

## HIGHLIGHTS

Best Agers Newsletter  
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### Focus theme: Coaches & Experts for Businesses

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## KEY FACTS

- Best Agers is a project which aims to form a cross-generational innovation environment, where older employees, retired or semi-retired professionals above the age of 55 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
- Lead Partner: Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.



## DEAR READER

In European projects, time seems to pass more quickly than in the rest of the world. This newsletter issue is already the third one, and three more are coming - it's not difficult to calculate that Best Agers has now reached halftime.

This also means that it is time to present to the public what the Best Agers partners have been doing during the last one and a half years, and we will do so primarily in our upcoming Mid-term Conference. The conference carries the title "Older Citizens in Modern Society: Economics, Education, Creativity" and will take place on 9 June in St. Petersburg, Russia. The project partnership will be in St. Petersburg already for the second time, which shows that we consider it important to share perspectives on ageing populations also with those Baltic Sea Region countries which are not EU member states - but which face similar challenges.

If you miss the conference, you can check out the presentations afterwards on our website, [www.best-agers-project.eu](http://www.best-agers-project.eu). Various reports produced by the Best Agers partners during the first half of the project will be published at the same place soon.

And if you want to stay in touch

with the project all the time, check out Best Agers on Facebook!

Like the last, this newsletter issue concentrates on one of the four themes the Best Agers project is dealing with. This time, the focus is on older employees or retired professionals dedicating their time to help and support businesses, especially small and medium-sized ones, and their employees.

Increasingly, executives and human resource managers realise and acknowledge that it is costly to neglect the work experience and tacit knowledge of their older employees (see page 2). But as the story of Danish youngster Sanne and her two mentors (see page 4) shows, experience of life can do much more - even restore youthful spirits!

Enjoy the read!

Hartwig Wagemester  
Lead Partner



## WORK PACKAGE 4

### Coaches & Experts for Business

Through their extensive working experience, many Best Agers have acquired valuable skills in business administration and other professional fields. In order to preserve this expertise for the following generations, the partners will in this WP identify and possibly extend existing coaching and expert service initiatives or create new ones to

- make the know-how of retired Best Agers available to SME who are in need of assistance, e.g. due to lack of highly specialised employees or economic difficulties
- let Best Agers give advice and mentoring in cases of business succession, where SME are threatened to go out of businesses and get eliminated because no adequate replacement is found when the founder or owner retires
- support SMEs' internationalisation by facilitating contacts with Best Agers from other BSR countries
- encourage and assist SME to employ Best Agers as "Mentors" with special tasks to promote a healthy cross-generational working environment.

The project activities are targeted specifically at SME, but results will be relevant for larger companies, public employers (e.g. hospitals) and NGOs as well.

#### For Further Information

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## BEST AGERS AND ENTERPRISES

**Knowledge and experience of Best Agers are invaluable for enterprises. Motivating them to participate in intermentoring programmes is therefore crucial.**

Demographic changes that can be observed in the last years and in particular acceleration of the process of society ageing is determining series of socio – economic consequences in the macro scale. The most important are increasing expenditures in public finance sector, shrinking human resources, changes in structure of the consumer demand or the development of so called silver economy.

The society ageing process has also microeconomic consequences. The most significant for the enterprises are difficult access to qualified and experienced personnel and necessity for implementing the age management. Without appropriate policy of human resources management, companies are threatened by generation gap and increasing tensions between new knowledge and lack of experience and experience not keeping up with knowledge. It is necessary to lengthen the time of professional activity of older people, as well as to start canals that will enable transferring their knowledge and experience to younger employees.

Within the Best Agers project Gdansk University of Technology together with partners from Poland, Germany and Lithuania will identify the target groups for activities that are favorable for increase of participation of older people in mentoring and coaching processes, so as the potential of knowledge and experience of this group will not be irrecoverably loose for the companies. It will be also a

way to hold older people on the labour market. Moreover needs, expectations and fears of older people that determine their participation in mentoring and coaching processes will be identified.

Previous studies show that the problem of knowledge loss in connection with the retirement of the employees can be observed more often in Polish companies, rather than in German ones. Among others it is connected with the fact that in the 47% of German companies that were included in the study within SISC (Senior Inter-generational Social Capital) there are intermentoring systems implemented, thanks to which older employees transfer their knowledge to younger ones. This kind of systems are only working in the 19% of Polish companies that were included in the studies. The main justification for implementation of intermentoring systems in German companies is retaining knowledge and new engagements. In the case of Polish companies it is career development and new engagements.

Among main fears of older people concerning their participation in intermentoring programmes are lack of self-confidence, frustration connected with the performance of additional unwanted activities, the sense of loss of exceptionality and leader position in the company, problems with communication with younger people and transferring to them the knowledge that they desire.

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## BEST AGERS IN MENTOR PROGRAMMES

### Best Agers share their knowledge and life experience with the young generation

Best Agers partner Green Network is a networking organisation of public institutions and private companies from Southern Denmark who work together for more sustainability in environment, social commitment and occupational health and safety. In the Best Agers project, Green Network describes and tests different ways of establishing networks of mentors in workplaces, educational environments and as volunteers. It cooperates with Jobcenter Middelfart, an employment agency run by the municipality of Middelfart.

#### Common Benefit

Middelfart Municipality Jobcentre has in recent years successfully developed networks of volunteer mentors, both in the social sector and in enterprises. The Danish contribution to the Best Ager consists among other things of a method statement with the capture of lessons learned from Middelfart who can inspire similar network of mentors in the other project countries.

Behind these networks is social worker and project coordinator Ulla Sørensen. Through her work with mentors who introduced vulnerable young people in employment Ulla Sørensen discovered that many young people had complex problems which made it difficult for them to fit a job.

- As the financial resources to help these young people are few compared to the need, arose the idea to transfer the experience gained from business mentors to voluntary social work, says Ulla Sørensen.

#### Training as a Mentor

The volunteers, social mentors, have signed up after advertisements in local newspapers. To become a mentor it is a condition that you go through training: during five educational ses-

sions the mentors learn what the mentor role entails, including some theories and techniques to support mentors in relation to vulnerable young people.

When mentors and citizens are matched, it is vital that they have a common point of contact or interest, which has nothing to do with the problems the citizens are facing: A neutral starting point where mentor and citizen can meet on equal terms.

- Whether it is just a canary bird or an inclination to go for a walk, as Ulla Sørensen says.

The mentors are not paid, but the Jobcenter offers monthly experience meetings and regular joint activities

where both mentors and mentees meet for instance dining together.

- It is important to emphasize that the voluntary social mentors are not a substitute for the public system, but a complement. And it is important to maintain that the mentors are unpaid volunteers, says Ulla Sørensen.

- Most mentors enjoy their effort and they stick together. They are resourceful throughout. It is great to work with people. You become happy all over, says Ulla Sørensen.

#### Further Information

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#### Mentors in Middelfart

- 54% are publicly employed, 46% private sector employees.
- 56% women, 44% men.
- 46% are trained nurses, family assistants, teachers, educators or social workers.
- 23% have a vocational education.
- 29% have a higher education, such as engineering, midwife, librarian, etc.
- 2% are unskilled.

In 2010 there were 72 trained mentors and this spring 14 are being trained.

The target group for the voluntary social mentors are citizens aged 15 to 32 years.

In April 2011 66 citizens took part in a mentor program and another 20 are in process of becoming mentors.

The mentor's role is to act as a role model, buffer and motivator for his or her mentee/citizen - and to support, encourage and advise the citizen in his or her development. The key issue is to maintain the youth in jobs or training and create structure in their lives. The mentors support the young citizen in developing trust, motivation and the ability to cope - and give them a realistic view of reality. It's largely about strengthening citizens' self-esteem.





## TWO HELPING HANDS TO SANNE

- It was the opportunity to do something for young people who turned us on, says Susanne Bering, who, along with her husband, Tage Mau, for the past year has been mentors for 22-year-old Sanne Larsen.

Susanne is a teacher, Tage an electrical engineer. Their four children have flown from the nest. When the younger had to go as a soldier, Tage and Susanne opened their home to a German exchange student for a year.

- The successful experience of having a young German girl living with us meant that we got the taste for more, says Tage.

- When we read that Jobcenter Middelfart sought mentors who would lend a helping hand to youngsters in a difficult situation, we quickly agreed that it was something for us.

In April 2010, Susanne and Tage were presented to Sanne, who became their mentee - or citizen, as they call it in Middelfart.

### Depression and Chaos

Sanne has for some years been struggling with clinical depression. It has made it difficult for her to find her way in the education system – and impossible to stay employed. A year ago, the dialogue with her parents had met a dead end: Sanne could not tell them that she had a depression.

It was during an interview at Jobcenter Middelfart that the case-worker suggested that Sanne get a mentor.

- I needed adults who could give me some tips on how to connect to my parents, says Sanne.

- Everything was chaotic for me, and I was not ready for neither training nor work. I needed to get some adults on my side.

The first times, Sanne met with Susanne and Tage, it was done on neutral ground. They met at the library or went for a walk together while they got to know each other.

Jobcenter Middelfart match mentors and mentees/citizens on the basis that they must have at least one common interest, which has nothing to do with the problems the citizen is facing: In this case it was literature. All three are happy to read - Sanne even has a blog where she writes about books - and this has given rise to many good discussions in the year that have elapsed. The trio also takes on art shows together.

### A Smile on Her Face

But first and foremost, their regular meetings has helped to get the gleam back into Sanne's eyes, as she has enjoyed the company of two confidential adults who have time and energy to meet her as she is.

- When first we started, I was a very quiet and contained person, says Sanne.

- My development has been very

positive in the past year. I have spoken with my parents, we're talking well together today. My mother and brother think it is great that I've got Susanne and Tage as mentors, while my father is a bit more unsure of what to think. But he can see that I feel better.

Currently Sanne is participating in a project, "Young Now" that Middelfart Municipality offers to young people who have difficulty finding their way into adulthood. She has been in the project for three months.

- It's nice to have something to get up to after having been at home doing nothing for the past few years, she says.

Susanne protests:

- You have done a lot during that time! Been creative, read books and writing your blog!

- Yes, admits Sanne:

- And today, I have an easier time talking with other people. I have become much more active and outgoing.



*Sanne Larsen surrounded by her mentors, Tage Mau and Susanne Bering. Tage and Susanne share their life experience and knowledge with young citizens.*

## THE MARKET PLACE OF “GOOD BUSINESS”

**After a planning and organization phase of one year the first market place was opened by a stroke of a gong in the afternoon on March the 17th 2011 in the campus science economy centre in Kiel, Germany.**

About 30 enterprises and 30 charitable societies of Kiel have met in an informal atmosphere to trade “good dealings” in 90 minutes. Everything could be traded but money!

### 45 Trading Agreements

People with specified creative offers had big changes to make a good deal even with difficult trading partners. So it happens that one charitable society exchanges the takeover of childcare for the employees of a wellness hotel on the next works outing for 10 voucher for the wellness area.

A timber construction company offered an institution for people with mental disabilities the support by

the construction of a counter and get for that the free use of their workshop rooms: coffee included.

A pharmacy got a relaxation workshop for their employees from an association for child in mourning and provide for that first aid boxes for all childcare rooms....

All together 45 trading agreements were reached - proofed and stamped by the voluntary “market-lawyer”.

### Improving Social Good

The market-place planning team was very satisfied with this first event in Kiel.

- A special pleasure for us was the visit of the delegation of our transnational partners of the Best Ager Project, says Antje Oltrogge from the equal welfare organization PARITÄTISCHER Schleswig-Holstein, partner in the project and co organizer of the market place.

- The project Best Agers wants to sustain the know-how and the

potential of older people for the economy. For our subproject we open this intention and try to find ways to sustain this potential for the society in general. We want to improve the social good by raising up the readiness of people, especially Best Agers to commit and engage. The market place is one very good method for that and we tested it for our “Activation Toolbox”, says Antje Oltrogge.

The transnational partners were witness for the test results: the market place method had passed the test.

All information’s about the market place, the participants and the trading results could be found on the website [www.gute.geschaefte-kiel.de](http://www.gute.geschaefte-kiel.de)

### For Further Information

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## CITIES IN BALANCE PROMOTING SENIOR ECONOMY IN EUROPE

Cities In Balance is built on improving mainstream opportunities for seniors, moving forward from the traditional approach of intervention and treatment. CIB aims to reduce reliance on health and care services by encouraging greater emphasis on broader well-being issues. CIB will focus on services that improve the quality of life of seniors and help to enable them to live independently. A key activity is to define and explore innovative strategies to address the challenge posed by an ageing population. CIB will explore:

- empowering seniors to participate fully in community life;
- information and communication provision;
- securing social, financial and digital inclusion;
- business and employment opportunities.

### Selected Expected Outcomes

*Elaboration of a manual for all cities in North West Europe how to develop and implement a site-specific "Silver Hub", a centre where seniors and other generations can mix, volunteer, communicate or gather information based on the experiences made in a prototype hub; The manual is primarily written for persons in public and semi-public organizations who are thinking in establishing a silver hub.*

*Development of a toolbox that provides transferable strategies and solutions to help organizations work together to ensure the inclusion of seniors in the life of their community; The silver inclusion toolbox includes case studies and examples of ways older people have been successfully supported to improve issues of financial, social and technical involvement of older people in community life.*

*Creation of an action-oriented guide to best practices of qualification strategies to help cities benefit from the economic inclusion and contribution*

*of seniors; this output covers the more theoretic boundaries each city has to consider when implementing projects.*

*Development and implementation of a transnational training programme 'Become an aging expert!' in senior affairs; The training programme is based on the outcomes of the evaluation and will be developed for three specific target groups as every group requires a special training due to different qualifications and demands.*

*Carry out a transnational awareness raising campaign for the challenges and opportunities of demographic change. The awareness raising campaign was concretized by designing and printing the 'senior-employment brochure - How Europe can cope with demographic change'.*

### Selected Activities and Results

*Hi Ho Silver: Support for senior (50+) business start-ups and intergenerational business mentoring in Edinburgh (UK). 50 new senior businesses and social enterprises have been supported and 60 senior business mentors recruited.*

*Senior newspaper: A newspaper providing information about the project and other senior related activities has been established and published in Hagen and Kaiserslautern (DE).*

*Money maze: In Stockport (UK), the project established financial mentoring services in order to secure financial independence of people 55+.*

*Silver Entrepreneurs: The initiative provides practical information on f.e. tax implications, legal issues and access to ongoing business support for over 50s wanting to start a business or aiming to reenter the labour market in Stockport (UK).*

*SIGN Southampton Intergenerational Network: A network aiming at bringing together old and young through f.e. intergenerational singing events*

and an anti-prejudice theatre play has been initiated by the project.

*Sloppy Slipper Exchange: Senior citizens were invited to exchange their old shoes whilst several orthopaedic specialists and senior organisations informed about health issues and ways for senior citizens to stay healthy and active.*

*Intergenerational Volunteer House in Brugge (BE): provides a meeting place for both younger and older people of Bruges interested in volunteering. It's a place for information, guidance and exchange of knowledge.*

### Project name

Cities in Balance

### Programme

INTERREG IVB North West Europe Programme; Priority - Strong and Prosperous communities.

### Website

[www.cib-online.eu](http://www.cib-online.eu)

### Duration

01/03/2008 - 01/10/2011

### Budget

Total budget : 5 500 780 EUR

### Partners

- Germany: Stadt Hagen (Lead Partner); Stadtverwaltung Kaiserslautern, Stadt Leverkusen, FernUniversität in Hagen
- United Kingdom: Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Leeds City Council, Southampton City Council, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Belgium: Stad Brugge, OCMW Genk (Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn)
- The Netherlands: Gemeente Vlaardingen

### Upcoming Events

26th of May 2011: Final Congress - CIB – Active Cities for all Ages



## AGE MANAGEMENT IN COMPANIES – A MATTER OF QUALITY



**Best Agers partners will work together with the Marie-Luise and Ernst Becker Foundation on certification of age-fair personnel development.**

The Marie-Luise and Ernst Becker Foundation joined our project as associated partner in April 2011.

The Marie-Luise and Ernst Becker Foundation is a charitable foundation based in Cologne. The foundation was established in 2002 for the purpose of promotion scientific research in the field of ageing research. In the centre of research interest are the ways of maintaining health and achievement potential, and ultimately a self-determined and fulfilled life in old age.

The developments in the wake of demographic change puts topics focusing on age and work in the centre of the foundation's activities. The foundation encourages interdisciplinary exchange between science and practice. It awards the annual "Age and work" innovation prize to young scientists and meaningfully contributes to further developing the topic through annual symposia with

experts from science and practice.

In collaboration with the University of Vechta and the Institut for Quality Assurance in prevention and rehabilitation, the Marie-Luise and Ernst Becker Foundation developed AGE CERT – a quality seal for age-fair personnel development for companies.

The objective of the quality seal is to increase both the employers' and employees' sensibility for dealing with an ageing labour force and to encourage the development of suitable human resource-concepts and -instruments.

It has been agreed to use this seal within the project Best Agers and to offer it to companies for certification. Furthermore, plans to use a similar version of the seal for public administrations are under way.

The implementation and evaluation of the latter should be promoted and performed through the project. All project partners are asked to investigate whether the certificate is sufficient for the requirements in their own countries. If so, the goal is to develop a European seal for an age-

fair personnel development for companies and public administrations. Thereby, an ever better integration of the activities of the project partners is guaranteed.

### Further Information

[www.age-cert.de](http://www.age-cert.de)  
[www.becker-stiftung.de](http://www.becker-stiftung.de)

## SUBSCRIPTION

If you have not yet subscribed to Best Agers newsletter you can do so at [www.best-agers-project.eu](http://www.best-agers-project.eu).

You will then automatically receive a newsletter from the Best Agers project twice a year - directly in your mailbox.

In each newsletter we focus on one of four workpages

- Labour Market & Employment
- Coaches & Experts for Business
- Tutors for Start-ups, Students & Pupils
- Motivation, Skills & Entrepreneurship

We also bring news about past and upcoming activities

## CALENDAR

**9. June 2011**

**Best Agers Mid-Term Conference in St. Petersburg, Russia.**

“Older Citizens in Modern Society: Economics, Education, Creativity”

First project results will be presented to and discussed with an audience from Russia and the Baltic Sea countries.

In addition, different approaches to dealing with the challenges and opportunities posed by demographic change will be discussed with representatives of EU projects from the Baltic Sea, North Sea and North West Europe regions.

For information please visit the Best Agers website.

**15. - 16. November 2011**

**Best Agers Project Fair in Hamburg, Germany**

The target groups of this event are organisations, networks and projects which are working with the potentials of the generation 55+ (e.g. as mentors, coaches, experts or entrepreneurs) with regard to business and skills development. The idea is to bring together these initiatives and give them an opportunity to exchange experiences and thoughts and present their activities with information booths.

The fair will take place right next to the conference “Working together for sustainable labour markets”, organised by the Baltic Sea Labour Network project.

If you are interested in exhibiting or want to know more please contact the Best Agers project management team ([bestagers@rem-consult.eu](mailto:bestagers@rem-consult.eu)) or check our website soon!

## NEWSFLASH



### Best Agers in Public

- Three representatives of Best Agers project partners took part in a common workshop with the partner projects Cities in Balance (see page 6) and DC Noise in Groningen, NL on 6 April 2011.

The purpose of this workshop was to discuss different approaches to tackle the effects of demographic change on the labour market and to learn from the pilots implemented in different European regions by partners from each of the project.

- The County of Pinneberg participated in a panel discussion at the final conference of the “Demographic change platform” (created within the DC Noise project) in Hamburg, DE on 19 May 2011.

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