

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Tutors for Start-ups, Students & Pupils

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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

## CONTACT

### Lead Partner

Hartwig Wagemester  
Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

P: +49(0) 431/3016-138  
M: hartwig.wagemester@wak-sh.de

### Management and Communication

Hauke Siemen  
REM • Consult, Hamburg, Germany

P: + 49 (40) 657 903 78  
M: siemen@rem-consult.eu



Photo: Tomas Cernevicius

## DEAR READER

If you have read the previous editions of this newsletter, you will know that in each issue we have focussed on one particular theme of the project. Last time we looked at small and medium-sized enterprises making use of older employees' and senior experts' know-how.

There is another group of people who can profit greatly from older professionals' knowledge: pupils, students and young entrepreneurs who are navigating through the ever more complex world of education and career opportunities. Best agers can be lighthouses for these youngsters, guiding them on their way to employment or their own business and helping them to avoid common mistakes and assess their strengths and weaknesses properly.

With this aim in mind the partners of the Best Agers project are carrying out five pilot initiatives and would like to inform you about their progress in this newsletter. In their efforts to facilitate intergenerational transfer and exchange of knowledge, they employ different methods - from the classic form of consulting to internet-based tools such as "webinars". Read about experiences in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Germany on pages 2-9.

In our previous newsletter we had invited to our Mid-term Conference, which took place in June 2011 in St.

Petersburg. This event was attended by a wide audience including many Russian stakeholders and actors in the social, economic and political sphere. The conference was very successful and I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all the guest speakers and organisers.

Meanwhile, the topic of ageing and demographic change is beginning to receive much more attention in political and economic life - not least because 2012 has officially been declared the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. The Best Agers project plans to make use of this grand opportunity to take the public discussion about older people's potentials to another level, in cooperation with many other projects and actors in this field. The Best Agers Project Fair on 15-16 November 2011 in Hamburg is only the first step in this process.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and will be glad if you would make the project more widely known.



**Hartwig Wagemester**  
Lead Partner

## WORK PACKAGE 5

### Tutors for Start-ups, Students & Pupils

Best Agers can be mobilised to counteract the impacts of demographic change by supporting young entrepreneurs and start-up companies with their skills and knowledge.

They can also tutor and support students and pupils in transition periods of leaving schools and universities to the labour market.

The objectives are

- to explore potentials of employing Best Agers knowledge and skills in an innovation related activities of younger generation
- to create favourable conditions for transfer of knowledge and skills of Best Agers to young entrepreneurs, students and pupils
- to develop and implement training programmes and organise workshops as well as to raise an awareness of both Best Agers and young entrepreneurs in order to facilitate establishment of new businesses

### For Further Information

Tomas Cernevičius  
ctomas@kta.lt

## SENIOR ADVISOR NETWORK: LET'S START

**Creation of and cooperation between senior advisors networks is one of the focal points of the Best Agers project. The networks' purpose is to match retired or semi-retired executives and professionals with business or organisations seeking expert help or advice.**

The pilot initiative of Best Agers project partner Siauliai Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (SCCIC) to create a Senior Advisors network based in Siauliai (Lithuania) was accepted favourably by the local business society. In a survey conducted in spring entrepreneurs said that consultations and assistance are mostly needed for seed stage and start-up companies. In business life cycle, when your business is just a thought or an idea, help of an expert is invaluable. The expected role of the senior advisor in a company is sharing "know-how" as an advisor, mentor or instructor. „While according to a World Bank study „Doing Business“, Lithuania is one of the nine business-friendly EU countries, indicators showing start of business are not encouraging. It is high time to mobilise the untapped professional experience and use it for solving business problems“, - says Inga Medzidoviene, SCCIC head of Foreign Relations and business development department.

### Experience Available

The first important step was taken - after the public and the business community was informed about the use of knowledge and experience of 55 + professionals and experts we attained the first volunteers. At the present stage the developed initia-

tive of Senior Advisors network is supported by ten volunteers - best agers. Knowledge providers are: one retired and one semi-retired business owners, seven chief executives of business and organisations, two specialists widely experienced in commercial activities (small and medium business consultant and logistics and customs procedures expert). They all joined the network with desire to share their knowledge and life experience with small, medium and start-up businesses. However, not only. When asked about their reasons for joining Senior Advisors network, the experts stated, that their motivation is not only altruistic. „Engaging in these activities I hope to gain more experience in management, more information about business trends, news, problems in the city and country“, says Mykolas Dromantas, director of North Lithuania College. Opportunity to learn, gain new experience, being involved in business life are important reasons for senior generations to engage in voluntary activities. However motivation of local business leaders, business owners and professionals remains crucial in this pilot initiative.

Another important task is to facilitate accessibility of experience and knowledge for potential beneficiaries. For this reason a special platform is being created. Soon all information about Senior Advisors network based in Siauliai you will find on the website [www.rumai.lt](http://www.rumai.lt)

### For Further Information

Edita Grigaliauskiene  
[edita.grigaliauskiene@chambers.lt](mailto:edita.grigaliauskiene@chambers.lt)



Photo: Tomas Cernevičius

## INVENTORS, START-UPS AND SENIOR EXPERTS TEAM UP IN LV

In order to develop activities where best ager senior experts-advisors could be involved by assisting entrepreneurs-inventors to commercialize their ideas and inventions, a Team Creation Forum was prepared and run in Latvia on 17th May.

Team Creation Forum is a place where start-ups and inventors can meet senior experts, mentors, advisors and get the opportunity to find a member for their business team. Senior experts play a key role in preparation process of start-ups before they present at the Forum. Two rounds of training were conducted before the Forum. Overall eight projects and more than 30 participants participated in the Forum.

### Elmars Baltins, Managing Director at CONNECT Latvia:

Being an independent non-profit association with the mission to help entrepreneurs we are working to assist and give advice to start-ups and inventors who are making first steps in their business. Some of them are more experienced, while others are just starting their first business venture. But all of them are dealing with unknown situations in their start-up process.

Traditionally we used to invite experts from outside to give advice, and it helped in some way. But then we realized that there exists a huge potential of knowledge and experience among senior experts, who are retired from day-to-day business activities, but would love to engage as an advisors to start-ups. They would be interested to be engaged in a more intensive scale than we were able to organise. We looked for a way to establish closer cooperation between senior experts and start-ups. After learning the model of "Norfolk Knowledge" at Norwich Business School in the United Kingdom (where Senior experts are linked to start-ups, organisations



*Latvian senior experts evaluating an inventor's presentation*

and established companies to assist as mentors in their tough period) we adapted a local test-platform, called Team Creation Forum. It is an opportunity for start-ups and inventors who realize lack of competencies or experience in some aspects of their business or current challenges, to meet their senior expert.

In the Forum start-ups present their needs to an audience of senior experts and professionals who could later join the team as mentors or senior advisors. Usually we suggest to have several voluntary (cost free) meetings to understand the issue deeper and make first suggestions toward solutions of identified problems. Then, if start-up assumes the importance of engaging senior expert as a paid consultant, they are free to do so. In other options, senior experts may be voluntary mentors for a specific period of time or, if they are really interested in the project and know a specific market niche in depth, he or she may be involved in the shares of the start-up company.

### Miervaldis Rozenbergs, member of the board of Latvian Association of Inventors:

At the first Team Creation Forum we selected 8 start-up projects to present to a group of senior experts and managers. All but one project exchanged business cards. Each

distributed 7- 20 business cards and received 4-10. After the Forum a first round of discussions with experts made six projects. Two projects made a second round of discussions. Two projects need experimental production facilities. Two other projects need a partnership with an industrial company. Two projects get stuck because of difficulties.

It is too early to speak about the results. The work is started and will bring results in the long run.

### For Further Information

Elmars Baltins  
info@connectlatvia.lv

## 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.





## TRAINING BEST AGERS TO BECOME MENTORS AND COACHES

The Best Agers project aims to sensitise public and private employers and the best agers themselves to the multifaceted potentials that this age group possesses.

In order to achieve this, first curricula for different target groups have been developed. The Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein is currently running and evaluating a newly developed curriculum on Age-adjusted Human Resources Management for executives and personnel responsible in public authorities and in private companies together with the City Council of Kiel, an associated organisation of the project, and small- and medium-sized companies. First results will be published soon.

Moreover, a first draft for a curriculum in the field of tutoring start-ups, students and pupils has been developed. Pilot seminars and their evaluation are under way.

### What is the content of the seminar of this pilot initiative?

Best agers have the professional experience and social competences to provide competent advice, support and assistance. The target groups in this case are pupils, trainees, students and founders of start-ups of succeeding generations who need support with future challenges, e.g. the career start, work in a company or questions regarding start-ups.

The training concept is mainly aimed at best agers who want to apply and pass on their professional and personal expertise as mentors and coaches and take on a pioneering role when it comes to future-oriented policies.

Several partner countries have regional and industry related characteristics which are not specifically dealt with in this curriculum. These characteristics, however, will be discussed with the participating partners such that they can be



*Members of the personnel departments of the City of Kiel took part in a pilot seminar at the Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein.*

incorporated into the curriculum in the future.

Based on this curriculum, the attending best agers will acquire knowledge in the field of pedagogy and psychology. The entire structure has been designed to impart essential learning attitudes, such as open-mindedness, by means of examples. This is reflected in all seminar modules as well as in the subsequent process support. The best agers will assist their clients with implementing their goals or solving their problems and use their own experience to increase the sustainable success of future generations.

The seminar will comprise 18 lessons. As the course is scheduled for two to three days and no specific individual topics will be covered, the respective module contents will only be focused on basic topics. At the same time, however, best agers – the target group – are expected, due to their work and life experience, to not only have professional know-how, but also a certain degree of methodical, social and self-competence which eventually leads to action competence.

The curriculum consists of

- a foreword defining the objective of the module
- one column with sub-objectives

- one column specifying the amount of lessons
- one column with structured module contents
- one column indicating the learning level
- one column informing about the intended teaching method.

The seminar calls upon Best Agers from all groups in society to support succeeding generations with their professional development.

- Pupils will mainly be supported in their transition from school to the working environment.
- Trainees will be assisted with the practical learning environment and the transition to the working environment.
- Students will receive support with their degree programmes.
- Founders of start-ups will be assisted on their way to become successful self-employed business people.

These activities will support and actively promote the mutual learning process of young and old.

### For Further Information

Ursula Kirsten  
ursula.kirsten@wak-sh.de

Hartwig Wagemester  
hartwig.wagemester@wak-sh.de

## LIFE IS GOOD!

**Ewa Hedkvist Petersen recounts a day working with active older people in Norrbotten, Sweden.**

I was happy when I got home from work one Saturday evening in October. I had talked to a lot of seniors about active ageing – and it was so pleasant! The municipality of Boden wanted to draw attention to their seniors and did so by organizing a fair for two days. They fair is called “Life is good”.

At the fair we offered seniors advice on entrepreneurship. The activity was a part of developing a programme at Entreprenörcentrum, our region's center for new entrepreneurs, directed to best agers interested in becoming entrepreneurs. In addition, I presented the Best Agers project.

Our question to the seniors on the floor was – Do you carry on an idea? Persons that answered positively could directly in our stand sign up

for a consultation. It turned out that there were many seniors having a business idea or an idea for an innovation.

We met the woman who planned to start a business as her pension insurance. She would start the firm while being employed and if she became unemployed, she would immediately transfer to her firm. Also we met the man who is a retired teacher and will start up a company to develop and sell teaching materials. We talked to the woman who has an idea for an invention. And we directly offered her consultation with a specific innovation advisor.

We also had the opportunity to listen to Mari Sundberg, who at age 55 started a scrap booking store, Scarp Time. She is a skilled pedagogue. When she was 44 she suffered a stroke and went through rehabilitation for many years. As part of her rehabilitation, she began scrap book-

ing. This was so interesting that she decided to start up a store. She begun on her spare time parallel to her ordinary work, but now she runs her business on full time. “My stroke led me into scarp booking and I really like to be an entrepreneur”, Mari Sundberg says.

Many of the seniors were also interested in talking to us about how to age in an active manner. They told us that they still look forward to challenges in life, but on their own conditions. At the panel debate a journalist told about her older colleagues:– “They have experienced the most already in their profession, so they are the ones at my workplace who are most interested in new challenges.”

### For further information

Ewa Hedkvist Petersen  
Project manager Best Agers in Norrbotten, Sweden



*Linda Hällerstand, Entreprenörcentrum and Ewa Hedkvist Petersen discuss about active ageing in Norrbotten, Sweden.*



## THE 55+ AGE GROUP – PRICELESS FOR ENTERPRISES

**Older citizens acting as mentors and coaches are still rare in Poland. A workshop which took place in Gdansk in October 2011 could be a starting point for increased activity of Polish best agers.**

The professional activity of the older generation in Poland is one of the lowest among the EU members. Over 60% members of the 55+ age group rely on pension entitlements, and in the 65+ age group the rate goes up to almost 90%.

According to the research conducted as part of the Best Agers project among the students of the University of the Third Age, the most frequently stated reasons for ceasing professional activity include: attaining the formal retirement age, bad health condition, structural changes at the place of work, the desire to have more free time.

Moreover, Polish companies very rarely use the methods that make it possible for the older employees to transfer their knowledge and experience to the young ones - such as mentoring and coaching. The results of the conducted research point to two reasons for such a situation. Firstly, the employers do not make use of the potential of knowledge and experience of their senior employees (only 62% of the respondents stated that the employers did

put into use their knowledge and experience at their last place of work). Secondly, it is often the case that the senior employees themselves do not want to share their knowledge and experience (only 58% of the respondents stated that they were ready to share their knowledge and experience).

On 18 October 2011, at the Faculty of Management and Economics of Gdansk University of Technology, the Polish partners in the Best Agers project, i.e. Gdansk University of Technology (GUT), the Institute of European Initiatives and the West Pomeranian Business School, held workshops on the Potential of the Best Agers – mentoring and coaching in business. The workshops concentrated on age management in companies, presentation of international good practices with regard to coaching and mentoring, and experience in the projects aiming at the professional activation of the 55+ age group.

The workshops were attended by representatives of the partners in the Best Agers project from Germany and the United Kingdom as well as the representatives of numerous institutions from Pomerania region who are actively involved in the projects for the professional activation of the older generation.

Based on the presentations and the discussions conducted by the workshop participants, the following recommendations have been drawn up:

- to establish an e-platform that would constitute a database of the institutions in Pomerania region that are actively involved in the professional activation of senior members of the society. This would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience between such institutions and would create favourable conditions for their co-operation,
- to devise the concept of a co-operation program based on the idea of a network of institutions, operating in the region, which are involved in the professional activation of the senior citizens,
- to promote mentoring and coaching as methods of knowledge transfer in which senior citizens may act as mentors and coaches.

### For Further Information

Anita Richert-Kazmierska, Gdansk University of Technology  
Anita.Richert@zie.pg.gda.pl



*Experts and practitioners from Pomerania, Germany and the UK gathered for a workshop in Gdansk in October 2011.  
Photo: Joanna Oleszek*

## EDUCATION FOR EXCELLENCE – WEBINARS SESSIONS

Putting research ideas into practice requires knowledge in business planning. Best Agers partners from Germany, Latvian and Poland have developed a webinar program to help researchers transfer their scientific and technological ideas into business. The second webinar series will start in early 2012.

Universities and other research institutions generate many ideas in order to exploit research results. Potentially, a large number of academic and scientific ideas is qualified to transfer into real business. However, specific approaches for an economical realisation of those ideas exist in insufficient dimensions only.

A qualified business plan helps to view, to schedule and to structure an idea. Business plans provide profound information about potentials of products or services. Several aspects like market research, marketing plans and financial issues are discussed in those plans. The plans mainly address investors and potential business partners.

In order to provide substantiated know-how in writing a business plan the idea of a webinar program was born. A webinar is an online and interactively designed presentation or seminar. An experienced and educated best ager moderates the webinar-sequence about developing a business.

General learning goals of the webinar business planning are the creation of an own business plan and the usage of the designed plan in search of investors, banks and funding institutions.

Basically, the webinar sequence deals with several important issues like the development of products and service ideas, creation of a strategy for the development of business plans, elements and criteria of a successful business plan, valu-



*A webinar is an online and interactively designed presentation or seminar.*

able hints about the business plan development and characteristics linked to (technology) start-ups.

Best Agers, people aged 55 years and older, operate as presenters within the webinar program. They provide their knowledge and moderate the webinars. The whole webinar-sequence business planning comprises five single webinars.

The first session was conducted in June and July 2011 with the help of a Latvian best ager, Talis Laizans.

Based on this gained know-how, we are developing our second series now which will start in January or February 2012. For this 2nd round, we intend to develop a profound marketing plan to make the sessions more successful. Furthermore, didactical improvements of the moderation have to be considered as well.

We address all interested people from universities, research institution and other organisations who have generated a practicable product or service idea. They should have a real interest in an implementation of their idea into the markets. All of them are welcome to join our next session.

### For Further Information

Katrin Reichel, Research Association  
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania  
(FMV e.V.), Germany

bestagers@fmvev.net

## Q&A

**- to Mr. Roberts Paeglis, PhD,  
Head of the BUFPI**

**What was your general impression from the webinar series?  
How helpful was it to you, and  
what are the key things that you  
learned?**

I am pleasantly surprised that webinars like in HP learning center and Mathworks Matlabs are available in Latvia.

I enjoyed business tutorials from a lecturer who seems to have both business and university experience.

**What do you think about the  
format of the webinar? Is a  
web-based seminar an appropriate  
tool for such teaching?**

A webinar and handouts indeed seem accessible, especially if conventional office settings are not convenient e.g., in the summertime.

**How did you experience the  
moderator? Did it matter how  
old he is and how much experience  
he has?**

The lecturer's experience provided several novel insights, especially in accounting.

## MATCHING PLATFORM & VIRTUAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

**In order to bring together senior advisors and those who need their assistance – start-ups, SME, NGOs – the Best Agers project is currently developing a transnational web-based matching portal. The portal will be launched by the end of this year and will also contain a virtual business incubator.**

The establishment of the matching platform and virtual business incubator is one key component of the project, as it will make the knowledge of a wide range of highly specialized experts from different fields available to the target groups of the portal. As experienced experts are often well connected with other experts in their field, their consultancy will also support (transnational) cooperation between businesses and institutions within the Baltic Sea Region.

The website is going to have two main features:

### 1. Matching Platform

- by enabling users to create profiles and matching these profiles each other based on individual

search aspects and key words

- the web-based platform helps to initiate contacts in order to make expert know-how on a voluntary basis available especially for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups throughout the Baltic Sea Region.

### 2. Virtual Business Incubator (VBI)

- this service may be called the premium version of the matching platform
- if a business idea owner is in search of specialized support which goes beyond volume and limited extend as well as know-how of offered services of simply matching within the basic platform, the VBI shall support this process and to bring business ideas into the market by using web-based communication tools provided by the platform.

The main purpose of the overall platform is to bring together senior experts and institutions or individuals seeking these experts' help (hereafter referred to as clients) in order to

make accessible to clients the specific knowledge and experience that they need and that experts possess due to their previous professional activities. Experts and clients can create user profiles and post requests in order to find suitable partners.

Although the matching platform and the virtual business incubator build upon each other, their specific aims and required functionalities are different (see above). Simply put, the matching portal offers basic services for several target groups (SMEs, NGOs & social enterprises, start-ups and business idea owners, educational institution) and the incubator offers extended services to only one specific target group: start-up companies and business idea owners.

To exemplify some services offered on the overall platform to support the work between experts and clients, functions like a wiki about business plans, document management, blog (documentation of work-flows), calendar (e.g. for meetings, milestones etc.), forum (discussion of project related topics), and RSS (for following project activities with external software tools) are going to be integrated.

By now, the realisation of the web-portal is still in progress. The Research Association Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania cooperates with a regional software company in order to create the platform. The finalisation of the product is planned by the end of 2011.

### For Further Information

Katrin Reichel

Research Association Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (FMV e.V.), Germany

bestagers@fmvev.net  
0049-381-51079-0



*Young entrepreneurs will be able to find senior help using the web-based matching platform. Photo: Mareks Justs*



## CAN THE YOUTH BENEFIT FROM BEST AGERS?



Photo: ColorBox

**There is no doubt that young people, students and pupils are an important innovation source for the European economy. At the same time there are a few clear issues that are preventing youth from becoming successful entrepreneurs such as limited access to capital and existing business networks, a lack of knowledge about marketing, branding and promoting their products and many other things which need time and practice to be acquired, such as problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, management skills, good ethics, financial literacy etc.**

According to Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "A growing number of young people are taking up challenge of starting their own business and much is being learned about how the odds for success can be improved through various types of assistance and through the creation of a supportive environment."

One of the possible factors which may influence the creation of a positive environment around young entrepreneurs (students and pupils) is engagement of best agers, professionals in their primes, into innovation related activities and using their professional competence, knowledge and experience in the field.

But still there is a common lack of

attention to potential of best agers in European countries despite the national or regional variations; their possible contribution to development of innovation related activities of young people are obviously not enough investigated.

### Research idea

In order to discover, define and formalise opportunities for involvement of best agers into innovation related activities, the project partnership plans to undertake an extensive analysis of the current situation of needs and interests of targets groups (young entrepreneurs, innovative companies, best agers) in Baltic Sea Region and partner countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and UK. The research aims at collecting information about existing knowledge, competencies and skills of older professionals required by innovative companies and defining ways and forms of its application and possible employment of best agers in innovation related activities of pupils and students as well as in creation and support of start-up companies.

Guidelines for innovative companies/teams as well as for best agers to inform them about the opportunities and advantages of older experts' involvement into innovation related activities will be developed as a result of the research.

The partners of the research have set the following research objectives:

1. to define needs and requirements of young entrepreneurs (students and pupils) in using of professional experience, knowledge and competence of best agers,
2. to explore problems and barriers faced by young entrepreneurs on different steps of their carrier which can be overcome through cooperation with best agers,

3. to define the spheres of professional competence of best agers required by young entrepreneurs,
4. to identify possibilities and readiness of best agers to share their knowledge and experience,
5. to find the best ways of cooperation between young entrepreneurs and older professionals, effective forms of using knowledge and experience of best agers and roles that they can play in young entrepreneurs' activities.

### Research methodology

The research methodology will combine questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and desk research.

The target groups for the questionnaire survey include:

- young entrepreneurs (students and pupils at age under 30) who are owners, leaders or employees of innovative (start-up or spin-off) companies
- and/or owners, leaders or employees of innovative (start-up or spin-off) companies or other organizations operating in the field and working actively with young entrepreneurs (business-incubators, venture funds, business angels etc.).

Based on received data, questionnaire survey, best practice report and results of desk research, guidelines for innovative companies/teams and best agers on how to use opportunities and advantages as well as on how to involve the best agers into innovation related activities will be developed.

### For Further Information

Yulia Victorova, St. Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics, Russia

Tomas Cernevicius, KTU Regional Science Park, Lithuania.

## DOES LITHUANIA COPE WITH DEMOGRAPHIC WINTER?

**Interview with Professor of Vilnius University, the Social Work Department lecturer, and social policy expert Romas Lazutka.**



*Conducted by Jurgita Šarkienė, KTU Regional Science Park.*

In Lithuania, like in other European countries, the population structure is changing rapidly. The number of pre-retirement and retirement-age population is growing and the share of children and young people is declining - the population is aging. Under these conditions, it is important that older people continue to participate in economic activity, get in wage-earning employment or serve the public - in other words, to stay longer in the labour market. "This is no less important, and an economic expediency, because now in the society one of five people is in the age of 60. A large part of their consumption of goods is created by the working-age employed people. It is important that the working age would last as long as possible, and the old people could participate in economic activities, that there are no barriers to adoption and older workers are not expelled on grounds of age discrimination," - says Professor of Vilnius University, Social Work Department lecturer and social policy expert Romas Lazutka who agreed to share his insights, experiences and also the results of various studies related to an aging population for this newsletter.

**What are the challenges and problems associated with ageing - also called a "demographic winter" -, dealing in Lithuania?**

The labour market is not friendly to elderly people in Lithuania. Various studies show that in finding or changing employment, age is one of the main criteria of discrimination. Older people are only reluctantly accepted. It is often said that older people take away jobs, and that for young people whose unemployment rate is quite high the employment opportunities are reduced. But this dependence is not direct, because if people work longer, they have a better life, buy more, demand appears, the economy expands. And for the young people there might even be new jobs created.

If older people are discriminated against and therefore excluded from employment or labour market while they are still willing and able to work quite long - then from a dozen to a few decades of their life span may remain much obscured by social exclusion and poverty. At the same time it is a huge loss for the whole society, because these people, as I said, do not produce goods, they are often are sick or need social services.

**Europe cares for a higher 55 + age group's employment rate and longer stay in the labour market. How are these issues addressed in Lithuania?**

In Lithuania the employment in the group of the age from 55 + to retirement compared with the EU is above average. In Lithuania, people want to work and the number of older workers is quite big. The truth is that often the tendency to work is not out of a good life, but because of a very low level of pensions. A small pension is a large "incentive" to remain in the labour market as long as possible. However, it is not volunteering! This is a forced situation; because of the low pension received it is difficult to

survive. Before the crisis, pensions have not been reduced, and now they are much more reduced only to bigger wage earners. This is important because a person is not forced necessarily to choose salary or pension. You can get this and that. And when pensions and wages are low, people are trying to remain there even after starting a pension. We conclude - the rate of employment in this age group in Lithuania is a good one.

Discrimination clearly exists. Talking even about the public sector, such as educational institutions or public services, the age of 65 years is considered as a limitation for work. Continuing to work beyond that age is allowed only exceptionally and for a fixed term, though the term may be extended in a separate step.

**Why and which stereotypes need to overcome the employees of 55 + to stay active?**

We often hear complaints that we cannot exclude the "old dead", that some of them work more than full time, that they do not leave the jobs to young professionals and resist innovation. Therefore, the older generation in the labour market is viewed with suspicion, there exists a reluctance to employ them.

It is more difficult to manage older people. You need to use specific knowledge of management, that's why organisation of learning processes is more expensive. It depends on age and the ability to learn, so older people are harder to train - at least if the teacher or lector is one who has only been working with students and young people so far. Then the learning process is a hard work for both sides and often inefficient. However, if you create the right conditions, make use of special teaching methods or systems, superior results could be reached. If the representatives of 55+ generation accumulate new knowledge with experiences, they become even better!



**We have touched the topic of social exclusion of the 55+. Let us look from the brighter side to the 55 + age-group's activity. Maybe you've seen and analysed the situation of the youth, looking for ways to attract and use in practice 55 + specialist knowledge and experience?**

Often the question arises who is the most promising group of employees - young or old? I'd say mixed. These teams work better and create better results as they bring together specific knowledge, experience, innovation, energy and drive, etc. Older workers are better able to cope with unforeseen obstacles. In unexpected circumstances they are superior because of their experience-based knowledge. Older people are also more successful in transfer of their knowledge into practical business strategies. In a personnel structure which combines workers of different ages, transfer of knowledge can take place - from older to the young and from young to the older.

Employers' attitudes to older people are controversial. On the one hand, employers rely on their older workers, but when they are recruiting new staff, they prefer young people. This can be explained by the fact that employers keep only the best employees, so they are more confident in them. However, when it comes to trainings, employers first send younger employees.

Talking about the stay of older generation professionals in the labour market, it is important to emphasize the profession. Certain professions' representatives have the possibility to plan their activities, their work intensity can remain high for quite a long period, as they can take into account their feelings, needs, and so on. They avoid a lot of stress because they are their own bosses.

In pre-industrial society pensions didn't exist and people worked to a

ripe old age. In post-industrial society, people must adapt and find a job according to the resources themselves. There are a variety of works, so it is possible to have a partial retirement pension and get a partial salary or "flexible" retirement age, i.e. people can choose when to retire specifically for a particular age range (say, between 55 and 65). When a person can choose the amount of work, work schedule, when to retire, we are saying that the labour market is friendly for the elderly.

**How do you see 55 + age group of professionals in the labour market as mentors? Would it be useful to develop a toolkit "How to transfer knowledge to young people"?**

For engaging the older generation in professional mentoring, motivation is an important factor. How to attract them? What could motivate them? They could see a value and perhaps an honour in being active? After all, they are experts in their fields, but not necessarily experts in transfer of knowledge. Communication must be acceptable to young people. Therefore, those who agree to participate in these activities should be trained and familiar with the methods of how to reach a younger audience. Special guidelines on how to work with a younger audience, how to involve and engage with new knowledge, in my opinion, are necessary.

**What are the perspectives for the future of the 55 + in Lithuania?**

Society is changing, there is a variety of jobs and a person not able to do a specific job because of age, or because he does not want to learn to innovate, can find another job, which is physically less demanding. Sure, status can be a barrier. Not all professionals want to work in lower skilled jobs, and for them it is better to leave and they agree to live with a modest income.

Employers could be more favourable

to older employees, too, and create flexible work schedules. They could for example use more part-time work, have more employees only at peak times, when they are really needed. They could differentiate work according to their ability, use special teaching methods and appropriate managerial decisions, in other words: adjust.

State aid might motivate business leaders to keep the older generation employees, for example by covering wage costs and thus making labour cheaper by introducing a Social Insurance Fund tax exemption - after all, the older employees already receive a pension.

The most important thing is that public opinion must change. This area needs better coordination from the state: regulation, motivation of businesses, positive public opinion formation, and abolishing unfounded stereotypes. There is no documented scientific or other evidence that older people are not receptive to innovation - when reasonable conditions are created. Employers decide on waivers of 55 + employees based on their own experience and opinion heard in a public space, but this is not reasonable.

If public opinion and stereotypes do not change, state regulation and coordination of processes alone will not be sufficient. State aid and initiatives forming positive public opinion and reducing discrimination against older people may be a significant influence.



**BEST AGERS  
ON FACEBOOK**

Only one newsletter every half year? If you want to be updated more frequently, visit (and like) us at Facebook!

## SENIOR ENTERPRISE - EXPERIENCE NEVER AGES

**Best Agers is not the only EU project dealing with the consequences of demographic change for the European economies and societies. In our newsletter we present on-going projects with similar objectives with which Best Agers cooperates.**

The objective of Senior Enterprise is an increase in the economic contribution of older people to their local communities. By starting new businesses alone or with others, investing in or acquiring businesses started by others, or by advising or supporting innovation in SMEs, the projects' ambition is to see people aged 50+ as a resource to be empowered rather than as a burden.

Through an awareness campaign, the impact of this initiative will be wider than the number of persons directly engaged and will go beyond the locality. At the end of the pilot, the fully tested initiative will be ready to attract further funding, as the best practice model will be transferable and will be of interest to policy makers responsible for enterprise and demographic change.

Against the background of the current economic downturn which sees pressure on employment and pensions for older people, the project aims to develop and test suitable means of tapping into the knowledge, skills and resource base that exist among older age groups in order to increase the number of new enterprises being started and as a means of strengthening new and existing SMEs.

As a result of the project, older citizens will be encouraged to remain active, contribute to the development of vibrant communities and engage across the generations.

### Selected expected outcomes

#### 1. Raising awareness

To raise awareness of the various ways in which those aged 50+ can

engage with enterprise and the many benefits that can flow from that engagement.

#### 2. Starting & partnering

**Starting:** This initiative will support older individuals to explore the personal, financial and commercial aspects involved in taking the first step into entrepreneurship.

**Partnering:** Those aged 50+ may consider starting a business in partnership with a younger individual. The drive and enthusiasm of the younger person would then benefit from the wider knowledge, experience, networks and resources of the older individual.

**Get Started:** The first 50+ Start Your Own Business Programmes have already been successfully piloted by the County Enterprise Boards in Counties Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, Ireland. More are planned for Autumn 2011 in Brittany and Ireland.

#### 3. Investing & acquiring

To encourage a greater number of those aged 50+ to become an investor or to acquire a business started by someone else.

#### 4. Advising & innovating

To encourage a greater number of advisors and mentors from among suitably qualified and experienced older people and among those interested in supporting entrepreneurs aged 50+. The particular focus of Senior Enterprise will be on developing a group of volunteer 'supporters' for 50+ entrepreneurs.

#### Selected activities and results

The development and testing through action of SUPPORT PROGRAMMES and INSTRUMENTS suitable to meet the needs of those aged 50+ who wish to engage with enterprise, together with recommendations as to the tailoring required for specific regional circumstances. These will be designed to encourage a greater en-

agement by older people with starting, partnering, acquiring, investing, advising and supporting innovation in new and existing businesses

A published collection of ROLE MODEL PROFILES across various economic sectors that will demonstrate through example the manner in which older individuals have successfully engaged with enterprise across the partner regions.

By the end of the pilot a fully tested BEST PRACTICE MODEL will be available so that Senior Enterprise may be implemented more widely within the NWE area and beyond.

EUROPEAN SENIOR ENTERPRISE ASSOCIATION will be set-up with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, and will continue in existence long after the life of the project.



#### Project name

Senior Enterprise

#### Programme

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

#### Website

[www.seniorenterprise.ie](http://www.seniorenterprise.ie)

#### Duration

October 2010 - June 2014

#### Budget

Total budget : 1 832 171 EUR

#### Partners

- Ireland: Mid-East Regional Authority (Lead Partner)
- United Kingdom: The PRIME initiative Ltd.
- France: inno TSD



## „BEST AGERS“ IN BRUSSELS

Active ageing is becoming a hot topic in Brussels these days. Jonas Meixner reports how the Best Agers project has been getting involved in these discussions.

Despite the ongoing financial and economic crisis, demographic change and its consequences still remain an important issue on the current European policy agenda. And while the focus of “Best Agers” is clearly on the implementation of results and initiatives at the regional & local level, the European arena is equally important in order to exchange best practice examples and ideas with similar projects and institutions.

On behalf of the EU institutions, the upcoming “European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity” is only one of several major attempts in order to enforce demography-related political action by the European Commission. At the same time, the implementation of the so called “Europe2020” strategy with the major goal to achieve an EU-wide employment rate of 75% by the year 2020, constitutes an important background for enhanced EU-engagement regarding the employment of older people. Furthermore, member states themselves plea for a broader and more coherent action on demographic challenges, for instance during the recently held Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO): Among other measures, the Council proposed an integration of demographic change as indicator in EU-funding as well as in the annual growth surveys and national reform programs of the member states. Last but not least, an increasing engagement of NGO’s and civil society actors related to demographic challenges was encouraged – just one opportunity for the “Best Agers” project to get involved.

In recent weeks, various members of the “Best Agers” partnership have therefore been actively promoting



*Jonas Meixner has been promoting the project’s goals, initiatives and results in Brussels. Photo: Hanse-Office*

the project’s goals, initiatives and results on several occasions in Brussels. In the following, some selected activities are highlighted:

- On 5 October a well-attended workshop of the “Demographic Change Regions Network” (DCRN) was held at the Saxony Liaison Office in Brussels. Under the title “Demographic change: European challenge, regional solutions”, Jonas Meixner, “Best Agers” project manager at the County of Pinneberg, presented results from two pan-Baltic studies on regional employment patterns as well as employers’ attitudes towards the employment of older workers.
- During the “Open Days”, the European week of regions and cities, “Best Agers”-representatives from Sweden and Germany attended a workshop on “Reactivating Older Workers in Europe”. Besides the presentation and discussion of several demography-related EU projects, institutions from Poland, Belgium, Italy and even Turkey showed interest in “Best Agers”-activities.
- Furthermore, October witnessed

a meeting with a representative of the “AGE Platform Europe”, where a closer cooperation of “Best Agers” and AGE was initiated by project-representatives from Luleå and Gothenburg. “Best Agers”-members were invited to several meetings, among others for giving a presentation at the “AGE Employment Expert Group”-meeting in Brussels in December.

- Finally, “Best Agers” member Andreas Thaler from the Hanse Office, the Joint Representation of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the State of Schleswig-Holstein to the EU, organised a well-perceived workshop on “Volunteering of Senior Citizens”. Linking the current European Year of Volunteering and the upcoming Year 2012 dealing with “Active ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity”, the participants discussed potentials of an increased engagement of seniors in the sphere of volunteering and employment.

### For Further Information

Jonas Meixner, County of Pinneberg  
j.meixner@kreis-pinneberg.de

## CALENDAR

### 15-16 November 2011 Best Agers Project Fair

Many organisations, networks and initiatives throughout Europe are working hard to find ways to utilize the potentials of older people and make their human resources available to others, especially the younger generations. Often, they prepare and implement similar solutions in different regions.

The Best Agers Project Fair brings some of these organisations together. 17 organisations, plus the partners of the Best Agers and Baltic Sea Labour Network projects, will set up exhibition stands and exchange good practice, new ideas and common challenges with each other, visitors of the fair and participants of the BSLN final conference which will take place right next door. Presentations about "Creative Age Management Strategies in the Baltic Sea Region" and the almost finished Best Agers web-based matching portals for senior advisors and their (potential) clients as well as panel discussions about special skills of older professionals and how to make use of them will offer additional food for thought and debate.

A brochure presenting all exhibitors, as well as documentation of the fair, will be uploaded to the Best Agers website after the event.

After the fair, the next project internal meeting will take place on 17-18 November in Rostock, Germany.

### Stay Updated

Please visit Best Agers website for updated project activities: [www.best-agers-project.eu](http://www.best-agers-project.eu)

## NEWSFLASH

### Best Agers Mid-Term Conference

The Best Agers project reached half-time this summer, and preliminary results were presented and discussed at the Mid-Term Conference with the title "Older Citizens in Modern Society: Economics, Education, Creativity". The conference took place on 8-10 June 2011 in St. Petersburg, and in addition to the project partners more than 100 representatives of mostly Russian governmental and non-governmental organisations, higher education institutions and businesses participated. The topics covered in three plenary sessions and two roundtables were

- Older workers in changing labour markets
- Coaches, experts and mentors: new roles for older citizens
- Motivating best agers for an active social and economic life
- Synergies of European Projects
- E-government and distance learning for older citizens.

Furthermore, three other INTERREG projects (DC Noise, Cities in Balance, Senior Enterprise) were present and discussed their approaches with the Best Agers partners. All conference speakers' presentations and a conference report are available on the project website.

### Best Agers in Public

- The Best Agers project was in-

vited to present the webinar series Education for Excellence (see page 7) at the first **Joint Conference of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes** 16 September 2011 in Katowice, Poland. The presentation was part of the workshop on Demographic Change, the results of which are documented here: <https://registration.livgroup.co.uk/transnational-cooperation/PostEvent/>

- Hartwig Wagemester presented the Best Agers project at the **CONNECT Annual Meeting** in St. Petersburg on 6-7 October in St. Petersburg. Both the Latvian and North-West Russian chapters of CONNECT are working on pilots in WP 5 and 6 of the Best Agers project.
- Hauke Siemen informed about the progress of Best Agers at the **DC NOISE Final Conference** on 27 September in Brugge, Belgium. The DC NOISE project is unfortunately closing now, but cooperation between partners of both projects will hopefully continue.
- Jonas Meixner of the County of Pinneberg presented results of the work on employment of older workers during a workshop of the **Demographic Change Regions Network (DCRN)** on 5 October in Brussels, BE (see page 13).



Photo: Mareks Justs