



 Lisbon 20 - 22 September 2017

A SUSTAINABLE
SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES

Realizing the potential
of living longer

Synthesis of the Research Forum 20 September 2017

Kai Leichsenring
European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

Aims

- To foster a dialogue around the three themes of the Ministerial Conference from different perspectives of research on ageing
 - Recognizing the potential of older people
 - Encouraging longer working life and ability to work
 - Ensuring ageing with dignity
- To identify common findings to underpin the Ministerial Declaration with evidence from research on ageing
- To identify priority areas of future research on ageing

Setting and outcomes

- About 70 renowned researchers on ageing from across the UNECE Region
 - Social gerontology, psychology, law, economy, political sciences, labour market research
 - 2 inputs/statements on specified issues per session
 - Invited comments from Eastern European perspectives
 - UNECE Café discussion at round tables
- Wide consensus among participants
- Synthesis of results, rather than declaration

Recognizing the potential of older people

- A paradigm shift is needed to establish an age-friendly culture
 - Societal institutions and cultural traditions
 - Social and economic values, that are shaping life-course patterns
 - Narratives of ageing
- However, support mechanisms are needed for a rising number of older people in need of care
 - Realising potentials through re-ablement, equal access to long-term care services and facilities, organisational and technological innovation
 - Facilitating mutual learning between 'early movers' and 'late movers' in Eastern Europe

Encouraging longer working life and ability to work

- Sustainable work over the life course required
 - Supporting people in engaging and remaining in work
 - Taking care of circumstances and situations of workers throughout working life, in particular at transitions
- Avoiding cumulative inequalities
 - Early disadvantage increases exposure to risk as disadvantages accumulate over the life course
- Specific challenges in Eastern Europe
 - Increasing employment rates and rapid ageing call for a new work-retirement balance in the face of changing life cycles

Ensuring ageing with dignity

- Persisting age-discrimination and mistreatment of older adults
 - Towards a binding treaty on the rights of older persons
 - Policies need to be proactive, specific to elder abuse, participatory, gender specific, implemented and evaluated
- However, dignity also means
 - Improving access to lifelong learning, Internet, sports, culture, volunteering etc.
 - increasing employability of older workers
 - Creating conditions for independent living by improving housing, access to health care and the availability of services for older people in rural and remote areas

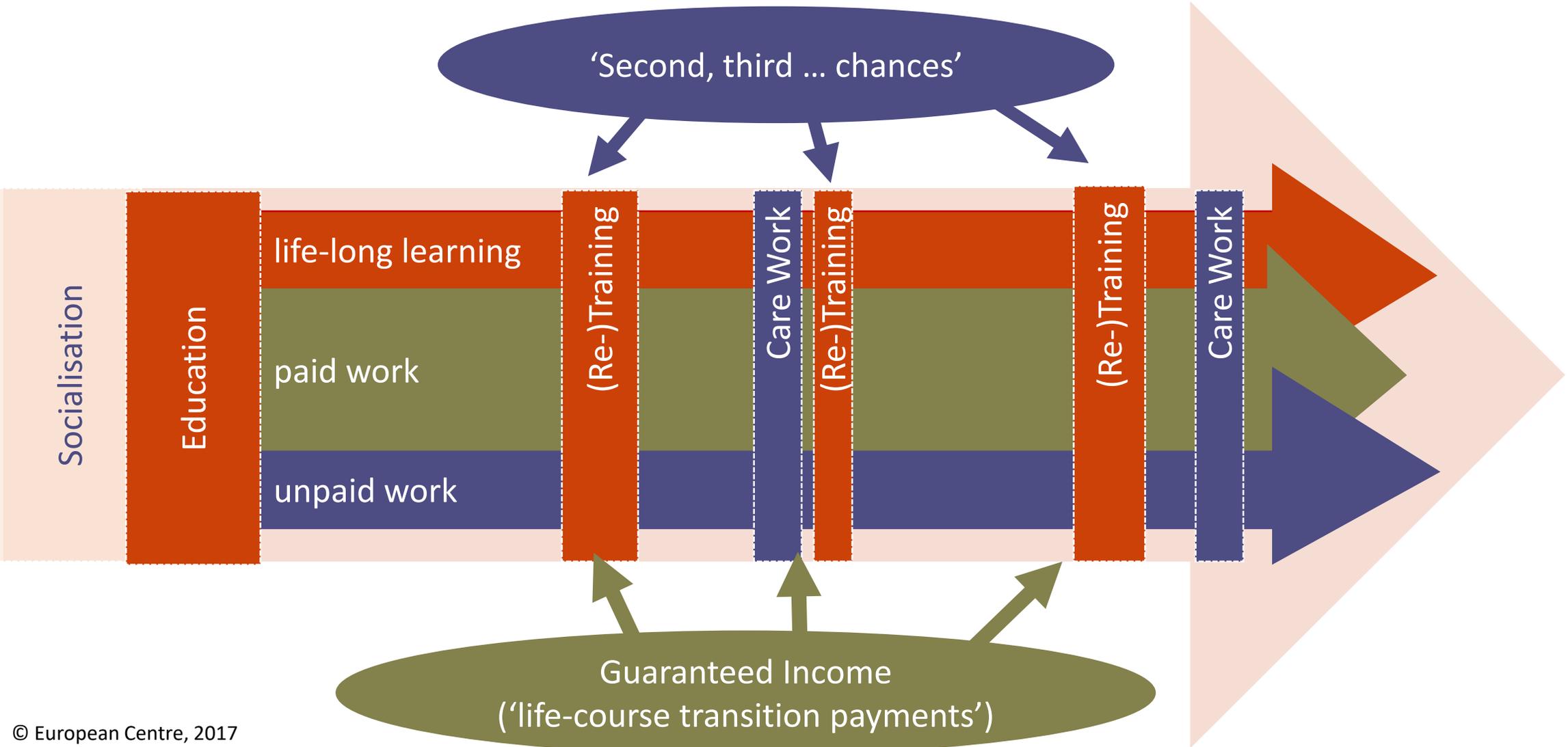
Research needs

- Exploring the potentials of involving the various groups of older people in social, political and cultural discourse and planning
- Investigating necessary preconditions for implementing a culture of (positive) ageing with a view on the diversity of societal groups, in particular at higher ages
- Analysing social investment initiatives, including knowledge on the drivers of technology for an ageing population, and exploring possibilities to equally distribute the potentials of the silver economy
- Analysing the efficacy of policy measures to overcome poverty and inequalities
 - Exploring the potentials of reducing and preventing cumulative inequalities by adopting a life course perspective as a framework to understand well-being in later life

Research needs

- Exploring innovative ways to extend working lives and developing concepts of sustainable and valuable work lives in a life-course perspective (trajectories, interfaces)
- Exploring the challenges of men and women to reconcile paid work and non-paid activities, including care provided outside kin relationships
- Promoting further multidisciplinary research on human rights in old age and measures for combating ageism
- Identifying predictors of mistreatment of older adults in families, in the public sphere and in residential settings, and its consequences
- Synthesizing existing results of ageing research to learn from existing knowledge

Towards an integrated life-course perspective in a solidaristic society?



Realizing the potential of living longer

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 19
September 2017

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Reframing age and ageing.....	2
Healthy ageing.....	3
Longer working lives.....	5
The Silver Economy.....	9
Volunteering and unpaid care.....	10
Towards an age-integrated life-course approach.....	15
Conclusion.....	17
References.....	18
Checklist.....	20

Challenging context

The need to adapt to the challenges of population ageing prevails in policy, media and general discourse. Much less attention is being paid to the opportunities and potentials that living longer holds for individuals, economies and society at large, and to tackling the barriers that currently hinder their full realization. Perceiving longevity mainly as a fiscal pressure and an obstacle to economic growth may trigger reforms that result in rising inequalities. This can occur when the cumulative disadvantages stemming from difficulties in transitions over the life course, ill health and disability and unpaid caregiving are insufficiently addressed. It also feeds into age-based stereotypes and negative attitudes towards older people. To change this, it is essential to better recognize the potentials of ageing societies and to enable people to live active and fulfilling lives as they age.

Suggested strategies

An age-integrated approach that facilitates transitions between phases of education, working, caring and leisure and the possibility of combining them flexibly across the life course is advised. This would contribute to the realization of the potentials of longer life while mitigating personal risks and social inequalities. Collaborative efforts of individuals, civil society, businesses and the state are needed to realize the potentials of living longer:

- **To realize the potential of healthy life years**, more emphasis needs to be placed on health promotion and disease prevention throughout the life course, tackling health inequities and providing age-friendly and supportive environments.
- **To realize the potential of extended working lives**, lifelong learning needs to be fostered. Support to workers at various stages (transitions) of the life course is needed to tackle unemployment. Awareness-raising campaigns and other measures are called for to combat ageism and dispel age-related misconceptions that disadvantage groups of employees or jobseekers.
- **To realize the potential of the Silver Economy**, the needs and preferences of older people have to be better understood. Older people should be involved in designing, testing and evaluating new technologies, products and services to ensure their relevance.
- **To realize the potential of volunteering and informal caring**, it is recommended to enhance the recognition of voluntary contribution and to facilitate volunteering, civil engagement and caregiving throughout the life course. Flexible transitions and simultaneous reconciliation of working and caregiving or volunteering need to be promoted and the risks associated with part-time working or time off employment need to be reduced.

Expected results

The opportunities of longevity will be better realized if people are enabled to lead healthier lifestyles and receive the treatment and care they need, seek out and seize lifelong learning and training opportunities, stay in employment for a longer time, volunteer more and provide care and support to their families and communities over the entire life course.

With good practice examples from:

Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom.

This policy brief addresses Commitments 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and paragraph 3 of the Preamble of the 2012 Vienna Ministerial Declaration:

“We recognize that the enduring demographic changes have been generating both opportunities and challenges in the region. We are committed to raising awareness about and enhancing the potential of older persons for the benefit of our societies and to increasing their quality of life by enabling their personal fulfilment in later years, as well as their participation in social and economic development”.



United Nations

More information

<http://www.unece.org/population/wga.html>
www.euro.centre.org