**Report on Stakeholder Meeting to Discuss *Policies for an Aged Workforce in Europe* *(PAWEU)*, Project Report and Presentations – 5th May 2017 Brussels**

**Policy Background**

The 1999 the Treaty of Amsterdam enunciated the principle of *age equality* which in due course became enacted in the Employment Equality Framework Directive 2000/78/EC. Under the Directive all EU states were required to pass laws against age discrimination – action which was progressively completed by most member states over the following decade. In 2001 the Stockholm European Council of Ministers set a target that by 2010 at least 50 per cent of the EU’s population aged between 55 and 64 should be in employment. In 2002 the Barcelona European Council agreed to aim for a “progressive increase of about five years in the effective average age at which people should stop working,” to be achieved by 2010.

The idea of *active ageing* thus began to take root, first as an economic ambition.The need was recognised to increase participation of 55-64 year olds in the labour markets of all European states. Targets were set and governments and social partners were urged to work towards them. As a direct result, in a number of states there was a marked increase in the labour market participation rates of 55-64 year old workers – in the Netherlands for example it rose from 26% in 2000 to 42% in 2010. In Bulgaria, the rise was from a low in 2000 of 10% to an astonishing 38% by 2010.

With the realisation that workforce ageing was a truly global phenomenon, international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and its agencies the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund became interested in the sorts of *policies* and *practices* that might support older workforces. The consequences of ageing in developed economies required strategic planning and analysis.

Over time, the search for policies that would support not simply older workers but more active participation in society has gathered momentum, fuelled in part by recognition that economic activity was only part of the story. Health, including mental health and the rounded participation of individuals in society had to be taken into consideration.

This multi-dimensional concept of *active-ageing* was at once expressed and given further momentum by the *2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.* This in turn provided a motive as well as subject matter for further research and action programmes. During the year hundreds of initiatives took place. In 2014 the EU Committee on Employment and Social Affairs requested an overall assessment of the year. One outcome was a list of guiding principles for active ageing and solidarity between generations, covering employment, participation in society and independent living.

**Workshop**

A stakeholder workshop held in Brussels on 5th May 2017 was a direct product of this growing interest. It was convened to consider a report prepared as part of a European Commission funded project (Policies for an Ageing Workforce in the EU – [PAWEU](http://www.fondazionebrodolini.it/en/projects/policies-aged-workforce-eu-paweu)) led by an Italian not for profit agency, *Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini – FGB*[[1]](#footnote-1)with the support of the Italian Ministry of Labour, Families and Social Protection. The purpose of the project has been to compare and contrast the situations in EU member countries with regard to policies and practices for ageing workforces (50-69) to stay in the workforce as long as possible whilst protecting them from unemployment and social exclusion. The lead partner is the Italian Social Security Institute (INPS) contracted by the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

A final [report of some 174 pages](http://www.ose.be/files/publication/2016/PAWEU_OSE_fin_rep_dec2016.pdf) covers various dimensions of the situation regarding ageing workers in the EU, including employment/unemployment, pensions, early retirement, incomes (including in-work poverty), employability (including participation in training), and a consideration of population clusters of workers of like age. Dimensions examined include labour market activity, part-time working (including involuntary part-time working), long term unemployment, in-work poverty and the extent of education and qualifications across several dimensions. The following extract (from page 40) comments on the contrasting fortunes of younger and older workers across these dimensions:

“For the majority of the dimensions considered … the younger population is generally more exposed to negative patterns than the older population, throughout Europe …. However, for certain dimensions the older population is clearly overrepresented. This is the case of part-time work and self-employment, across all country clusters and nearly all countries. Nevertheless, in the Mediterranean cluster (of countries) younger persons are more represented than older ones (EL, ES, IT) in these types of employment. The share of long-term unemployment in total unemployment is greater for older persons in the Nordic and Continental clusters, but also in LT. In-work poverty is higher for older workers in IE, while poverty among the older population is slightly higher in IE and EE than in the rest of the EU.” Much of the report could be usefully drawn on for the ASPIRE project.

The workshop itself included contributions from a number of contributors. [Full details of the programme and presentations are available here.](http://www.ose.be/EN/agenda.htm#050517)

**Short Highlights Summary and Comments**

* Professor Asghar Zaidi (Eurpean Centre, Vienna and Southampton University) on *Trends in Active Ageing in European States* (referring in particular to his Active Ageing Index – a valuable tool;
* Dalilia Ghailani (European Social Observatory) presenting the main findings of the research covered in the report;
* Michele Raitano (University of Roma La Sapienza) commenting on *The Heterogeneity of Older Workers Employability,*
* Greet Vermeylen, from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) commenting on *Sustainable Work for an Ageing Workforce,* drawing extensively from the European Working Conditions Survey.

Asghar Zaidi pointed to some interesting trends in the Active Ageing Index, including the differences between index scores for men and women on the work and incomes dimensions. (Men find *active ageing* easier because their incomes in retirement are better).

Michele Raitano made some especially interesting points about the problems and pitfalls of applying increases in retirement ages universally, arguing that policies were needed that distinguished between the employment possibilities of workers in different jobs and industries. An interesting discussion took place on the problems and challenges of reflecting the arduousness of work in retirement ages. (Note, while some countries (e.g. France) already have industrial relations systems allowing for variations in retirement ages in different sectors, others (e.g. the UK) are wedded to uniform state pension entitlement ages. Whilst individuals could choose to work *beyond* state pension age in the UK, retiring *early* was only possible if one had the personal finances to support this. (Some interesting slides included one comparing the possibilities of employment according to age in different countries. Others compared possibilities to be active according to different intervening factors in Italy; the extent of combining retirement pensions and post retirement incomes according to job roles.

Greet Vermmeylan emphasised the need to consider sustainable work over the life course. Living conditions were needed that supported engaging in and remaining in work. The Eurofound European Working Conditions Survey looked at multi-dimensions of quality and work over the life course. While physical risks were not apparently increasing, there was evidence of increasing frequency of long working hours, the growth of psycho-social risks, a poor fit between work and private life. In looking at whether individuals felt they would be able to continue working in their present jobs at the age of 60, there were huge variations (particularly between men and women), including the feeling of being treated fairly in one’s job. Older workers had much less training than younger workers. (NB the concept of *sustainable work* would seem to be an important one to examine. Similarly, Greet argued, achieving sustainable work implied creating circumstances for achievement of compromises – it called for a social partnership or dialogue of some kind.

There was a useful exchange in the session 2 stakeholder roundtable. In particular, Rebekah Smith of Business Europe discussed the frame work agreement laying out a joint commitment and approach towards active ageing. (This should be given close attention in the Aspire project going forward).

Philippe Seidel Leroy (Age Platform) commented at length on the priorities of older workers for rights to work and earn a pension (this is still not allowed in some countries), the need for mid-career guidance reviews, attention to older workers’ care responsibilities.

There were a number of useful points made in the round table exchanges, including the possibility that Business Europe would want to use some of the EU’s Social Dialogue funding for future projects to support active ageing. Speakers’ presentations should be available in due course. I introduced the Aspire project to the workshop – much interest was expressed.

**Chris Ball 8th May 2017**

1. [FGB](http://www.fondazionebrodolini.it/en/about) is member of several EU level networks: [ETUI - European Trade Union Institute](http://www.etui.org/), [IWPLMS - International Working Party on Labour Market Segmentation](http://www.iaq.uni-due.de/iwplms/index.php), [OEO - EU Employment Observatory](http://www.eu-employment-observatory.net/), NE RLMM - [European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring](http://www.regionallabourmarketmonitoring.net/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)