



NEWSLETTER 6

The European Year 2012 – A Review

by Sergio Andreis, Lunaria



The 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations was intended to raise awareness of the contribution that older people make to society. It sought to encourage policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take action to create better opportunities for active ageing and strengthening solidarity between different generations.

A wide variety of achievements

In December 2012 a short film was circulated by the European Commission which encapsulated the achievements of the European Year 2012. It noted that 38 presidents, prime ministers and ministers had taken part in EY 2012 events with altogether over 5,000 participants. It

reported that senior enforce days had seen the participation of over 11,000 citizens all over the EU and more than 420 schools had taken part in the generations@school activities. It said that 337 events had been organised for EY 2012, resulting in 6,162 printed articles, 3,432 online articles, 329 broadcasts and 1,578,000 European Year website visits.

The closing event of EY 2012 was held on 10 December in Nicosia, organised by the Cyprus EU Presidency. The European Year 2012 mobilised a wide range of stakeholders across Europe to promote active ageing and better relations between generations. It gave rise to hundreds of new initiatives and events at European, national, regional or local levels dealing with employment, social participation and the independent living of older people.

Launching policy initiatives

In addition, the EU member states developed together with the Commission the Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations which were endorsed by the EU's social affairs ministers on 6 December 2012. The Guiding Principles are addressed to member states, regions and cities, companies and other relevant organisations which have a role to play in further improving the conditions for active ageing over the coming years.

At the closing conference, a new Active Ageing Index (AAI) was presented for the

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first time to the public. The AAI was developed in a joint project between the European Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The index will help the EU member states to identify challenges and unrealised potential and to monitor progress in the area of active ageing.

Many member states used the political momentum created by the European Year 2012 for launching important policy initiatives. These included the following:

- Austria presented a Federal Plan for Senior Citizens in January 2012.
- Belgium established in November 2012 a new Federal Advisory Council for the Elderly.
- Germany ran an awareness campaign. The German Anti-discrimination Agency declared 2012 the Year Against Age Discrimination.
- Ireland decided that every local authority area in Ireland will have its own Age-Friendly County Programme by the end of 2013.
- Poland adopted in August 2012 a government programme for Senior Citizens' Social Activity for the years 2012–2013.

Overcoming the challenges

In his closing address to the Cyprus conference, László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social

Affairs and Inclusion, said that the European Year 2012 had been an important milestone in the efforts to support the development of active ageing policies and initiatives. He said that he was 'impressed by the commitment and innovative ideas shown by hundreds of organisations, companies and individuals across Europe who have increased older people's opportunities to keep working and participate in the economy and society'.

The Commissioner said: 'It makes me confident that we can succeed in tackling the challenges of population ageing. I encourage you to keep up your efforts after the European Year is over'. While looking forward to the results of the evaluation of EY 2012 being carried out by Ecorys, we can indeed keep up our efforts to promote active ageing and later-life learning through the activities and work of the ForAge network.



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