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Active ageing

Finland helps older people to stay in work

The population of Europe is ageing and that process is going to accelerate. That can in the longer run endanger the sustainability of pensions, healthcare and other social provisions, unless the EU countries act in time. One possible solution is "active ageing" - ensuring that older people stay at work for longer and remain involved in society.

In Finland, the rate of employment for older workers has risen faster than in any other EU country in recent years. The active ageing programmes brought in from the end of the 1990s have played a big part in that. And they paved the way for broad social acceptance of pensions reform. In November 2007, the European Commission's peer review programme on social inclusion brought experts from across Europe to Helsinki to take a closer look at the Finnish model. Among their main conclusions:

- Social inclusion and employment policies promote active ageing. **Besides improving the employment rates it has an important part to play in ensuring the sustainability of pensions, healthcare and social protection. Sometimes though reaching the goals can be fairly challenging.** Not all tasks are suitable for older workers. **Changes in work organisation** are needed in order to promote active ageing. And early retirement may have to be retained for some categories of blue-collar worker in physically demanding jobs. However in general the peer countries are in the process of postponing the retirement age. A **flexible retirement age** is being introduced in Finland. It has also been adopted in a number of peer countries and many others have similar plans.

- **Training** is needed to help older workers adjust to changes in the labour market. **Educational provision for retirees** is an important part of active ageing. **Lifelong learning** has an important role to play in increasing the labour market participation of older workers. For instance the Slovenian Third Age University offers educational opportunities to retired people.
- The Finnish model focuses also on the **improvement of working conditions**, and more particularly of **occupational health and safety**, as a way of helping people to work longer. Slovenia's competition for awards to companies 'Best Practice in Health and Safety at Work 2007' pursues the same idea.
- The Finnish active ageing strategy does not address directly the issue of **long-term unemployment**, although first steps have been taken to tackle the problem (creation of Duuri network and similar initiatives). Finland is open to other countries' examples, notably the activation measures used in Denmark and the Netherlands.

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- **Older people have much-needed knowledge and skills**, and should therefore be provided with incentives to stay in work or return to work. Through Germany's 'Initiative 50plus', for example, in-company training for older workers is supported, besides other measures. In some countries, those receiving pensions, incapacity benefits and other payments are not allowed to work. This could impede active ageing strategies. On account of this some peer countries, e.g. Estonia, Denmark and Slovenia, offer the possibility to retire later in return for a higher old age pension then. The Netherlands allow income tax deduction for older people in employment.
- There is a need for greater **awareness** of active ageing strategies, on the part both of employers and of employees. This is particularly the case in SMEs. **Proactive measures and campaigns** should be preferred to passive transfers of income to employers and employees, although financial incentives have a part to play in promoting active ageing. The Romanian national plan for fighting against discrimination (2002-2006) which incorporates prevention and action regarding age related discrimination is one example. In October 2007 the Norwegian government launched a campaign aiming at changing the employers' attitude towards and knowledge of older workers' resources, working capacity as well as working ability. Another activity is the Slovenian action plan of active ageing in the field of labour market and employment set up by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. **Self-help groups** can be given greater responsibility within active ageing if they are provided with a budget. **Legislation against age discrimination** can play an important role in changing employers' attitudes. Building a **consensus** on active ageing also entails increasing the **financial literacy** of the population as a whole. This need will be addressed in the European Commission's work programme for 2008.
- **The Finnish strategy combines individual attention with a holistic, integrated approach.** This formula should be applied in other countries. One important lesson from the Finnish experience is that **active ageing programmes should be launched before pensions reform**, not after. The Finnish system is a way of reassuring workers that they will not be left alone to face the social and economic consequences of ageing.
- Some peer reviewers wondered whether the **multiplicity of programmes** within the Finnish model adds to the efficiency of the reform. The Finnish participants pointed out that the present multiplicity is a sign that various ministries, agencies and insurers all take a strong interest in the active ageing strategies and feel ownership of them. It also reflects a consensus and promotes communication and coordination. However, it is not yet known to what extent this multiplicity will be maintained in future.
- Finnish active ageing strategies are based on a **consensual social model** and a **strong social protection system** which have taken decades to build. They are therefore not immediately transferable to other peer countries. A number of peer countries (e.g. Denmark, Norway, Romania) foresee in their policy the involvement of social partners through various tools such as tripartite agreements.
- Nevertheless, peer reviewers felt that the **contact and coordination between ministries and between social partners** in Finland on the question of active ageing could usefully be emulated in other countries.

For more information on the Peer Review and to download all relevant documents, please visit the website: www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net/peer-reviews/2007/active-ageing-strategies-to-strengthen-social-inclusion



Combat human trafficking

How Denmark fights trafficking in human beings and helps its victims

Human trafficking has become a social problem across Europe. It is a pitiless, often brutal trade - and never more so than when women are being trafficked for sexual exploitation. To fight it effectively, close cross-border cooperation is needed.

Denmark has just issued its second action plan to combat the trafficking of women and children. The first one was launched in 2002, and an evaluation at the end of 2006 found that it had a positive impact. In December 2007, experts from across Europe travelled to Copenhagen for a peer review of the Danish experience. Participants came from European countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficked women. The meeting was part of the European Commission's social inclusion programme. Among the peer reviewers' main conclusions:

- The Peer Review dealt mainly with the biggest group of trafficked people - women who are forced into prostitution. However, it was recognised that **people of both sexes are trafficked for a wide variety of purposes, including many types of clandestine employment.**
- Victims of trafficking originating from the **EU 10+2 are now EU citizens** and hence, in some EU countries of destination, they are no longer protected by the anti-trafficking legislation since the latter concerns migrants only.
- Within the EU, trafficking is most intense towards the **countries that have not yet completely opened their borders to legitimate workers from the new EU Member States.**
- **Trafficking also takes place within countries.**
- Denmark's "**reflection period**" of up to 100 days before trafficking victims are returned to their countries of origin was welcomed, and this practice might be transferable to some other EU countries. However, some participants also felt that victims of trafficking should receive a **right of residence** in the countries to which they have been trafficked.
- The need for strong **cross-border cooperation** in the fight against trafficking is obvious. But attitudes to prostitution vary considerably from one European country to another. Also, **international legal provisions and definitions** concerning trafficking and sexual exploitation are inadequate. In this context, the EU could play an important role in framing and implementing **common European policies to combat trafficking and assist its victims.**
- Danish action on trafficking includes public **awareness-raising campaigns**, notably to address the mistaken belief that all or most foreign prostitutes are willing participants in the trade. Such campaigns could usefully be conducted, and perhaps EU-wide.
- If outreach to trafficked women is to be effective, **assistance and law enforcement need to be kept separate. In particular, the granting of asylum should not be made conditional upon a victim's giving evidence against traffickers.**
- Before returning a trafficked woman to her country of origin, a **risk assessment** should be made. But strict **data protection** should apply.
- In the countries of origin, **poverty** is a major factor in human trafficking. It also means that trafficking victims who are sent back to countries outside the EU may make further, often successful, attempts to re-enter the EU illegally. So **action to reduce poverty both within the EU and globally will also help to reduce people trafficking and clandestine immigration.**
- Denmark's "**social assistance**" approach to victims of trafficking was welcomed. However, if trafficking victims are equipped with **new skills**, their chances of being accepted back into society are increased. In this connection, the Norwegian experience



of training trafficked women as beauticians and providing them with a case of basic equipment to take back with them was noted with great interest by the other peer countries.

- Relevant cultural factors within some **ethnic minorities** need to be taken into account. However, this must be done in a highly sensitive way which avoids stigmatisation.
- In many EU countries, asylum-seekers are not allowed to engage in paid employment. Trafficking victims therefore risk losing their current remuneration if they seek help from the authorities. In some cases, the loss of earnings may be considerable. The question of **financial support** and **accommodation** for trafficking victims therefore needs to be addressed.
- **Some women trafficked for sexual purposes may not regard themselves as victims.** Help should be offered, but should not be imposed upon those who make it clear that they do not want it.

Further information on this Peer Review as well as all relevant documents are available at: www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net/peer-reviews/2007/social-aspects-of-human-trafficking