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KEY FACTS

Best Agers is a project in which older professionals work together with different age groups in the fields of business and skills development to generate new ideas and share their expertise and experience.

- Part-financed by the European Union Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. Priority 1 - Fostering of innovations across the Baltic Sea Region.
- 19 project partners from 8 countries involved.
- Project duration: January 2010 - December 2012.
- Project budget: 4.423.070 EUR

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DEAR READER



Our project “Best Agers” has aged rapidly. It was conceived in the fall of 2008, when the idea to create a project to increase older people’s professional activity in the Baltic Sea Region was first discussed by a small group in Kiel, Germany. Its birth followed when the application was approved in September 2009. After some exciting but sometimes also difficult months of childhood and puberty it reached adulthood with our Mid-Term Conference in St. Petersburg in June 2011. And like many of our “best agers”, the project became most productive towards the end of its working career in the second half of 2012.

During these last few months, a multitude of reports were finalised and published. The pilot initiatives in our partner regions were concluded and evaluated. Two overview publications summarize the results of analytical and practical work (read more on page 6). Our documentary film “Best Agers – Meeting Demographic Change” had its première at a cinema in Kiel in November. It portrays four older persons who have - with different backgrounds and under different circumstances - decided to remain active. The stories of Hans-Georg Billmann, Karen Marie Ravn, Miervaldis Rozenbergs and Kerstin Sofia Andersson speak for themselves and convey the message of our project better than any written report or article (page 6).

During the last months we also organised several events to present our project results and invited external stakeholders to share their opinions and own approaches. We addressed regional representatives at a seminar on age management in Norway (page 5) and held a round-table on age management strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises in Brussels (page 4.) Finally, our Final Conference under the title “ProActive Ageing – Older People Help to Change the Future of the Baltic Sea Region” took place on 21 November in Kiel, Germany (page 2-3). We were happy and grateful for the opportunity to share our ideas and results with so many interested persons!

Now “Best Agers” has reached its end. But fortunately, the final conference was no funeral, but a starting point for further cooperation. “Best Agers Lighthouses”, a two-year extension stage of our project, has already started (page 7). With all the wisdom and experience which we accumulated during the last three years we are sure that it will become a success. We will keep you informed!



Hartwig
Wagemester,
Lead Partner

FINAL CONFERENCE - PROACTIVE AGEING

After three years of intense transnational cooperation, the „Best Agers“ project held its Final Conference at the premises of the Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel, Germany. On 21 November 2012, the nineteen partners of the Baltic Sea Region project presented to a broad public manifold approaches how to deal with ageing workforces in a proactive manner.



The night before the conference had already witnessed a special event: The premiere of the documentary film „Best Agers - Meeting Demographic Change“ (see page 6) took place at a local cinema in Kiel. The approximately 80 guests used the opportunity to discuss lively with two of the protagonists and members of the film team who attended the screening.

The Final Conference itself was opened on 21 November by Managing Director DR. DETLEF REEKER on behalf of the Lead Partner of the „Best Agers“ project, the Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein. His welcoming words were followed by

WOLFGANG RÖTTGERS, City Councilor for Finances, Cultural and Civic Affairs in the City of Kiel, who as head of the personnel department of the City of Kiel acknowledged the need for an age-sensitive HR management. DR. KAARINA WILLIAMS of the Ministry for Justice, Culture and European Affairs, who serves also Member of the Monitoring Committee of the Baltic Sea Region Programme highlighted the awareness raising and networking activities of the project partnership and expressed her support for an extension of the project.

HAUKE SIEMEN, on behalf of the Best Agers partnership and the Project Management Team from REM • Consult, Hamburg, introduced the project to the audience and gave a short overview of the main achievements as well as planned future activities such as „Best Agers Lighthouses“ (see page 7).

In his keynote speech entitled „Ageing and Work in times of Demographic Change“, Prof Dr Jürgen Deller from the Institute of Strategic HR Management at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg presented results from research projects on demographic change and the implications for our future working life. He particularly stressed the enormous challenges for enterprises which call for a change of mind-sets and established working

cultures among employers. Moreover, Prof Deller highlighted the great potential and experiences of „best-aged“ workers: he recommended to better utilize their specific skills and to offer more flexible work contexts, using the concepts of work ability and life-long learning.

The roundtable discussion followed Prof Deller's line of thought and dealt with the question „How to create an environment that encourages economic activity of older people?“ Moderator VERNER KRISTIANSEN welcomed various experts from different Baltic Sea States on the panel who engaged in a lively discussion with the conference participants.

JÖRAN RUBENSSON, President of the Swedish National Association of Senior Citizens argued that it is very important how age is being pictured in the media and advertisement and that the conveyed image of older people is often flawed even in a seemingly advanced country such as Sweden. He was supported by ANNETTE PAULY of the German Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, who introduced the German campaign „Programm Altersbilder/Images of Ageing“ which was created to contribute to a more differentiated image of older people. DR. SILVIA STILLER, Research Director at the Hamburg Institute of In-



Dr. Detlef Reeker (right) and Wolfgang Röttgers welcomed the conference participants at the premises of the Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel.

Photo: Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein



Michał Bruski (left), Annette Pauly and Jöran Rubensson debated how to create favorable conditions for the economic involvement of people aged 55+.

Photo: Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein



Hauke Siemen (REM • Consult) presented the achievements made during three years of project work.

Photo: Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein



Photo: Östen Lejon

ternational Economics stressed the greater flexibility of concepts for ageing workforces realised in Sweden and Finland. MICHAL BRUSKI, Vice Director of the Regional Labour Office in Gdansk, Poland called for the new EU Member States to institutionalise effective employment services in times of ageing workforces – even more against the background of the Polish pension reform which envisages a significantly longer period of employment.

During lunch, the discussions continued while the conference participants had the chance to visit a poster exhibition which presented

pilot initiatives and key results from the project.

In order to allow the participants to get a glimpse at different activities of the Best Agers project, the afternoon provided detailed insights in two rounds of interactive workshop sessions. In these workshops, participants discussed with experts from and beyond the project partnership why employing older workers is beneficial, how Best Agers can be supported in becoming entrepreneurs or how family business succession could be organised.

Before the conference closed, JÖRG STOLZENBURG, member of the Net-

work “Mentors for Businesses in Schleswig-Holstein e.V.” summarised the event with a dedicated closing speech. His positive assessment of the project achievements led to a call for action: the previous three years’ work should be continued in the future with even greater willingness and commitment in order to create sustainable solutions for changes in policy-making, but also at the local and regional level, where the need for applied solutions is most significant.

CREATIVE AGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SMEs

On 19 October 2012 the Best Agers project held a roundtable discussion on „Creative Age Management Strategies for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises“ at the Hanse-Office, the Joint Representation of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein to the EU, in Brussels.

SMEs are particularly affected by the consequences of demographic change such as ageing workforces and the loss of knowledge of their experienced employees. At the same time they often lack solutions as well as the strategic and personnel capacity to prevent early retirement and the loss of key employees through long-term and age-sensitive human-resources management.

The event highlighted the results of a study conducted by consultants Alexander Frevel and Carola Newiger-Bogumil. The authors collected an inventory of exemplary approaches for age management in companies in different Baltic Sea Region countries. In Brussels, they presented recommendations for both policy-makers and enterprises to an audience of 30 experts. The authors called for a common approach to the related



*Alexander Frevel presented the results of a study on age management for SME commissioned by the Best Agers project.
Photo: Hauke Siemen*

challenges: Policies and actions directed towards SMEs should be based upon the provision of an excellent (occupational) well-being of the companies' workforce. Furthermore, the authors stressed the importance of integrated policies based on a social consensus among stakeholders. Instead of unilateral raises in retirement ages, they called for reform of working conditions which emphasizes the qualitative dimension of working life.

In the following roundtable discussion, experts from various fields discussed the study results. Helen Hoffmann (UEAPME) claimed that dismissed perceptions of young and old employees pose a major problem in times of demographic challenges for SMEs. She referred to the widespread, but factually wrong prejudice that increased employment of older workers poses an obstacle to the employment of younger people. Dr. Jörg Peschner (EU Commission - GD Empl) underlined that both welfare and long-term dimensions of demographic change should be considered more prominently instead of a reduced perspective on pension reform only.

Dr. Roland Kadefors (University of Gothenburg) remarked that macro-economic developments and regulations did not offer enough incentives for sustainable changes at the local workplace level. Moreover he highlighted attitude-related obstacles and ageism as key barriers on the way to a more age-sensitive labour market and employment policy. Dr. Katarzyna Rewers-Dawid (Chamber of Commerce Pomerania) emphasized the need for support structures and elaborated lifelong learning-systems especially in Poland and the new Member States. Finally, Ole Norrback (AGE Platform Europe) analysed demographic challenges in the context of the current economic crisis in Europe and the demand for a stronger Europeanisation of economic regulation.



*Dr. Roland Kadefors (University of Gothenburg) and Helen Hoffmann (UEAPME) discussed the special challenges that workforce ageing poses for SME. Prototype workshop.
Photo: Hauke Siemen*

Following the discussion, Åsmund Lunde, former Director of the Centre for Senior Policy in Oslo, introduced the Norwegian "seniorpolitikk" concept (see our newsletter issue no 2). The Centre serves as a body which challenges negative attitudes towards older workers through age management measures, working with representatives from enterprises all over Norway. Dr. Roland Kadefors assessed the transferability of the senior policy approach, praising its success in changing attitudes while conceding that the concept is based on the Scandinavian political culture and would be difficult to implement in most other EU member states, not least in times of economic crisis.

Summing up the lively discussions, the event was seen as a success, although the participants agreed that much remains to be done in this field. Consequently, the partners of the „Best Agers“ project will address the problem of missing positive examples for age management in SMEs with the recently approved extension project "Best Agers Lighthouses" (see page 7).

PAN BALTIC REGIONS NETWORK

How can people that are 55+ contribute to working life? How can enterprises adapt to ageing staff and other demographic challenges? And what is age management about? A growing number of regions around the Baltic Sea Region face these questions in the wake of demographic change. The Best Agers project has now launched a virtual network which addresses these issues and brings together regions, enterprises and other stakeholders.

Under http://www.bsssc.com/index.php?system_cms=99&s=1 interested regions and other institutions can join the network, exchange experience and get involved with similarly engaged regions. “Learning what has worked elsewhere might make it easier for regions to adapt to demographic challenges”, says Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, representative of the County Council of Norrbotten (North Sweden) and initiator of the network. Sharing information about events, on-going projects and research results on age management is the main purpose of the network for now.

The creation of the website followed a seminar which was organized by the Best Agers project on 20 September 2012 in Lillestrøm, Norway. The seminar “Demography and Age Management – Generation Shift on

Labour Markets” was a side event to the BSSSC Annual Conference and the BSR Programme Conference 2012. Approximately fifty participants, mostly representatives of regional entities in the Baltic Sea Region and of the Best Agers partner organisations, discussed demographic challenges

and suitable pro-active strategies at the regional level. Age management and work force participation of older people were in the centre of the discussion.



The speakers at the seminar on demography and age management. From left to right: Roland Kedefors, (Gothenburg University), Marianne Jørgensen, (Sandnes Municipality), Hartwig Wagemester (Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein), Ewa Hedkvist-Petersen and Agneta Granström (Norrbotten County Council), Klaus Georg Hansen (Nordregio), Hauke Siemen (REM • Consult, Hamburg). Photo: Eivor Bryngelsson

FINAL PROJECT RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to summarize what the project has achieved and in order to give you an overview about our activities and results we have compiled two booklets:

“The Labour Market and Demographic Change”, edited by the University of Gothenburg, highlights results of our analytical work on the situation of older people on labour markets throughout the Baltic Sea Region. It also contains key findings and rec-

ommendations for the different Baltic Sea countries.

“Uncovering the Potentials of Older People: Pilot Activities of the Best Agers Project in the Baltic Sea Region”, edited by Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, is a colourful compendium of all the different pilots on mentoring, coaching and entrepreneurship of older people that have been implemented by our project partners. Its purpose is

to share our experience about what has worked – and what could have worked better – to inspire and stimulate support for economic activity of older people.

Download or order

Both booklets can be downloaded from our project website or ordered as hard copies by sending an e-mail to bestagers@rem-consult.eu.

MEETING DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE – DOCUMENTARY FILM

What is a “Best Ager”?

We spent much time in the project discussing this question. So we asked a film team to give us some ideas by portraying four persons who consider themselves to be in good age. Although our four protagonists live in different countries with different attitudes to ageing, although they have had very different careers and life stories and although they are working in different fields and on different terms – one thing became clear: The feeling of being able to contribute, to help people and work on ideas and projects is very important for a positive feeling about age.

Watch all four episodes at <http://www.best-agers-project.eu/BestAgers/DocumentaryFilm/tabid/1497/Default.aspx>. If you would like to order the films on DVD, please contact bestagers@rem-consult.eu.

Hans-Georg Billmann from Eckernförde, Germany was forced to retire at the age of 62 due to cancer. After recovering, he fulfilled his lifelong dream: founding his own business advisory company.



“Once in a while I ask myself how long I wish to carry on with this business. But right now this question is not important to me. I have just started - I don’t want to think of the end yet.”

Karen Marie Ravn, 65, has already reached the official retirement age but continues to work at a museum in Give, Denmark, and to guide people with psychological problems back into the labour market as a social mentor.



“Even though I have turned 65, I am still very happy to work and hope to continue if my health will allow me to. This is because I can make a difference for other people and reach some goals that are waiting in the future.”

Miervaldis Rozenbergs from Riga retired at the age of 68, but quickly began to focus on his passion: Inventing and guiding young talent through his involvement in the Latvian Inventors Association.



“I could only imagine a life without work if I were bedridden and couldn’t move anymore. If you don’t work, and don’t do anything, you just think about where it hurts. I think that is the wrong attitude.”

Kerstin Sofia Andersson (70) returned to Northern Sweden following a successful career as a business advisor, determined to set up a conference and tourism centre in her



hometown.

“Some of our experience and know-how might be old-fashioned, but I believe that we still have a lot to offer.”

Photos: Perspektive Media

“BEST AGERS LIGHTHOUSES” – WE ARE NOT FINISHED YET!

The Final Conference (see page 2-3) marked the end of the Best Agers project, but not the end of cooperation between its partners. Only a few days after the conference, the Baltic Sea Region Programme approved their application for an “extension stage” under the title “Best Agers Lighthouses”.

In this project, 12 partners from Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany will build upon the results of the Best Agers project in order to carry the principle of age management into small and medium-sized organisations in the Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to create positive examples for employers who are looking for successful approaches to

workforce ageing.

The Best Agers project was able to apply for the extension stage because of its status as a strategic project. Kaarina Williams, Head of the German Subcommittee and Member of the Monitoring Committee of the Baltic Sea Region Programme acknowledged the strategic character of the project

when she addressed the participants of the Final Conference in November 2011: “Strategic projects deal with topics of highest priority which are relevant for the whole Baltic Sea Region, and they therefore draw special attention. Best Agers has shown that it has met these expectations. It has taken its objectives regarding labour markets seriously and has worked directly with companies.”

During the 22-month extension the partners will continue and intensify this exchange with companies. Public and private employers are a key factor in determining the labour market activity of older people, and the “Lighthouses” approach is therefore tailored to increase their awareness and commitment with regard to age management strategies. Employers’ attitudes towards older workers are often based on inadequate information and wrong assumptions and can

best be changed by creating positive examples.

On 23-25 January 2013 the new project started with a kick-off meeting in Helsinki, Finland. “We are very happy that finally also Finnish partners are involved in our project activities and

can share their vast experience”, said Lead Partner Hartwig Wagemester at the opening of the event. He was immediately proven right, when renowned experts Juhani Ilmarinen, Kaisa Kauppinen and Eeriki Mäki presented their research results and examples from Finnish companies.



Photo: Päivi Kapiainen-Heiskanen

BEST AGERS LIGHTHOUSES -THE APPROACH

The vast majority of enterprises in all EU member states are small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Altogether, these companies employ approximately two thirds of all employees, but many of them are operated by the owner and have only a very small staff without a specialised HR department. When the Best Agers project commissioned a study on age management strategies for SME in 2011, it was therefore not easy for the authors to find companies that could serve as good examples. “Up to now there are only few companies in Europe that have implemented a clearly noticeable increase in the retirement age of their workforce”, the authors state in the study.

This assessment is complemented by the results of a study conducted by the County of Pinneberg. The majority of the employers who were interviewed were well aware of the demographic developments and its consequences for their staff situation, but most conceded that they had no strategy in place to cope with retirement of key employees and recruitment shortages.

These findings are the point of departure of the project “Best Agers Lighthouses”. The aim of this extension is to work closely together with selected (medium-sized) companies or public organisations in the partner regions in order to assist them in designing and implementing an individual age management strategy.

In each of these “Local Age Management Partnerships (LAMPs)” an external advisor will be designated to analyse and monitor the age structure of the organisation’s staff and propose age management measures

such as adapting working tasks and times to the needs of employees or improving competence transfer within the company.

These interventions will be monitored and evaluated by the three scientific partners of the “Best Agers Lighthouses” project – Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Aalto University Small Business Centre and Gdansk University of Technology. The ambition is to identify concrete incentives for organisations to engage in age management and to allow for an analysis of costs and benefits.

The companies and public organisations which have participated in the LAMPs could become lighthouse organisations for the whole Baltic Sea Region and serve as those good examples for age management in small and medium-sized organisations which have been missing thus far.