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Definition

The effects of an ageing population are considerable. Economically older people are far more likely to save money and less likely to spend it on consumer goods. This leads to lower interest rates and deflationary pressure.

Social welfare systems are also exposed to problems. Pay-as-you-go pension systems are almost completely unsustainable in a period of population ageing, but there are other ways of running a pension. The largest area of expenditure by almost all governments is health care and these prices will increase dramatically as the population gets older requiring higher taxes or a reduced government role in providing health care.

The second largest expenditure of most governments is education and these expenses will fall with an ageing population. Crime is mostly committed by those aged 15-25 and crime rates will fall.

The Impacts of Aging on the Workforce

Current population trends illustrate that there will be more aging workers (50 years and over) in the work force than ever before. Older workers will comprise the largest proportion (> 30%) of the European work force during the next 25 years. There will also be fewer younger workers (25 years and younger) in the work force than ever before. The work force participation rates of workers 55 years of age and over is declining greatly, and the national age dependency ratios will increase dramatically across Europe during the next 15 - 25 years. Between 2001-2010, the number of workers aged 25 - 54 will only increase by 5%, yet workers over 55 years will increase by 45%¹

Health

According to WHO, "'Health for All' does not mean an end to disease and disability, or that doctors and nurses will care for everyone. It means that resources for health are evenly distributed and that essential health care is accessible to everyone. It means that health begins at home, in schools, and at the workplace, and that people use better approaches for preventing illness and alleviating unavoidable disease and disability. It means that people recognize that ill-health is not inevitable and that they can shape their own lives and the lives of their families, free from the avoidable burden of disease."

The Objectives of European Commission Policy

"To compensate for the predicted fall in the working age population, the Union advocates greater employment participation, particularly by women and older people.."

"We will have to not only reach but to exceed the objective in the Lisbon Strategy – an employment rate of 70% – to compensate for the expected drop in the working age population: employment participation will have to increase, and the retirement age will have to continue to rise."²

Current Applications

The Nationwide Building Society plc and B&Q Limited are two large UK companies, both with successful histories of tapping into the older workforce, expanding potential talent pools and experience. Two separate, independent studies report that these employers have found older workers lead to increased:

- Knowledge, skills and experience

¹ Source: US Bureau of Labour Statistics

² Source: EC Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations"

- Reliability, stability and loyalty
- Strong work ethic / responsibility
- Customer care skills
- Motivation and initiative
- Improved performance: 97.7% of over-50s rated good or excellent³
- 18% higher profits
- 6 times lower staff turnover
- 39% less absenteeism
- 59% less stock damage and theft⁴

Older Workers in the Information Society

To encourage the retention of skilled and trusted, older members of staff, many have identified e-learning or webfolios as effective tools for retraining as well as expressions of competencies and accomplishments.

E-learning “may have the most significant effect on education since the introduction of formal schooling”⁵

E-portfolios may be viewed as a response to fundamental shifts in learning and teaching technology, and learner needs in a climate where learning is no longer perceived as confined to formal education⁶.

E-learning is accessible anywhere, removing barriers for those with mobility problems whilst permitting shared, restricted access to varied interested parties. It is also flexible - digital data are easily manipulated, exchanged and updated, progress is traceable, as a history summary can be applied offering easy development tracking. Finally, E-learning presents no time restrictions, increasing flexibility and constant support services through chat rooms, discussion forums, critique groups and email truly advance the learning experience.

Webfolios are often used for demonstrating growth, allowing for flexible dissemination (i.e. customised folders and site areas to meet the requirements of a particular application)

Case Studies

Webfolios have seen massive uptake by recruitment agencies such as Monster.co.uk, Adecco, and OfficeAngels. This ecologically sound method of recruitment has seen such a rapid uptake partially due to reduced labour and storage costs. Electronic learning has also become a common dissemination tool in EC research projects such as [Nutri-senex](#) and [HealthSense](#), as well as providing affordable coordination solutions organisations like Learn Direct and the Third Age Employment Network.

Further examples of e-portfolios, e-guides and e-learning relating to the elderly include CD-ROM Interactive Training titles from Kiss of Life Multimedia Ltd. Such as:

- *Depression and Dementia in Older People.*
- *Falls and Bone Health.*
- *Bladder problems in Adults.*
- *“Off His Legs”*

³ Source: McNaughton, T (2002). “Valuing Older Workers” Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, NZ.

⁴ Statistics adapted from www.efa.org.uk

⁵ Love, McKean, and Gathercoal, 2004

⁶ Source: <http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/eportfolios.htm>

www.merck.com provide an online manual with information on ageing, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence have produced a number of useful e-guides applicable to older people, the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network is a valuable source of e-guides and information in a number of clinical areas.⁷

Senior-Info-Mobil

Launched in Germany in 1998 by a non-profit organisation
Supported by the Federal Ministry of Research and various private companies.
Employs a mobile internet café for demonstration and training purposes.
Specifically aimed at older adults
No information on ICT uptake between older adults after participating in one of the courses.

eContentplus

Initiated by the European Commission
Supports the development of multi-lingual content for innovative, on-line services across the EU.

University of the Third Age

Promotes learning in later life
Offers new services to older adults.
In Finland, a learning co-operative of older people enables members to share many educational, creative, social and recreational activities.
In Helsinki, IKIS Internet has introduced a series of Internet Services Courses, which have proven to be very popular.

The European Learning in Later Life network

A co-operation of further education institutions, universities of the third age and other institutions from 18 European countries.
Initiated by the Centre for General Scientific Continuing Education at Ulm University.
Offering scientific retraining for older adults.
A working group called "Seniorinnen/Senioren im Internet" (Seniors in the Internet) has also been initiated.

COMMA

Based in Yorkshire, in the UK,
Older adults produce and manage multimedia content for their community website using specially developed software
Seniors scan photos and archive them with text, sound clips and other material into a Community Multimedia Archive (COMMA)
Enables knowledge of older people to be transferred to users of the archive (e.g. schools and libraries),
Now being implemented in Denmark, with plans to introduce to the Netherlands

Seniorweb

Launched in 1996 in the Netherlands, in Germany in 1997, and has now spread to Austria and Switzerland.
Targeting Europeans over 50
Encouraging older people to use ICT by offering online services and computer and internet courses.

Current Barriers

⁷ Source: http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=1160&doclng=1

The speed at which information technologies have developed has provided few opportunities for older people to adapt to the subsequent changes in the workplace. There has also been little co-ordination, sharing or follow-up of knowledge between initiatives.

Age Stereotypes

Older workers are often perceived to be less adaptable to change and much less able to handle information technology.

Recruitment

Jobs are often advertised with age limits or ranges and advertisements are often placed in similar media. Sadly, the practice of solely checking medical references of older applicants is common, despite being effectively discriminatory.

Employer's Concerns

- Necessary skill set (especially with regards to IT)
- Training methods and time required
- Hours and shift patterns
- Recruitment and availability of older people
- Nature of work

Regulation

In October 2006 amendments to the anti-discrimination legislation will come into effect. These modifications are intended to reduce the impact of discrimination on the demography of the working population with special regards to women and older citizens. Summary information on European regulations can be found as follows:

[Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations"](#)

[Increasing the employment of older workers and delaying the exit from the labour market](#)

[Europe's response to world ageing](#)

- [Towards a Europe for all ages](#)
- [Development of high-quality, accessible and sustainable health care and long-term care](#)
- [The future of health care and care for the elderly: ensuring accessibility, quality and financial viability](#)
- [Sustainable and secure pensions: overview](#)

[Equal treatment in employment and occupation](#)

[A European action plan for equal opportunities for people with disabilities](#)

[European year of people with disabilities 2003](#)

- [Promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities at international level](#)
- [Equal opportunities for people with disabilities](#)

Potential Applications

Possible solutions to address existing barriers to the retention or recruitment of older workers have been identified and include:

- Provide incentives and remove disincentives for people to remain in the workforce
- Retraining programmes and lifelong education
- Promote positive employer attitudes towards recruitment and retention of older workers
- Mechanisms for job matching
- Job-search assistance
- Vocational guidance and counselling.
- Training of supervisors for age management
- Implementation of age ergonomics
- Worksite exercise programmes
- Tailored training in new technologies such as Information and Communication Technology.

Promotion

- Criteria and systems for advancement should be independent of age
- Employees should be aware of and understand promotion and career development policies
- Promotion should be based on performance assessment evaluations
- Staff should feedback their thoughts on the integrity and fairness of the policy

Training

Employees should...

- Be actively involved in identifying training and development needs
- Be included in and benefit from training and development opportunities, using a range of flexible training styles
- Be encouraged to develop a variety of appropriate skills.
- Refresher training should be available for people who have been in the same role for a long time or are returning to the workforce.
- Managers should be trained to ensure fair appraisals.
- Arrangements should draw upon the experience and corporate memory of older staff, for example through secondments or mentoring.

Retirement

- The retirement policy should be fairly applied and communicated effectively
- A succession plan should be in place to allow the organisation to retain or transfer skills and knowledge that would otherwise be lost through retirement
- Support and guidance should be provided for people approaching retirement and flexible options are available to individuals.

Resources

European Commission

Priorities and Objectives

[The Social Agenda](#)

Employment

[European employment strategy \(EES\)](#)

[Employment analysis](#)

[EURES: European employment services](#)

[Local development](#)

European Social Fund

[European social fund \(ESF\)](#)

[EQUAL: Community initiatives](#)

[Innovative measures \(Article 6\)](#)

Working Conditions and Work

Organisations

[Social dialogue](#)
[Corporate social responsibility](#)
[Labour law and work organisation](#)
[Health & safety at work](#)
[Free movement of workers](#)
[Coordination of social security schemes](#)

Other National Organisations

Austria

[Seniorweb](#)
[Seniors' Office Graz](#)
[Verein der Freunde der EURAG](#)

Belgium

[Seniorflex](#)
[EURAG](#)

Denmark

[Ældre Sagen](#)

Spain

[Portal Mayores](#)

France

[Fédération Internationale des
Petits Frères des Pauvres](#)

The Netherlands

[Seniorweb](#)
[PCOB](#)
[NPOE](#)

Germany

[EURAG Deutschland](#)
[Kuratorium Wohnen im Alter e.V.](#)
[LiLL - LEARNING IN LATER LIFE](#)
[Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe](#)
[Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen](#)
[SeniorenNet](#)
[Seniorentreff](#)

Further Information

[Aging Research Centre](#)
[AgeLine](#)

Inclusive Society

[Social situation and demography](#)
[Social inclusion](#)
[Social protection in the EU](#)
[MISSOC: Social Protection in the Member States](#)
[Anti-discrimination and Relations with Civil Society](#)
[Civil Society](#)
[Disability issues](#)

[Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wissensbörsen e.V.](#)

Great Britain
[ARP o50](#)
[Age Concern](#)

Italy

[Opera Immacolata Concezione](#)

Sweden

[SeniorNET](#)

Switzerland

[SeniorWeb Switzerland](#)
[EURAG Switzerland](#)
[ProSenectute](#)

United States of America

[Senior Net](#)
[Senior Com](#)
[Seniors-Site](#)
[Age Scape](#)

Australia

[Endeavour Web](#)
[Older Women's Network](#)

Canada

[Age of Reason](#)
[Fifty Plus Net](#)

Japan

[Senior Japan](#)

[MORI - Challenges of the Demographic Shift
Documentary on Aging](#)

For more information, please contact info@LidsterCorp.com

[Anti-Aging Guide](#)

[Anti-Aging Info.Net](#)

For more information on our specific support services, please see <http://www.lidstercorp.co.uk/ourservices.html>. For information concerning seminars, conferences and other major events, please see <http://www.lidstercorp.co.uk/events.html>