



# Age Work Balance

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Balance Approaches  
for an Ageing workforce in  
Metropolitan Areas

Final conference documentation

Berlin, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Tackling the challenges of an ageing workforce in metropolitan areas is an important step to MetropolisNet vision of an inclusive society.

The importance of older workers in the European employment sector is nothing new and a lot of activities in the member states show that older people are in the focus of different measures. In fact, the EU wide employment rate of people over 50 grew from nearly 37% to more than 47% within the last 10 years. However, this positive trend might be jeopardized taking into consideration the future demographic changes. The proportion of people aged 60 and over is growing faster than any other age group. Therefore, it is essential to keep the integration of older people into sustainable employment on the agenda, so that the positive trend can be continued.

The project AGE-WORK-BALANCE examined measures, programmes and projects which target people above the age of 50 in metropolitan areas in order to identify approaches that have proven successful in integrating older people into the labour market and to discover the common factors that determine the best balanced relationship between a particular approach and the Network-structure in which the practice is embedded.

AGE-WORK-BALANCE final conference dealt with the project leading question *“Is there a best balanced relationship between a particular approach taken and the variable “network-structure” in which the practice is embedded? On what does this balance depend?”* and presented the project findings and recommendations for professional practice. The conference additionally considered the views of practitioners, representatives of public authorities and other initiatives and networks dealing with demographic change.

In the following we like to present you some impressions and results of the AGE-WORK-BALANCE final conference

Sincerely,



Dr. Reiner Aster  
Director MetropolisNet

AGE-WORK-BALANCE-Team

## Impressions in pictures



*Lively discussions – examples from different countries*



*Mutual learning – exchange of information*



*over 50 participants  
from 8 European  
member states*

## Greetings

*Mathias Kuhlmann, Senate Department of Economics, Technology and Research, ESF Managing Authority Berlin*

On behalf of the Berlin Senate Mathias Kuhlmann welcomed all participants in Germanies capital Berlin – the capital of cosy neighbourhoods „Kieze“!

He reported about the situation in Berlin and informed the audience that older citizens are an issue but not a key target group in Berlin. Neither the local programme *BerlinArbeit* nor recent ESF initiatives in Berlin focus appropriately on older job seekers. However, taking the demographic challenges ahead of us into account this has to change rather sooner than later. It seems to be key for the Age-Work-Balance project but also for all future endeavors to integrate older citizens into the job market to build a solid bridge from the project level to the mainstream. In this regard he recognized the presence of representatives of local Jobcentres and employment service providers as an encouraging sign and a good starting point to maximize the impact of the Age-Work-Balance results.



Mathias Kuhlmann looked forward to a fruitful exchange.

*Markku Jääskeläinen, Representative of the AGE Platform Europe*



In his welcome speech Markku Jääskeläinen started with a short introduction of the AGE Platform Europe which was created 11 – 12 years ago in order to present older people on EU-level. The AGE Platform Europe is rather a network than a classical organization. He underlined the fact that pensioners organizations are not considered to be a classical social partner and therefore do not sit at the political decision-making table (an exception being Norway which is outside). The AGE Platform represents 28 million people in Europe but the overall aging of societies will let these numbers rise steeply in the next decades. He sees a clear discrimination on the labour market against older job seekers despite the fact that evidently workers aged 55-64 are at least as competent as their younger peers. He highlighted the fact that studies have shown that enterprises with a balanced combination of young and old employees are the most dynamic, thriving and successful companies. Finally he wished good discussions during the conference and sent best

regards from the AGE Platform Europe general secretary Ms. Anne Sophie Parent and its team in Brussels.

*Dr. Reiner Aster, Director MetropolisNet EEIG*

Reiner Aster welcomed all conference participants not only as director of the MetropolisNet, but also as director of gsub-Projektgesellschaft mbH, where the conference took place. In a short and very entertaining session he introduced the participants of the different countries (Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Finland, Poland, Netherlands and Belgium) and he introduced the persons involved in the project in their different roles as peer reviewers and stakeholders.



Furthermore he presented the MetropolisNet which was founded 1998 as informal network with the aim to support local partnerships, employment pact and initiatives and to organise exchange of knowhow and transfer of good practice. In 2009 MetropolisNet was established as European Economic Interest Group. The city network still implements joint projects like Age-Work-Balance. The idea of the project is to answer the question on how we can (re) integrate older longterm unemployed into the labour market. This question was important for all involved cities. A particular emphasis has been put on the relationship of practices and the network and how this relationship impacts the service and its performance for the target group.

## ***Project design and Methodology of Age-Work-Balance Project***

*Jasmin Zouzi, MetropolisNet EEIG, Berlin*  
*Maria Schwarz-Woelzl, ZSI, Vienna*

In this session the participants had the chance to get a quick insight of the project design and its methodology.

Age-Work-Balance is funded by the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and implemented within the framework of PROGRESS the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity. Jasmin Zouzi emphasized the role of the transnational partnership within the project. It is built on a transnational partnership consisting of the MetropolisNet members in nine European cities. She remarked that each partner had different responsibilities and tasks. Thus for example Lawaetz and gsub-PG have been responsible for the research design and ZSI was responsible for the peer review method, while all partners participated as peer reviewers in this project.



In a next step Jasmin Zouzi demonstrated the needs for such a project like Age-Work-Balance and based her explanations on European figures. In the last 10 years the employment rate of older people has increased by almost 10%. This is a positive trend, but this doesn't change the fact that the employment rate of older people is only 47% compared to the overall employment rate of 68%. A fundamental element for positive change can be seen in the implementation of specific measures to support older workers labour market participation from the member states. The project addresses exactly this issue. The partnership wanted to find out what constitutes an innovative practice in order to integrate older long term unemployed people into sustainable employment. They had the assumption that networks and partnerships play an important role for the success of a project. The question which led the project was therefore: Is there a best balanced relationship between a particular approach taken and the variable "network – structure" in which the practice is embedded? On what does this balance depend?

Existing target group specific projects and existing non-target group specific approaches (as control group) served as the basis for the project as they are the information source to answer the project & leading question.

The project used the peer-review method combined with the critical friend approach. Maria Schwarz-Woelzl underlined in this regard the reciprocal relation between the host



organizations and the peer reviewers as “critical friends” to generate information via five workshops, concerned with the questions of: What is the strategy of a particular city to active labour market policies? What is the good practice? What role does the network play in that good practice? This challenging questions and discussions let to non-binding suggestions by the peer reviewers for the host organizations and their practice and built the source for the development of the projects learning and findings.

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## Practical Experience

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Representatives of the reviewed practices:

*Kerstin Birkner, [Berliner BÄr](#), Berlin*

*Tobias Hamer, [Jobcenter team.arbeit.hamburg](#), Hamburg*

*José Miguel Gómez Villanueva, [Cantabria Employment Service](#), Santander*

*Ciaran Reid, [Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership](#), Dublin*

**Age-Work-Balance peer reviewers:**

*Mónica Gómez Fernández, [Documenta](#), Santander*

*Dr. Diana Peitel, [gsub-PG](#), Berlin*

In the following sequence interviews with practitioners and peer reviewers were conducted dwelling on details of their respective practices.

First of all Kerstin Birkner from Berliner BÄr presented the specificity of the project Berliner BÄr, a target group



specific approach which focuses exclusively on older long-term unemployed citizens as part of the federal programme Perspective 50+. The size of this project can be seen as

very special. More than 14.000 older long-term unemployed people are registered and 7 Jobcenters are involved. Furthermore the project works with the so called “2-phases model” which means that additional recruitment consultants especially for the 50+ clients are hired by the Jobcenter and involved in the regulary



Jobcenter teams. At the same time they are collaborating with external social partners. In contrast with Berliner BÄr the Ballyfermot Partnership represented by Ciaran Reid does not offer its services exclusively to the older population. The Ballyfermot Partnership sees



itself as a gateway not only to employment opportunities but also to a range of local engagement activities (like volunteering opportunities, engagement in men sheds groups etc.). Despite their differences both approaches make use of networks. In Dublin all customers are profiled according to their needs and they are subsequently referred to experts in areas like counseling. Kerstin Birkner pointed out that in Berlin good experiences were gained by making use of private service providers and partners particularly in the field of coaching.

José Miguel Gómez Villanueva from the Cantabria Employment Service remarked that the



avalanche of unemployment also resulted in a fierce competition for attention for all target groups for funding. The question whether target group specific approaches necessarily result in disadvantages for other groups was denied by Tobias Hamer from jobcenter team.arbeit in Hamburg since their practice was funded by additional public resources.



Concerning the questions of how peer reviewers perceived their role as critical friends Diana Peitel complimented the open atmosphere and underlined the mutual learning



experience between hosts and peer reviewers. However, it must be acknowledged that there are clear limits of transferability of insights about the practice-network structures due to distinctive local and cultural backgrounds. Mónica Gómez stressed the utility for the host country bringing an unbiased and fresh perspective on common practices. José Miguel Gómez Villanueva underpinned this dynamic



with the example of that German practices might want to consider more the value of permanent contracts since in Germany practices often lead to temporary contracts. Kerstin Birkner added that of course permanent contracts are desirable but the problem is that employers only offer short time contracts and that employment service providers consider themselves already happy when 50+ customers are offered a job.

A participant of the audience raised the crucial question concerning the mobility of older citizens, which more than often limits their employability. Ciaran Reid underlined this problematique since data in Dublin has shown that 80% of the target group is not willing

to travel more than two miles due to costs of transportation and their general ability to travel. Reiner Aster pointed out that mobility is a key issue in the German Perspective 50+ programme and activities like driving lessons and the organization of bus transports are cornerstones of the measure. Moreover, health care provision in terms of movement, nutrition and relaxation is another important focus.

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## Strategy Paper & practical recommendation

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*Speaker: Dr. Daniel F. Heuermann, University of Regensburg, Germany*

*Commentator: Dr. Ulrich Schenck, Lawaetz Foundation, Germany and Philip O'Connor, Ballymun Job Centre, Dublin*

In this session the focus was on the question “What did we find out of this project?” raised by Daniel F. Heuermann. He presented the key findings and the lessons the peer reviewers have derived from the 5 workshops in Graz, Berlin, Hamburg, Santander and Dublin and finally gave the audience an impression of the recommendations based on the findings. This was commented by Ulrich Schenck and Philip O'Connor in their role as peer reviewers and discussed with the whole audience.

Daniel Heuermann started with the presentation of the key questions approached in the project: Is there a relationship, a balanced relationship and even a best



balanced relationship between an approach and the underline network? And which factors determine the balance between this two? Within the project partnership the approach was seen as a bundle of measures that is aimed at the integration of unemployed persons into the labour market, while the network was defined as cooperation between different partners that collaborate in order to achieve this goal. The connection between approach and network is complex. The partnership sees as key insight concerning this approach that modern active labour market policies consist of individualized and holistic services. That

means that individual circumstances and the specific needs of job seekers and enterprises are taken into account. These needs may consist of counseling, guidance, provision of health care on the job seeker side and consulting and placements services on the company side. In order to provide these holistic services properly network partners are needed.

This led the partnership to following statements regarding the interrelation between the approach and the network:

- The need for a network increases with the complexity of an approach since it is unlikely that one single organization can account for all individual needs
- The size of a network increases with the degree of local ownership since the more responsibilities the partners have the more they have to collaborate
- The shape of network depends on the political and legal environment because certain tasks are appointed by law which sets natural limits to the possibility to outsource tasks
- The use of networks increases with respective traditions and customs

The key insights concerning the network are:

- Public and private institutions both have their comparative advantage, on average one can say that public institutions are better suited for placement services while private ones are efficient for measures like counseling and guiding
- Networks need time to be established, projects profit from long lasting stable relationships between the network partners due to the creation of trust and the reduction of transaction costs
- Effective coordination matters as well as communication within the network
- Networks do not need to be formal to be efficient; also networks are always a means not an end in itself which means that they are sometimes not beneficial (for instance, if a single entity can provide all services out of one hand), if there is a struggle and competition for resources in the network networks can be even detrimental
- Networks will not prevail without sufficient resources

These key insights have implications on the balance between an approach and a network, because the potential of a network shapes the nature and complexity of the approach. The network itself defines what the approach is capable to achieve. In other words: the approach or the intention tells us how the network needs to look like and vice versa the quality of the network tells us how well the approach is implemented and how complex the service can be.

So it is obvious that there is a balance between the approach and the network, even this balance does not necessarily need to be the best balance. The balance itself depends on external factors and on the policy environment. Daniel Heuermann remarked that it is the task of policy makers to get the incentives right and to get the instructions right, so that the balance can be the best balance.

From this following recommendation have been developed:

- Future initiatives should be designed as outcome-oriented policies where the policy level should set the targets (negotiated in vertical partnership, relating not only to quantity but also the quality of created jobs) and the measure and the used network is defined on the local level.
- Encouraging cooperation between public and private organizations has turned out to be a very fruitful synergy.
- Networks should be regarded as an investment into structures and knowledge; this investment will only pay off with a sufficient time horizon.
- Local projects should be encouraged to constantly compare performance of its approach to realistic counterfactuals.
- It is the mixture of mainstream and innovative measures to a specific target group which makes projects successful.
- Projects should be designed to be transferable to other contexts, local projects exchange with other projects to further improve and learn.

Ulrich Schenck focused in his comments on the Efficiency of networks. He sees a danger of limited rationality since social partners often have closely related associations which excludes other providers (who might be actually more suitable); moreover, the choice of certain partners has an influence on the picked target groups which by definition excludes other groups. Finally, he finds it problematic that governments have introduced a second level of regulating labour market policies; next to output regulations and evaluation activities there are increased measures for input regulations (especially in terms of procedures, accounting etc.) which limits the room of maneuver.

Philip O'Connor highlighted the fact that the peer review process has been made by practitioners discussing the strength and weaknesses of approaches and not by



policy makers. For him this has been a great plus. He found the strategy paper excellent but mentioned critically that a bigger focus could have been put on the putative differences between target-specific and general approaches. In his opinion the value of target specific approach is at the policy level to meet the special needs of disadvantaged groups, but in actual implementation there is not that much of a difference because in practice both approaches put great value on an individualized service. Furthermore he underlined the importance of a sound agreement between policy setting level and the local autonomous implementation in particular in terms of resourcing; unfortunately there is the tendency that great pressure is applied from the policy level on the output delivery side and parallel decrease of resourcing on the network side.

In a concluding remark Mr Heuermann underlined that the finding and results in terms of the relationship of measures and networks are very much transferable to all other target groups, which is one of the distinctive surpluses of the Age-Work-Balance project.

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## Round Table: How to bring older people into sustainable employment?

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*Markku Jääskeläinen, Representative of AGE Platform Europe*

*Armelle Ledan, Representative of ESF-Age Network*

*Michał Sułkowski, Ministry of Regional Development, Poland*

*Angela Nardone / Luigia Maria Miredda, Italia Lavoro, Rome*

*Tommi Eskonen, Association of Finnish Local & Regional Authorities, Helsinki*

*Dr. Reiner Aster, MetropolisNet/gsub-PG, Berlin*

*José Gómez Villanueva, Cantabria Employment Service, Santander*

After an introduction of the round table participants the moderator Michael Förschner started with two questions by the audience. The first question focused on the limitation of available funding. Which target group gets the additional funding? What are the selection criteria? Dr. Reiner Aster answered the question with an example of the Perspective 50+ programme. The programme acknowledged the danger that older citizens are often discriminated by employers and that the target group itself has a low self-esteem and motivation to re-enter the labour market. Thus, the decision was made to put a focus on the older

unemployed citizens but only for a certain period of time. It should be underlined that the methods that were used are well transferable to other target groups like single parents, youth,



migrants etc. The second question of the audience focused on the Spanish family model. Does the family play a special role in the Spanish model? This question was answered by José Gómez Villanueva. He confirmed that the family does play an important role in Spain since the family is seen as a refuge for the unemployed. In times of crisis where the wages decrease the family is the social net that tries to absorb the negative effects and give the concerned person space to look for a new job.

In a next step Michael Förchner brought up the question on how do public authorities react to holistic approaches in order to bring older people back into work. Markku Jääskeläinen remarked that it should be acknowledged that the public and the private sector must feel responsible for unemployed senior citizens. In the good European tradition of the social dialog only joint solutions will lead to sustainable integration. In that field the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the employment of older citizens does not exclude the employment of younger people as studies of the OECD have shown. On the contrary old and young should work in tandems and learn in an active exchange from each other. Armelle Ledan mentioned that the possibility for older colleagues to overtake a role as tutors and mentors is a topic the ESF-AGE-Network is handling with. Furthermore she informs that employment of older people does not compete with employment of younger people, even if this has often been argued. This was demonstrated in a very valid and economic way by the OECD.



Michael Förschner brought in the issue that **some countries in Europe have to handle with dramatically ageing regions.**

Some of them need urgently the participation of older people in the labour market otherwise many companies have to close down. Tommi Eskonen from Association of Finnish Local & Regional Authorities confirmed that with a little different view as he reported about some cities or small towns in Finland where factories must change their location as only older people are staying in the town while the younger population is leaving and so not enough workforce is there. Michał Sułkowski from the Ministry of Regional Development Poland reported about a region in the centre of Poland famous for its textile industry. This region is in rather dramatic situations caused through different facts like the close distance to Warsaw. But also ageing plays an important role and the fact that the population does not live in a healthy way.



There is a need to develop employment and healthcare strategies for this region. Angela Nardone and Luigia Maria Mirena from Italia Lavoro attested a similar situation for Italy. In Italy more than 30% of the population is over 55 years.



years.

They informed about a very practical experience with a national inter-generational project called “The Inter-generational Bridge” as one strategy to keep older people into employment, implemented by the Italian Ministry of Labour. The idea behind this project is to avoid inter-generational conflicts between young and old, which might be caused through a recent Italian pension reform which produces a significant increase of the participation rate of older workers from almost 29% to 47% in the next 10 years. The idea behind the project is to change the contracts of older workers on a voluntary basis into part time contracts, if a younger worker is hired by the same employer with a permanent contract. The older worker in turn does not lose the pension rights and the missing contribution to the social security is paid by the region. Dr. Reiner Aster continued with a practical example and gave a prospect for a concrete policy outcome of the Age-Work-Balance project. In Berlin they had the idea to combine the Perspective 50+ approach with the approach used in Santander for a proposal to the *BerlinArbeit* programme of the

Berlin Senate. In essence, it is planned to combine a labour market incentive wage subsidies scheme for small companies with job coaching to stabilize the working contracts. The issue of decent work will play a fundamental role since the duration of granted subsidies are directly linked to the duration of the contract and the level of income with the ultimate goal in mind that the employee is not dependent on benefits anymore.

During the discussion the point of the legal retirement age was taken up. One participant critically remarked that to go into pension with a specific age (depends on the regulation in the member state) is a “must” and does not depend on the ability of work of the single person independently of its age. Tommi Eskonen underlined that the ability of work is a key issue if you talk about longterm unemployed people. An individualized approach is always needed. It is important to know what the person is interested in and to see the whole situation behind the person. This has to do with capacity building in order to learn new skills also on older age. Furthermore it is also a matter of attitudes and prejudices in the labour market and also on the side of employers. Finally Armelle Ledan highlighted the fact that it cannot be stressed enough that despite the fact that youth unemployment is the unrivaled hot issue at the moment this will very soon change.

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## Recommended literature, project and initiatives

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- AGE-WORK-BALANCE Strategy Paper  
[www.age-work-balance.metropolisnet.eu/reports](http://www.age-work-balance.metropolisnet.eu/reports)
- AGE-WORK-BALANCE Video: A first glance at our project outcomes  
<http://www.age-work-balance.metropolisnet.eu/videos/video-a-first-glance-at-our-project-outcome>
- AGE-WORK-BALANCE Peer Review Reports from Graz, Berlin, Hamburg, Santander and Dublin  
<http://www.age-work-balance.metropolisnet.eu/reports>
- Active ageing and solidarity between generations; A statistical portrait of the European Union 2012; EuroStat European Commission  
[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-EP-11-001/EN/KS-EP-11-001-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EP-11-001/EN/KS-EP-11-001-EN.PDF)
- Project Implementation of the Work Ability Index in the Netherlands  
<http://www.esfage.eu/network-products/netherlands/health-management/programmes/implementation-work-ability-index>
- ESF-Age Network  
<http://www.esfage.eu>  
Video: <http://www.esfage.eu/network-products/Video-Did-you-know>
- AGE Platform Europe  
<http://www.age-platform.eu/en>
- The Inter-generational Bridge - An Italian measure to support solidarity between generations.  
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