

Report of the SIforAGE
project's event at the
European Parliament:

CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING THROUGH SOCIAL INNOVATION



Contents

1

**Main lines of
discussion
and policy
recommendations**

2

**Opening and
Introductory
Remarks**

3

**Plenary Lecture:
Life Course
Perspective at the
Core of the Active
and Healthy
Ageing Paradigm**

4

**Presentation of
Main SiforAGE
Results**

5

**Round Table
Discussion
with Policy
Makers**

6

**Conclusion
and follow-up:
The SiforAGE
International
Conference 2016**

Introduction



Professor Antoni Font –
SiforAGE Coordinator, Full
Professor of Law at the University
of Barcelona

Professor Javier Tejada –
GISME Director, Full Professor
of Fundamental Physics at the
University of Barcelona

Dr. Elena Urdaneta – SiforAGE
Scientific Coordinator, Research
and Development Director at the
Basque Culinary Center

Dr. Dirk Jarré – President of
EURAG, the European Federation
of Older Persons

Professor Josef Weidenholzer
– Member of the European
Parliament, Intergroup on
Active Ageing, Intergenerational
Solidarity and Family issues

Europe is getting older. According to EUROSTAT, life expectancy at birth has increased by approximately 10 years over the past 50 years for both men and women in the EU-28. Between 2002 and 2013 alone, life expectancy in the EU region increased by almost 3 years. If in 2002 life expectancy in the European Union was 77.7, by 2013 it had risen to 80.6. The unprecedented demographic changes the European Union is facing are undeniable. The question arises as to how we should react to these data. Is ageing a problem or an opportunity?

The SiforAGE project recommendation is to answer that challenge with one word, innovation. The Social Innovation Incubator developed by SiforAGE brings together a large number of stakeholders whose work is involved with Active and Healthy Ageing (AHA) and provides them with opportunities to exchange ideas, to benefit from mutual cooperation throughout Europe, and to disseminate their results through five Knowledge Management Units (KMUs). The Social Innovation Incubator provides added value to research by bringing together well-established innovative experiences.

In this way, The SiforAGE Project is enabling the coordination of a myriad of experiences by organising, for example, Technology Experience Cafés (TECs) where end users are given an in-situ presentation of new technologies, and product and service development. SiforAGE also carries out contact programmes with children and

young people that educate them in the prevention of ageist attitudes. Mutual Learning Sessions with policy makers have also been organised.

Our social innovation activities also promote ethics and social responsibility issues in ageing research, particularly through the launching of a research prize on AHA. Overall, gathering together different stakeholders to enhance social innovation requires organising activities such as workshops for innovative services and business models for better lives, as well as engaging with the scientific community in international meetings, and journal publications.

The SiforAGE project – Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing for Sustainable Economic Growth – strives for these changes to be perceived not as a problem, but rather as an opportunity. Under the paradigm of AHA, the project aims to bring the young and the elderly together to work towards a common objective: a “Society for All Ages.” SiforAGE is a project funded by the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme. It involves 17 partners from all over Europe, Turkey, and Brazil, as well as many universities, companies, public administrations, and civil society organisations, working together with more than 2,000 stakeholders.

1. Main lines of discussion and policy recommendations

This report addresses the discussions and the policy recommendations of the event that took place on 18th April, 2016 at the premises of the European Parliament (Brussels, Belgium). SiforAGE organised an international one-day event entitled “Towards ‘A Europe for All Ages’” together with the European Parliament’s “Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Families Policies” to discuss social innovation strategies and policy recommendations for active and healthy ageing policies at the European Union. The aim was to make a contribution to this debate by bringing together policy makers from the European Parliament, some of the most important civil society representatives, and some of the most prominent international scholars researching in the field of ageing.

The main topics addressed in the event concerned the life course perspective through the lens of the Active and Healthy Ageing paradigm by raising questions such as: what are the core concepts of the life course perspective paradigm in which policy-making should be framed in order to provide Active and Healthy Ageing to European Citizens? How do views from the life course perspective help to ensure that EU policies overcome the current understanding of ageing and demographic change as a problem to be solved? How to create effective strategies on how to bring about a positive economic impact?

The debate focused on how to improve the social participation and the contribution of elderly people in social innovation policies. To do this, the debate questioned the means and ways to be applied in order to ensure an effective implementation of these policies. They discussed article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that indicates that:

“ *The Union recognizes and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.* ”

Proposals for evidence-based public policy and decision-making processes for a “Society for All Ages” were a key point in the agenda of the event. The discussion debated what role (if any) social innovation should play and how it can facilitate the participation of the elderly in social and cultural life, in creating new EU and national political concepts, policies, strategies, and projects, and in preventing traditional, age-related problems.

2. Opening and Introductory Remarks

Dr. Dirk Jarré is President of the European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG). EURAG is responsible for the coordination of KMU3, one of the transversal Knowledge Management Units of the SiforAGE project. This KMU deals with the issue of “Older Persons” active participation and inclusion in society and the inequalities associated with ageing.

Dr. Jarré opened the event by commenting on current demographic shifts, their impact on the elderly, future generations, and contemporary society in general. Dr. Jarré stressed that in less than the last 300 hundred years the population has multiplied 20 times. Consequently, this may lead to more formidable challenges such as: increasing the involvement of elderly people and civil society organisations in research, assuring the cohesiveness of a society for all ages, and balancing the distribution of resources in society and the labour market. Moreover, he stated that very often there is little contact and communication between the older generations and policy makers, which creates barriers in improving the lives of elderly people. For example, pharmaceutical industries and research institutions lack communication with the elderly and therefore, very often they are perceived as objects rather than subjects.

Dr. Jarré also argued that during the decades of their working life people accumulate an enormous amount of personal and professional experience that should not simply be lost when they retire from their jobs. In the majority of cases, they have to cease their salaried activities due to statutory provisions. In this sense, people need and appreciate strong systems of social security and rights to pensions, but at the same time many of them would like to continue work after retirement. According to his view, elderly people would like to go on having a specific, meaningful task to perform, to maintain their capabilities, and they wish to be recognised as the competent and useful people they are. That way, the important assets and advantages of the elderly should be much better valued and benefitted from by companies and by the economy as a whole. Their experience and abilities should be used not only for passing them on to the younger workforce but also, and in particular, for the creation and/or improvement of age-friendly work places and working conditions that allow the elderly to go on working easily and productively for as long as they want to and are able to.

New and flexible concepts for “transitional work” or for “advisory activities” in companies need to be conceived and developed for retirees so that both sides can benefit from this accumulated experience. Companies should be encouraged to create the necessary conditions through tax incentives for example, and should be rewarded for their commitment to social progress.

Moreover, Dr. Jarré noted that the life experience of the elderly should be more valued for its wisdom and subsequent impact on their judgement skills. Considering that elderly people in European society have accumulated huge experience throughout their lives, it is very surprising how little their knowledge is recognised and used in various domains of public interest. What elderly people have seen during many decades in terms of successes, failures, broken promises, erroneous concepts and the like (be it in power politics, in technologies, in social policies, in economic developments, or other domains) constitutes a still living treasure of mankind that cannot be transmitted simply through recorded documentation. Their collective experiences enable these people to make a comprehensive judgement on current issues in society and put them in a position to provide more balanced advice to decision makers in various key areas of society.

The admirable dynamism, the boldness, the trust in technological advance, and sometimes the simple and irrational confidence in the future of the younger generation can therefore be very well balanced and lead to more prudent

attitudes. An intensive dialogue between the generations may well be of great help for using the advantages of long-term experience combined with new drives and, therefore, to adequately plan for the future of society.

Further and more detailed elaboration of comments and suggestions made by Dr. Jarré as part of the NGO Committee on Ageing, in Vienna, can be found in a brochure titled “Recommendations for Decision Makers to Promote Active Ageing in a Society for All Ages,” published in September 2015.¹ The comments and recommendations contained in this publication are destined to be used by decision makers in various areas and at different levels, global and European civil society organisations dealing with ageing issues, and public and semi-public structures in the region. Yet, this publication is not only addressed to decision makers and their support staff, but also to “ordinary” citizens of all ages to argue for their concerns, needs and hopes; it might help them in strongly formulating their own criticisms as well as demands to those who decide about them or for them.



¹ This publication is the result of cooperation among the SiforAGE project, Dr. Jarré, and the NGO Committee on Ageing in the United Nations in Vienna. The publication contains 31 comments and recommendations in which it tackles issues related to inequalities associated with ageing, identifies barriers and obstacles for participation and inclusion, and highlights opportunities and actions to be taken. The statements, comments and recommendations are evidence-based and carefully argued in view of their political value and their practical implementation possibilities. They are the outcome of intensive research of a scientific project and based on the collection of good (and bad) practice examples according to a pre-established grid of important elements in respect to the present situation of elderly people as well as requirements to improve respect for their dignity, and the integration and the participation of elderly people in society.

Professor Dr. Javier Tejada Palacios is Director of GISME Group (Interdisciplinary Reflections Group and Math Solutions for Entities). He is a full professor of Physics at the Department of Fundamental Physics, University of Barcelona.

According to Professor Tejada, today we are living in the so-called “Second Machine Age.” While the preceding age was marked by the invention of the steam engine, followed by the sudden boom of the oil industry, and the rise of oil power, in a matter of decades we have brought our economies into the digital era. As professor Tejada mentions, the historical progress is linked with ageing, that is to say, both energy and ageing are two inseparable key words.

For many thousands of years, humanity followed a very gradual and upward trajectory. In fact, before the Common Era the world’s population was just tens of millions. Yet by the time of the Roman Empire there were around 500 million. However, around 200 years ago, the first Industrial Revolution bent the curve of human history, and with it, distorted humanity’s demographic and social development. The First Revolution meant a complete shift away from the limitations of human and animal muscle power, towards the generation of massive amounts of energy used upon demand.

As professor Tejada highlights, what can be concluded since the rise of steam power is that our progress is driven primarily by technological innovations. As data shows, the ability to generate massive amounts of mechanical energy is the main explanation why today the human population worldwide is close to 7000 million. That means that in less than 300 years the world’s population has increased by a factor of 12.

Nowadays, continues Professor Tejada, we are living in the so-called Second Machine Age. This means that technological progress allows humanity to overcome previous limitations and step into a whole new territory. In the words of Professor Tejada: how exactly this transition will play out remains unknown, but whether or not the new machine age will distort the curve as dramatically as the steam engine is an extremely important question.

According to Professor Tejada, both the search for new energy sources and how we are working for a better tomorrow are the two problems modern societies, and by extension Europe are currently facing. What is more, our capacity to successfully define our future is therefore bound up with our ability to promote sustainable population growth. It is particularly noticeable that, according to Eurostat, life expectancy at birth in Europe has increased by about ten years in the past fifty years. Furthermore, the predictions for the future of other parts of the world also point to a dramatic increase in population.

As highlighted by Professor Tejada, our generation will probably have the good fortune to experience two of the most amazing events in history: the creation of true machine intelligence and the connection of all humans via a digital network. These two events will be essential to allow us to walk down the road towards a sustainable and welfare “society for all ages”.

3. Plenary Lecture: Life Course Perspective at the Core of the Active and Healthy Ageing Paradigm

Professor Dr. Raina is
Professor of the Department
of Clinical Epidemiology
and Biostatistics, at the
Faculty of Health Sciences,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, CANADA.

Professor Parminder Raina began his presentation with a graphic showing the demographic shift in four graphs. The graphs showed, broadly, the increase both in absolute and relative terms of the population +70. The graphs showed the population in the years 1851, 1901, 1951, and 2006 respectively.

This concern is reflected in the following quote:

“*Population aging is unquestionably the most important demographic force of the first half of the twenty-first century.*”

(Schoeni FR, Ofstedal MB.
“Key Themes in Research on the
Demography of Aging” *Demography*, 47,
2010: S5-S15)

In fact, according to Professor Raina, with regard to world population ageing, during recent decades there has been a global decline of mortality and fertility from higher to lower levels. The world population is especially growing older: the share of the population aged 65+ is expected to double between 2010 and 2040 from 7.8% to 14.7%. The number of elderly people will increase from 530 million in 2010, to 1.3 billion by 2040. In this sense, another aspect of world population ageing is the ageing of the elderly population: the share of the elderly at ages 80+ (the “oldest-old”) is growing more rapidly than the elderly population itself. This growth will translate into a large increase of oldest-old within the world’s elderly population, from 16% in 2000 to 24% in 2040, according to the US Census Bureau, International Data Base.

Why does ageing happen?

According to Professor Raina, two types of ageing can be distinguished: primary and secondary ageing. What is “normal” in the ageing process is called primary ageing. While what results in more susceptibility to illness is called secondary ageing. However, with the increase in the amount of elderly people, there is more heterogeneity in the elderly population. The onset is indeterminable and the progression varied. Genetic as well as environmental factors are decisive in this heterogeneity. Professor Raina found that gender is a significant factor and lifestyle a primary factor. Therefore, various theories of ageing attempt to explain the process bottom line, as there is disruption of homeostasis.

He presented various theories that study the ageing process, namely: biological theories that attempt to discover how cells age and what triggers the ageing process. Sociological theories that ask how society influences its elderly people and how elderly people influence society. How do social and economic inequalities influence ageing? The psychological or cognitive perspective asks what the behaviour or cognition affected by ageing is like. Do patterns of behaviour or cognition change over time in any identifiable way? Finally, there is the biomedical perspective; this perspective asks how ageing and illness processes are related, as well as different. How do illness processes impact on function, quality of life, and health care delivery?

Professor Raina focused on the main risk factors for illness, disability and longevity. On the one hand, he noticed that risk factors are multiple, that is to say, that there are many factors contributing to the process. In addition, he states that gender difference remains unexplained, there is a loss of prediction, and therefore, contradictions in prediction. However, according to Professor Raina, there are new opportunities for research. He states that there is a larger number of very elderly people, and therefore, longer-term follow-up. There are longitudinal data which make it possible to identify optimal trajectory. Finally, he discovered that there are common risk factors.

He highlighted that, currently, there is a Paradigm Shift. The perspectives addressing the ageing process are changing. One of the main features of this change are the life course perspective and multi-level factors. These are individual, contextual and environmental factors. The new approach considers the ageing process as expressed as dynamic models as well. In this sense, the traditional risk factors of research are being incorporated within broader ecological models that consider social and political determinants.

The life course or longitudinal perspective distinguishes, broadly, four factors: the social, cultural, and environmental influences. This combines rural, socio-economic, exercise, and nutrition. The genetic factors, as they may generate telomeres or oxidative stress, psychological and cognitive abilities, and immune functions. The chronic illnesses factors refer to diabetes, cancer, dementia, arthritis, and cardio. Finally, the health and social services enter into the equation as far as infection due to the ageing process are concerned.

In this sense, professor Raina stressed that ageing is from birth to death, and the past shapes the present and future too: social conditions experienced in early life influence life choices and opportunities. In this sense, health behaviours adopted in childhood influence later life. Health in childhood influences health in later life. In his view, as an expert in the field, it is never too soon to adopt healthy behaviours and never too late. He identifies three life course themes and develops them as follows: first, each life transition presents a unique opportunity for interventions to inform policy and practice that can improve health and quality of life. Second, interventions can be focused on particular stages or on the entire life course. Finally, chronic illnesses probably result from the complex interplay of critical and sensitive period, and trajectory and accumulation processes.

What is a life course health development?

Professor Rania suggested that there are multiple determinants operating in context that change as a person develops. There are multiple contexts. Therefore, health development is an adaptive process composed of multiple transitions, and the design, and processing of health development. In addition, different health trajectories are the product of cumulative risk and protective factors. There may be variations in these trajectories. The timing and sequence of multiple determinants and experience influence the health and development of both individuals and populations. He discovered that there are critical and sensitive periods to that development that have different impacts on different individuals.

Strengths and limitations of a life course approach to studying ageing

Finally, professor Raina identified certain limitations to the proposed approach: first, there are few life course studies and an absence of life course studies of ageing, second, there are many methodological challenges, third, the long-term investment is an expensive method, and fourth, there are losses to monitor, and it raises many complex ethical issues.

However, he also identified some strengths in the perspective: first, the life course model makes researchers consider the timing (critical), the duration (accumulation) and, the temporal ordering (chains of risk or interactions) of exposures, second, it integrates social, psychological, lifestyle and biological risk processes, and finally, it promotes interventions earlier in the life course.

Professor Norbert Bilbeny is Full Professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy, University of Barcelona. He is a member of the GISME group.

Professor Bilbeny made the following comments on Professor Raina's intervention:

As has already been mentioned, the influence that society has on the elderly and that the elderly have on society is a common and proven fact. Society evolves over time, but it is also diverse and changes in space.

I would only like to highlight that, after differing lifestyles, both society and the elderly are becoming increasingly heterogeneous in ethno-cultural terms as well. This is a fact that is still only supported by a few studies. As such, we know how genetic, behavioural, and contextual heterogeneity influence elderly people's health, but we know little of the impact of linguistic, cultural and religious heterogeneity. Nowadays, every city is a universal enclave. Ethnocultural diversity must be considered when it comes to the impact it can have on elderly people's health, just as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and the role one plays or the skills one has are considered. Every culture perceives things differently: health and sickness, what is proper and what is improper, autonomy and dependency.

Because of this, research into how each group's ethnocultural values influence elderly people's lifestyles and quality of life may be needed. These are relevant facts for public health services as well as for epidemiology and could help further understand illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Many risk factors and protection from them cannot be disassociated from an individual's lifestyle since this is shaped by his or her belonging to a certain culture. Public health services cannot ignore the fact that beliefs and customs shape the lives of groups and individuals, including the elderly, and therefore have an impact on their illnesses and, likewise, on their healing processes. In my opinion, more empirical studies and critical approaches concerning this effect are required.

4. Presentation of Main SiforAGE Results

Dr. Andrey Girenko, is a SiforAGE partner and a member of Deutsches Forschungszentrum für Künstliche Intelligenz (DFKI), AAL Competence Centre.

In his presentation, on “Active Participation of Older End-Users in Research and Technology Development,” Dr. Girenko stressed the rapidly growing so-called Silver Economy. To be clear, the silver economy is the economy for elderly people and with elderly people. He also stressed the importance of the active participation of end-users in research activities and in particular, what has been developed under the umbrella of the so-called Technology Experience Cafés (TECs©), as one of the main experiences of SiforAGE. These experiences are identified as one of the possible ways to increase the social visibility of the elderly in social innovation and to promote the active participation of elderly end-users in research and technology development.

As Dr. Girenko pointed out, even though statistics convincingly show that elderly people use innovative products/services much less than younger people, numerous studies reveal that new technologies are able to radically improve the quality of life of elderly people, although it is true that many older adults need assistance learning how to use new devices and digital services. However, an unjustified negative notion about elderly people’s involvement in innovative technologies spring from sceptical

attitudes about the benefits of technology and stereotypes that associate elderly people with inability to use technologies. This phenomenon is also known as the “stereotype threat.” In this sense, the TECs© experiences show a completely different image.

During the TECs©, at which end-users are given an in-situ presentation, the participants can have first-hand experiences of innovative technologies and how they can facilitate their everyday lives. TECs© also enable open and direct dialogue between elderly users of technology and the representatives of assistive technologies, such as researchers and technology developers, industry, retailers, marketing agents. These face-to-face events also help to engage in this dialogue all stakeholders, such as representatives of elderly people associations, caregivers, public authorities, or insurers, involved in the proliferation of new assisted living technologies for the daily lives of elderly people. TECs© are an example of a direct dialogue between elderly people and the representatives of assistive technologies designed for elderly users, since they foster a social and interactive dialogue event to get feedback on the technological development from end-users. The TECs© experiences are beneficial for both parties.

Elderly people benefit for these experiences as they get an insight into the latest technological developments and market trends and are given space to provide their opinions to technology developers and their

needs for future developments. Moreover, TECs© also serves as a place for socialisation, meeting new people, and, also, having fun.

In return, scientists, technology representatives, and policy makers, through the face-to-face interactions with the end-users, get “user experience” of their research results and products. This way, they may be able to estimate the market potential and sharpen their marketing and exploitation strategies, as well as meet potential investors and attract supporters. The ideas, needs, and opinions of elderly end-users serve to prepare better evidence-based public policies to increase active and healthy ageing based on their observations of the needs of the elderly people with whom they had a direct contact. The successful implementation of innovative technological solutions shows that Europe can become the innovation hub for tools and services for the elderly.

Although during these activities technologies are at the core, very often they become secondary as the events acquire a more social character, in which elderly people share their experiences of growing older, comment on social and family issues, and propose solutions for their better integration and visibility in society and decision-making processes. Their interactions serve as valuable data to understand better the needs, challenges, and difficulties of elderly people and their experiences with innovative technologies.

The participants of the events agreed that elderly people should be more involved in the development of new technologies not only because they possess a huge, but still very much untapped, purchasing power that can help in the development of new technologies capable of radical improvement of the quality of life of elderly people, but also because elderly people can greatly benefit from the hi-tech innovations. It is an error to generally judge elderly people as neither interested nor competent in new technologies. Quite the contrary seems to be true considering that a large segment of them wish to be up-to-date in the use of modern devices and processes and therefore be able to keep up, in a way, with the younger generations. However, what is still essentially lacking is an intelligent involvement of elderly people in the creation of goods and services particularly oriented towards the “silver fraction” of society. An approach that simply uses them to test such products once they are available and ready for the market is neither sufficient nor satisfactory. Elderly people need to be involved in the process much earlier and over the whole production cycle - which means beginning at the stage where such goods and services are in a conceptual phase, through the design of the prototype of the product until it is given its final touches. This would make decisions on production much more rational, avoid or minimise errors, save investments, provide more satisfaction on the users’ side, and therefore insure success for the entrepreneur.



Dr. Elena Urdaneta is the SIforAGE project Scientific Coordinator and the Director of Basque Culinary Centre Research and Development.

Dr. Urdaneta presented the current results deriving from the SIforAGE project and how they may be helpful and supportive for increasing the social and economic participation of elderly people in society, the involvement of elderly people in research at various stages, and the development of appropriate technology.

According to Dr. Urdaneta, one of the main aims of the SiforAGE project is to strengthen cooperation among the stakeholders working on active and healthy ageing. This aim is elaborated in the project through the aforementioned knowledge management units, that results in the activities carried out and explained in detail both by Dr. Jarré and Dr. Girenko. In addition, the project aims at bringing together scientists, end-users, civil society, public administrations, and companies. The objective is to improve the competitiveness of the European Union regarding the promotion of research and innovative products for longer and healthier lives. The SiforAGE project's interdisciplinary and international nature is developed through the integration of a wide range of stakeholders along the value chain of innovation, such as: private foundations, care centres, civil society associations representing elderly people, universities, public policy makers, think tanks, and experts at European and International level. The aim, above all, is to bridge the existing fragmentation between them.

In her presentation, Dr. Urdaneta addressed the importance of the promotion of a positive image of elderly people, particularly among the younger generations. These actions have been carried out in various international institutions through contact programmes with children and young people with an aim to instruct them in the prevention of ageist attitudes, and identify the basis for evidence-based anti-discrimination laws. Dr. Urdaneta also highlighted what is known as the life course perspective in policy definition through the evidence-based decision-making processes and presented the Social Innovation Incubator that brings together a large number of stakeholders. The work of these stakeholders is involved with AHA and provides them with opportunities to exchange ideas, to benefit from mutual collaboration across Europe, and to disseminate their results through the SiforAGE project's five Knowledge Management Units (KMUs). The Social Innovation Incubator provides added value to research by drawing together well-established innovative experiences. The SiforAGE project's social innovation activities also promote ethics and social responsibility issues in ageing research. In SiforAGE these values are promoted particularly through the launching of a research prize on AHA.

As Dr. Urdaneta states, gathering together different stakeholders to enhance social innovation requires organising activities such as workshops for innovative services and business models for better lives, new technologies, Mutual Learning Sessions with policy makers, and product and service development. All these are activities that the SiforAGE project has been doing from its very beginning.

According to Dr. Urdaneta, the main goals of the SiforAGE project are: first, to disseminate knowledge, sharing it with policy makers, researchers and civil society working on the field of Active and Healthy Ageing, second, to increase the networking of European policy makers with relevant stakeholders on the issue, and third, to gather and spread the most important conclusions arising from the event(s).



5. Round Table Discussion with Policy Makers

Professor Joan Guardia is Full Professor of Psychology and Methodology of Behavioural Science, University of Barcelona. He is a member of the GISME group.

In his intervention in the round table with policy makers, professor Guardia noticed that the interaction between politics and attention to diversity on ageing matters is problematic. However, according to Professor Guardia, this interaction is key as the ageing challenge should be addressed from the political institutions following evidence-based recommendations that consider diversity to be an important part of the problem. In his view, social innovation activities play an important role in developing evidence-based policy recommendations.

He agrees with professor Raina in the view that demographic challenges need to be addressed from a life course approach. In this sense, the subsequent policy recommendations would deal with the diversity intrinsic to the ageing problems. According to professor Guardia, these

resulting policies should handle the demographic challenges not only through centralised policies, but also through local policies, which would be able to address particular demands. He highlights that some of the most common diseases derived from ageing, contributing to the demographic challenge, are the so-called non-communicable diseases.

As mentioned by Professor Guardia, one of the most challenging questions is what the new role of elderly people in European societies will be. One tentative concept, in this respect, would be the importance of elderly people as active citizens of European societies. In this regard, social innovation could be a stimulus for change. In this sense, according to Professor Guardia, two key policy recommendations are: to develop health and cognitive indicators, and to include elderly people in social activities.

Dr Uffe Bundgaard-Jørgensen,
CEO & Founder of InvestorNet-
Gate2Growth, PhD in economics
and operations research from
University of Copenhagen and
Danish Technical University.

Numerous new technical and service solutions are currently being developed to serve the needs of the elderly population and also the needs of caregivers and health professionals. However only a few reach the market as the business often fails due to lack of funding, poor understanding of this particular market segment or simply poor management. The general funding and business challenges have been dealt with in workshops and direct business coaching. As a direct result of this effort a book on “how to attract investors” will soon be available on the market.

Irrespective of all these generic business challenges, the “elderly sector” represents a very interesting market for both larger companies and for SMEs. However, the sector is also conservative. Both the elderly (easy to understand) and the caregivers/health professionals (less obvious) are often reluctant to accept and implement new solutions and technologies. This can make market penetration uncertain and slow. From the investors’ point of view this is an additional risk compared to a normal

business risk. For younger companies this can create a critical barrier, and lead to an abandonment of this sector as a potential market – resulting in lack of innovative new products and solutions becoming available.

During the SIforAGE project the development of the TEC-café concept proved to be an excellent new way of testing the acceptance of both caregivers and the elderly of new technologies and solutions. It also provided insights for the companies participating into the needs (and opportunities) in the elderly sector. It actually led to the development of new products directly tailored for the elderly and their needs. Hence, the TECs of the SIforAge project have proven to be an excellent tool to bridge the gap between needs assessment and product development/adaptation for this fast growing sector.

Further exploitation of the TEC concept could lead to more relevant development of technology and services for the elderly sector, and also secure the involvement of even more SMEs as suppliers to the sector and its fast-growing needs.

Professor Josef
Weidenholzer, Member of
the European Parliament,
Intergroup on Active
Ageing, Intergenerational
Solidarity and Family issues.

In four years’ time and for the first time ever, we expect more people in their mid-sixties to be living in Europe than those who are below the age of 25. This constitutes a particular challenge for social security and pension systems. In order to promote a social Europe, Member States must continue to invest in public pension systems. People should not be transferred to private provisions whose safety cannot be guaranteed and which ultimately result in a two-class pension system. Particularly in Eastern EU countries the financial situation is already now a long way away from the European standard. In order to stem the trend of an ageing Europe we must also allow the currently vehemently fought against migration into the EU. Equally important are political initiatives which promote equality between men and women and which provide support for families. Having children should not become an unaffordable luxury for future generations.

Elderly people do not represent a cost factor and financial strain. Instead they continuously work longer, expand their knowledge, show a commitment to their family and society in their retirement years and possess purchasing power. The chance of living a long life is higher than ever before and most people are now able to live this longer life in a healthy way and in their own home. To preserve this independence and flexibility, the internet will be of central importance to future generations. Virtual supermarkets with delivery service are just as important as the possibility to deal with the authorities in a digital way. Drawing up EU regulations on data protection and data security is therefore of particular significance. Data protection is also important in the area of “eHealth-solutions”, which allow for a simplified coordination between health and care facilities. This constitutes an important issue for those people who are already dependent on care and forms part of the Digital Agenda for Europe. In this context, a revaluation of caregivers must also take place as well as an end to wage dumping and semi-legal working conditions in this sector.

6. Conclusion and follow-up: The SiforAGE International Conference 2016

The road towards the improvement of the life of the elderly is a difficult one, marked by significant and far-reaching challenges to sustainability, since the old 20th century model is no longer applicable to rapidly changing social climate and human longevity. Therefore, it is essential to find new, innovative routes to ensure citizens can continue to live in healthy and dignified ways. The decisions taken and the outcomes of the event require active participation not only of those directly involved with ageing issues, but everyone.

Therefore, dissemination and social awareness activities are particularly crucial to involve society as a whole, to overcome preconceptions, and pursue a “Society for All Ages.” The SiforAGE project organises a three-day International Conference in October 2016 in Barcelona, the aim of which is to bring together agents from various disciplines and fields of research to discuss ageing, the ageing process, the challenges presented, and possible ways ahead for the future.



Grant Agreement No. 321482

Project title SiforAGE - Social Innovation on active and healthy ageing for sustainable economic growth

Title of the Document Report of the SiforAGE project's event at the European Parliament: Confronting the Challenges of Ageing through Social Innovation

Nature of the Document Report

Dissemination level Public

Date of delivery 20/07/2016

Contributing WP 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

Responsible UdL and GISME-UB

Working partners European Federation of Older persons (EURAG)
 Instituto Universitario de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL)
 Universidad de Lleida (UdL)
 Gisme Group Universitat de Barcelona (GISME-UB)
 Basque Culinary Centre (BCC)
 Deutsches Forschungszentrum für Künstliche Intelligenz (DFKI)
 INVESTORNET

Author(s) Ieva Stoncikaite (UdL)
 Cristina Astier (GISME-UB)

Internal Reviewers Elena Urdaneta
 Ander Errasti
 Javier Tejada
 Andrey Girenko
 Norbert Bilbeny
 Joan Guardia
 Uffe Bundgård-Jørgensen
 Joseph Weidenholzer
 Dirk Jarré
 Raina Parminder

EC Project Officer Giuseppe Borsalino

