



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Population Unit

www.unece.org/pau

Policy Brief: Images of Older Persons

4th meeting of the Working Group on Ageing

Geneva, 22 November 2011

Agenda Item 6b



UNECE

United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

Policy brief

Integration and participation of older persons in society

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 4
November 2009

Commitment 2 of the UNECE strategy on ageing: To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society.

Realizing a society for all ages is the declared goal of Governments in member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. To this end, achieving the integration and participation of older persons in society are important elements. This policy brief outlines the main strategies that may be considered to increase participation of older persons in political and economic life and to improve their access to transport, appropriate housing and cultural activities. It highlights the importance of balanced intergenerational relationships based on mutual respect. Efforts may be made to reduce ageism and to destigmatize old age. The potential of volunteering may also be used – both in support of older generations and by the older generations themselves.

Challenging context:

People live longer and healthier lives than ever before and have also the potential to make important contributions to societies at old age. However, older persons are often vulnerable to exclusion, marginalization and discrimination.

Suggested strategies:

- Political empowerment of older persons
- Promoting labour market participation of older persons

Contents

Integration and participation:
The issue 2
The concept 2

Functional integration:

United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

Policy brief

Summers

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 3
November 2009

"In an ageing society, one aims to further enhance the social, economic, political and cultural participation of older persons. [...] Older persons should therefore be recognized as a significant consumer group with shared and specific needs, interests, and preferences. Governments, service providers and civil society should take into account the views of older persons on the design of products and delivery of services."¹

The ageing of the population affects every aspect of society and economic activity. Among other things, older persons constitute an increasing consumer group with specific needs and significant aggregate purchasing power. Policymakers may wish to encourage companies to bring to the market more products for all ages.

This policy brief addresses the issues related to older persons as consumers in the background of demographic trends, the well-being of older persons in the UNECE region and their special needs, preferences and interests regarding consumption.

United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

Policy brief

Stream a gender approach in

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 2
November 2009

demographic and societal changes, on men and women and on all considered. Gender mainstreaming the implications for women es, prior to implementation. This t of strategies in which concerns to women and men are an integral y, implementation, monitoring and programmes.

and mainstreaming gender are equalities in older age result from d disadvantages during the life adopt a lifecycle approach when connections of ageing and gender anding that present circumstances understood by references to their requires the linking of socie- les and relationships in later life es of men and women. In many mainstreaming is an established arking on national strategies to

United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

Policy brief

To mainstream ageing in all policy es into harmony with demographic

UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 1
November 2009

ons across all spheres of society. Ageing- y fields in order to bring societies and y brief looks at how Governments can do ys in which all age groups can be equally abled policies and programmes.

Context ageing

in Europe and North America are ageing, themselves still in the stage of the so-called bonus, a situation in which working-age up the larger share of population while the ender children and older adults is relatively utional labour force and soon in many countries, e generations are approaching retirement epancy is increasing. This necessitates in many policy areas.

Strategy: mainstreaming

ng ageing is a policy strategy directed towards ageing issues into all relevant policy fields. While relying on evidence-based policies, ss should involve other stakeholders in a range of policymaking process.

Result integration

ng helps to ensure better integration of the groups into the policymaking process. It can persons to contribute to society, communities as much as other age groups do. Ultimately, help to bring economies and societies in h demographic change.

The series of 11 Policy Briefs published: Special thanks to all contributors!



UNECE

Policy briefs: idea behind

The challenge: Break down abstract policy frameworks of MIPAA/RIS to concrete action

- ✓ Translate knowledge into evidence-based policy advice
- ✓ Outline rationale for choosing a particular policy alternative
- ✓ Summarise state of the art of policy debate on an issue
- ✓ Concise, easily understandable for broad audience
- ✓ Good practice examples representing all UNECE region



UNECE

Policy Brief « Images of Older Persons »

To assist in fulfilling
Commitment 2 of MIPAA/RIS:

**TO ENSURE FULL INTEGRATION
AND PARTICIPATION OF OLDER
PERSONS IN SOCIETY**





UNECE

Introduction: Challenging Context

Older persons are respected and well integrated:

- + with considerable knowledge and experience
- + with consumer power through life-long accumulated savings
- + and are able to assist younger family members and their community with advice through gained experience.

Other factors foster a gap between generations and a general lack of empathy towards various age-groups:

- the displacement of older persons into segregated communities
- an undervaluing of different contributions in society
- and negative media portrayals.



UNECE

Suggested Strategies

- Ongoing dialogue through accessible and life-long education which fosters greater awareness about different experiences
- Curricula that incorporate intergenerational and gender perspectives
- Appropriate means to encourage a realistic and heterogeneous portrayal of older persons in the media
- Programmes that carry incentives and/or facilitate NGO collaboration with mass media outlets
- Intentional inclusion of persons of all ages in community activities





Expected Results of the Suggested Strategies:

- greater awareness of different lived-experiences
- social networks
- greater diversity of contact
- breaking down of stereotypes
- enhancing culture in particular communities
- increase in self-esteem





UNECE

What is Considered to be Old?

- Definitions of age tend to rely on societal norms such as the subjective experience of an individual, the role one occupies, or level of physical and mental ability
- Most used demographic definition of 'old age' is 65 years and older
- Although the accepted definition of age is chronological, age can also be defined by socio-cultural, biological and psychological processes
- Self-perception of the own capabilities is also relevant



UNECE

Heterogeneity of Older Persons

- Societal portrayals of older persons are often limited and influenced by the:
 - level of contact with older persons
 - media
 - societal and cultural perspectives
- Older persons are a heterogeneous group that differs based on:
 - personality
 - life experiences
 - age, gender
 - sexuality
 - culture
 - socio-economic status
 - geography
 - health and activity level





UNECE

Perceptions of Gender Differences

- Perceptions of the gender differences among older persons can differ greatly across cultural and legal environments
- In many cultures there are distinct roles of the older persons in the community, as well as differing gender roles performed
- In general, across cultures (older) women tend to be the primary caregivers



UNECE

Combating the Causes and Effects of Stereotype Formation

- Closer spatial proximity of older persons decreases the likelihood of isolation and stigmatization
- Understanding the value of diverging contributions to society
- Attention to intergenerational perspectives on ageing in families, schools and communities



UNECE

A Good Practice Example on Combating the Causes and Effects of Stereotype Formation

Portugal: Mais Idade, Mais Cidadania/ Increased Age, Increased Citizenship

- The programme seeks to develop concepts and means to address two areas:
 1. to decrease the isolation and older people,
 2. to combat violence more generally
- First results have been discussed at a national meeting called "Changing Horizons of Violence in Older Persons" to combat violence on 21 January 2011.

Contact: Rute Guerra at rute.guerra@gep.mtss.gov.pt or the Social Security Institute, Promotion of Autonomy Unit



UNECE

Media Portrayals of Older Persons

- How older persons are perceived overall in society is difficult to measure
- Media portrayals of older persons may be used as an indicator of societal perceptions of aging and the role of older persons
- Stereo-typed images of older persons contribute to a limited perceptions of older persons
- For a realistic portrait of older persons:
 - portray older persons as contributors
 - helping their families and communities
 - working or volunteering
 - passing down their knowledge and experience
 - and celebrating the individual characteristics of each person



UNECE

A Good Practice Example on Media Involvement

Croatia, Media Outlet “Fade In”

- Fade In - media outlet that produces videos and TV reports with focus on civil society in Croatia
- aims to address the social situation of groups with less media attention, e.g. older persons
- exhibiting positive images helps to contest stereotypical ideas of ageing; educates the broader public
- Fade In also airs motivational stories about older persons and the different ways they decide to live their lives.
- Previous topics include: creative ways to combat poverty, bridging the generational gap, motivation portraits (stories of older persons who write stories), and older women who collect healing herbs to empower others to gain independence.

Contact: www.fadein.hr or email SpomenkaTomek-Roksandić at spomenka.tomek-roksandic@stampar.hr.



UNECE

NGO Involvement with Mass Media

- Civil society can make a significant contribution to the way how older persons and intergenerational life is perceived in society
- NGO collaboration with various forms of media may increase the impact of this important work
- It offers various age-groups the opportunity to portray themselves in the way they wish to be seen



UNECE

A Good Practice Example on NGO-Collaboration with Media

Czech Republic: Respect my Granny!

- The programme is organised by an NGO called Elpida, which also offers other services such as a free crises helpline for older persons, educational opportunities and leisure activities. It also publishes a magazine for older persons called *Vital*
- The *Respect my Granny* programme in the Czech Republic is one of the campaigns that focus attention on social change in media by creating positive images of older persons and providing a forum to discuss related topics.

Contact: Lenka Bockova at lenka.bockova@mpsv.cz, or visit the website at www.mluvmeostari.cz and www.elpida.cz



UNECE

Images of Older Persons in School Curricula

- The aim of an intergenerational approach is to develop empathy and understanding among various age groups in the context of an ageing society
- This approach may include activities such as:
 - schools that arrange activities for the young and old in the same premises
 - making it mandatory to engage in various types of community services for credit
 - integrating lessons that foster understanding on life courses and gender differences



UNECE

A Good Practice Example on Images of Older Persons in School Curricula:

Spain, IMSERSO's Project "Affective change through education"

- IMSERSO supported the development of curricula that sensitise on the situation of older (and/or disabled) persons
- These curricula and teaching materials have been developed in cooperation with:
 - heads of educational centres
 - academia
 - teachers
 - parents associations
 - as well as kindergarten and elementary schools pupils

Contact: Manuel Montero-Rey. Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equity (IMSERSO). Email: mmonteror@imserso.es



UNECE

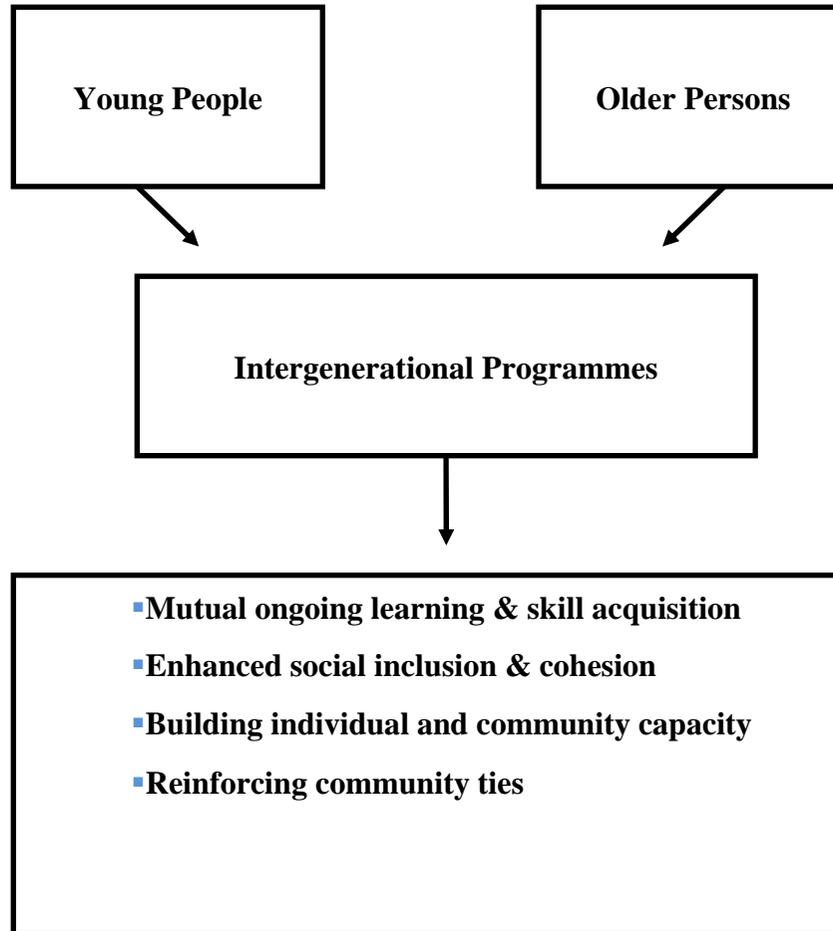
Intergenerational Perspectives on Old Age & the Crucial Role of Older Persons in their Families

- Older persons provide support and help financially
- Older persons provide care and support to their adult children, grandchildren and sometimes their parents
- Older persons are holders of knowledge and experience



UNECE

Intergenerational Programmes





UNECE

A Good Practice Example on Fostering Intergenerational Understanding

Belgium: Old and Young Playing Theatre Together on Basis of Improvisation

- The ultimate goal of this programme is to empower older persons and to foster intergenerational understanding
- One project of the programme is a theatre production, set up by older and younger persons, where the situation of the respective age-group is reflected
- Also, the production of a film called “Valise, Pilule et Chapeau” contributed to greater intergenerational understanding in the context of this programme

Contact: i.parentani@entrages.be or visit www.courantsdages.be Also available in French: info@entrages.be.



UNECE

Role of Older Persons in the Community

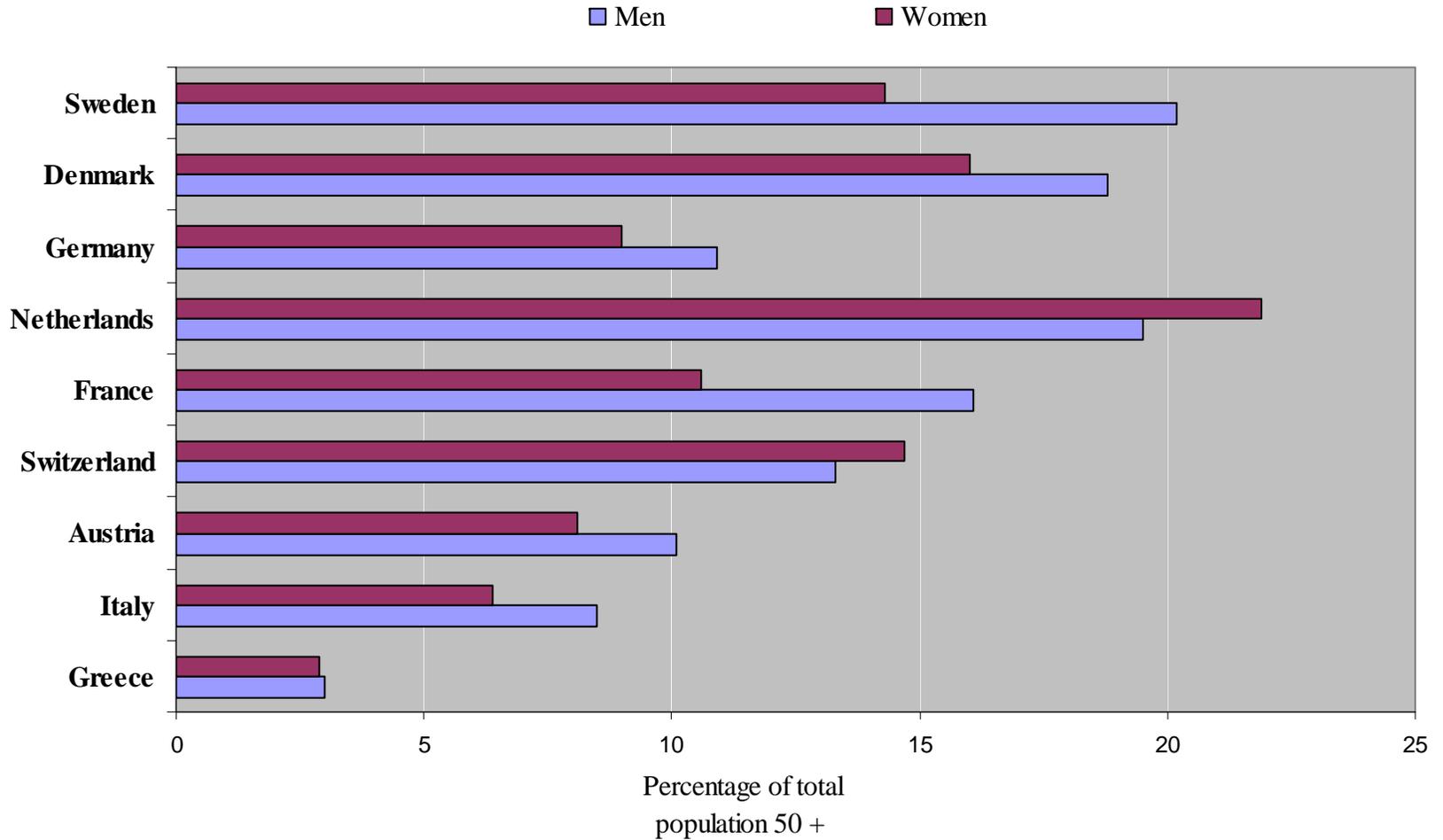
- Many older persons provide entrepreneurial contributions, volunteering and community work.
- Older persons often make important contributions in the unpaid sector, e.g. up to 20 percent of older persons in Europe engage in voluntary work.
- Overall within their communities and society at large, older persons act as invaluable repositories of knowledge history and society.





UNECE

Share of total older persons (50+) undertaking volunteer work by gender



Source: Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) (2005). First Results from SHARE: Work and Retirement. P. 50



UNECE

Conclusion

Enhance social inclusion by an improved image of older persons through:

- intergenerational exchanges of resources and ideas that increase co-operation between generations
- education with a intergenerational perspective
 - mutual learning
 - engagement and participation on multiple levels in:
 - schools
 - families,
 - and communities
- Media programmes in co-operation with civil society



UNECE

Thank you very much...