising negative effects of demographic change.

*Which roles should be taken out of your opinion by the three main stakeholders (the private, the public, civil society) in order to best contribute to minimising negative effects of demographic change?*

*How can the multi-governance matrix across different actors, policy fields and geographical scales best be build?*

### **Concluding**

The consultation paper in hand briefly informs on core aspects of the "[GREEN PAPER CE-AGEING STRATEGY](#)" in order to consult them with the public.

*Would you like to leave additional contributions?*

### **Thank you for your contribution!**

The editors of the CE-Ageing Strategy would like to thank all for their contributions when publishing the results of the consultation.

The questionnaire was completed by Ms./Mr.

Name of your organisation (if applicable):

First name:

Second name:

Phone:

Email:<sup>4</sup>

Country:

<sup>4</sup> Please indicate also your e-mail address so that we can contact you in case of need for further clarification on your contribution.