Promoting Participation, Social Inclusion and Non-Discrimination of Older Persons

Clemens Tesch-Roemer
German Centre of Gerontology

Panel discussion at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing
Vienna, 19. September 2012
Argument

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Argument

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Interventions for active ageing

Born 1930
(82 years in 2012)

Early Investment

Late(r) Investment

Participation

Age

Employment/Family

Retirement
**Argument**

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Interventions for active ageing should take into account diversity in ageing processes.

Some facets of diversity:
- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Region
- Ethnicity
- Living with/out handicap
- Cultural and political contexts
Education as investment in active ageing

1. Education concerns the acquisition of knowledge and skills and is a gateway for occupational career, influencing also financial status.

2. Educational status influences health, social integration, and societal participation.

3. Education in early phases of the life-course has to be complemented with opportunities for life-long learning.

4. Cumulative inequality theory points out the accumulation of risks and opportunities over the life-course.

5. Hence, late life educational opportunities should take into account life-course histories of skill and knowledge acquisition.
Argument

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Retirement: Gain or loss?

Active Ageing

Retirement as gain:
More free time, less obligations, recuperation from work related stress etc.
„Late freedom“

Retirement as loss:
Less income, less power, reduced social ties, less meaning in life etc.
„Being a burden“

Differential Effects:
Effects of retirement depend on social status, competence, skills, richness of goals etc.
„Prism“

Active Ageing

↑ Age

Active Ageing

↑ Age

Active Ageing

↑ Age

Hi educ
Lo educ
Volunteering decreases with age...

Volunteering: Percentage of individuals with „honorary function“ in organizations

40-54 Years
55-69 Years
70-85 Years

German Ageing Survey (DEAS) 2008

Naumann & Romeu Gordo 2010
…but educational status is more important than age.

Volunteering: Percentage of individuals with „honorary function“ in organizations

German Ageing Survey (DEAS) 2008

Naumann & Romeu Gordo 2010
...and the age gradient in volunteering rates has become smaller in Germany.
Argument

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Volunteering has important effects…

…for the individual person:
Volunteering has positive effects for the individual person, e.g. increased social inclusion, opportunities for education, and enhancement of quality of life.

Caution: Time and effort should not exceed the capabilities of a person.

…for the community:
Volunteering increases the social capital of neighbourhood and communities.

Caution: Volunteering is not per se socially inclusive.

…and for the society as a whole:
The economic value of volunteering can add significantly to the GDP of a country.

Caution: Monetary value may be inadequate for certain types of active participation, e.g. political initiatives.
Factors influencing participation in political, social and community life

- **Organizational level**
  Matching the needs of voluntary organizations and the interests of volunteers, especially those of subsequent birth cohorts.

- **Municipal level**
  Physical accessibility, service proximity, security, affordability, and inclusiveness increase active ageing (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010). Local policies influence the rates of productive participation of older people (e.g. Traunmüller, Stadelmann-Steffen, Ackermann & Freitag, 2012)

- **National level**
  Political and religious freedom and the extent of democratic participation, but also the provision of welfare state services influence the rates of productive participation of older people (e.g. Hank, 2011)
Volunteering: Fields for action

– **Organizational level: Welcoming beginners**
  Organizations should be open for “new volunteers” by offering choice of voluntary activities, the ability to plan one’s own time table and compensation for the activity.

– **Municipal level: Striving for age-friendly cities**
  Striving to be inclusive of older people and to develop seniors’ involvement by creating opportunities for participation and volunteering.

– **National level: Creating a culture of solidarity**
  Developing a national strategy for volunteering: Setting the frame for participation and active ageing (e.g. providing support for taking up voluntary work, e.g. reimbursement of expenses, insurance coverage).

→ **Developing a culture of recognition and age-inclusiveness**
Argument

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.
Some images of older people
Images of ageing: Consequences, antecedents, strategies

- **Consequences of images of ageing**
  Aging person: Health, performance, e.g. in memory tasks, activities
  Professionals: Medical decisions, personnel decisions

- **Antecedents of images of ageing**
  Higher educational status related to more positive images of ageing. Maybe also relevant: more frequent contact with older people in childhood.

- **Strategies for changing images of ageing**
  Direct intervention: School curricula, community programmes for inter-generational exchange, media interventions for a realistic portrayal of older persons.
  General: Changing age limits (retirement age; anti-discrimination laws.)
Thank you very much for your attention!

1. **Life course**: Although interventions for active ageing are most efficient when taking place early in the life-course, they are also effective and meaningful later in life.

2. **Diversity** in ageing processes should be reflected in interventions for promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

3. **Transition into retirement** is an important gateway for active ageing.

4. **Active participation** in later life is based on opportunities for involvement and volunteering in organizations and in the community.

5. **Images of ageing** frame opportunities for active ageing and access to social and health services for older persons.

Clemens Tesch-Römer, German Centre of Gerontology, Berlin: ctr@dza.de