

CE-AGEING PLATFORM AND CE-AGEING STRATEGY

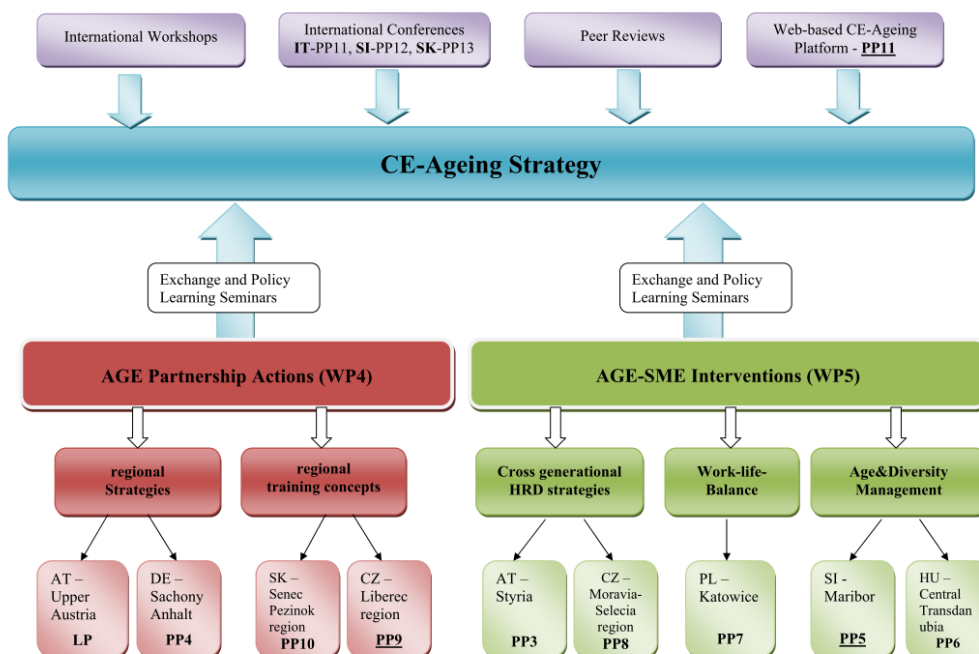
(ZSI, Vienna, 12 February 2013)

The Central European (CE) Knowledge Platform for an Ageing Society, in short "CE-Ageing Platform", aims to minimise negative effects and impacts of demographic change in CE. The project idea derived from cooperation between various partners and their desire to jointly contribute to improved framework conditions in their regions in order to foster economic growth, regional development and social cohesion. It is built on the belief that challenges faced in the cross-cutting issue "ageing" can only be solved in working together. The "Central European Knowledge Platform for an Ageing Society (CE-Ageing Platform)" has been chosen to be labelled as a project belonging to and supporting the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)/ Priority Area 9 "To Invest in People and Skills."

The partnership consists of 13 partners from eight CE countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia), representing public, private and civil society organisations operating at the national, the regional as well as the local levels within CE and tackling a variety of policies such as labour market, social, regional and economic development. The partnership includes several ministries, training and counselling institutions, regional development agencies, NGOs and research institutions.

The innovative actions implemented at the regional levels include the development of four Regional Age Platforms with which two Regional Ageing Strategies as well as two Regional Training Concepts are set up ("Age-Partnership Actions"). In other CE-regions 5 additional pilots, the "Age-SME Interventions", are implemented in cooperation with SME's.

Figure 1: Activities implemented by the platform

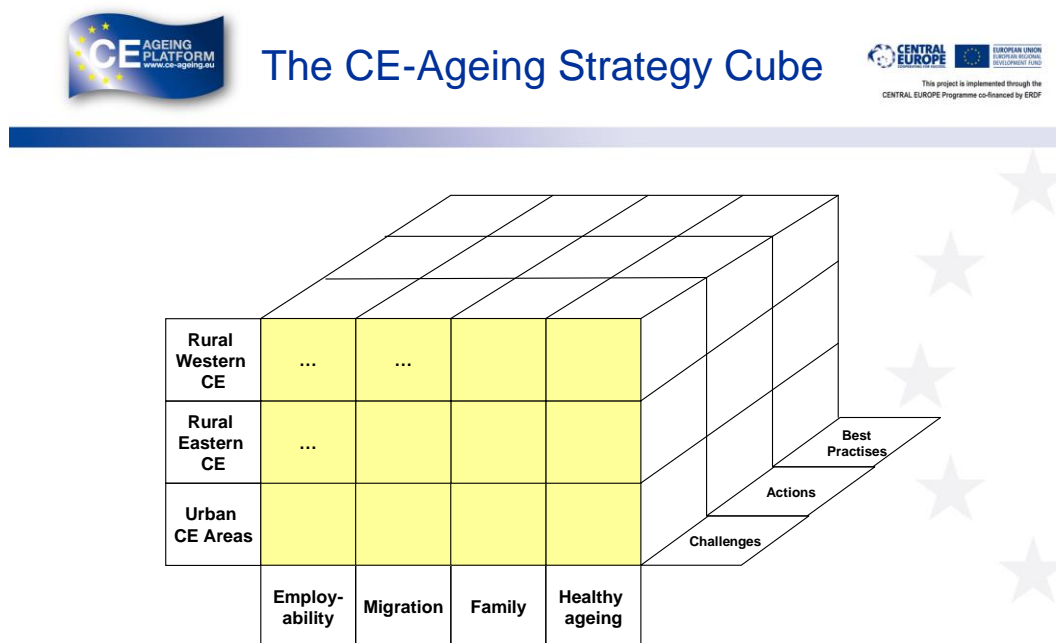


The CE-Ageing Platform jointly developed a **CE-Ageing Strategy** enabling partners to adapt to demographic change, thereby integrating lessons learnt from previous activities on the one hand and results and lessons learnt from innovative actions implemented by the CE-Ageing platform on the other. Based on the CE-Ageing Vision, the CE-Ageing Platform identified current challenges and potentials in respect to demographic change, developed trends and scenarios for CE, and established recommendations for policy change; all of which are presented in the green paper “Central European Ageing Strategy”. The strategy covers a wide range of policy interventions aiming at sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. The recommendations link policies horizontally but also vertically, i.e. local and regional actions go hand in hand with policy changes at the national and international levels. Three matrixes are presented summarising project results in relation to:

- Major current challenges faced within the CE territories (The Challenge Matrix);
- Actions recommended (The Action Matrix; this matrix facilitates the planning of actions for meeting current challenges in the four areas of concern and within the specific CE regions); and
- Practices already implemented within CE and abroad (The Practise Matrix; this matrix presents successful examples).

By linking the matrixes to each other a three dimensional ‘CE-Ageing Strategy Cube’ is built (See figure 2). A set of up to 200 practices are provided out of which CE regions shall choose those fitting to their particular requirements.

Figure 2: *The CE-Ageing Strategy Cube*



CORE ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY

Demographic change requires urgent actions

Over the next decades Central Europe will face unprecedented demographic challenges such as an ageing and shrinking population and ‘ageing regions’ due to demographic factors such as greater life expectancy and decreased fertility of CE citizens, just to name some. Enhanced migration to CE as well as within CE to more affluent regions next to changes in family structures are likely to occur.



The CE-Ageing Platform identified five top ranked current challenges faced by all CE regions. These refer to the low labour force participation of particular age groups, the need for modifications with regard to governance systems, in particular the pension, social and health and care systems, changes in family structures as well as the need for a better integration of migrants. The platform, in addition, observes growing inequality across CE as well as within CE regions. Four major areas of concern are in focus in regard to actions to be taken by local and regional public authorities in particular. These comprise:

- *Employability*: Undisputable, employability is the key for labour force participation and social inclusion. Investment in human capital is regarded as the cornerstone for enhancing employability.
- *Migration*: Courageous and proactive migration policies both within CE regions as well as to CE together with measures enhancing the integration of migrants are central to responding to the demographic challenges faced.
- *Family*: Modifications in the field of work and care provision due to changes in the family structures and household communities pose challenges to manage work-life balance. These policies go hand in hand with 'Employability'.
- *Healthy ageing*: Promotion of healthy active ageing is essential for all CE regions in order to enable for longer, healthier and happier lives of CE citizens.

Counterbalancing inequalities

The growing number of persons living in poverty and at-risk-of poverty draws an important picture of an unequal distribution of wealth within CE. The strategy draws specific attention to social justice and cohesion (i.e. reducing regional disparities). Less favoured regions and socially disadvantaged such as low-skilled, disabled and other vulnerable as well as persons confronted with multiple disadvantages are placed at the centre of the strategy.

Counterbalancing inequalities is regarded as 'the' big challenge in CE which has to be addressed by the public. The overall policy framework in CE should concern all issues related to reducing inequalities between groups of the society but also between territories, in particular in respect of pension, health, social security as well as care and long term care system/s. The public has to draw specific attention to CE's regional disparities:

- Rural areas in Eastern CE are most affected as knowledge and human resources next to infrastructure (e.g. health infrastructure) and capital are concentrated in big cities and wealthy rural areas (outmigration from rural areas).
- In rural areas in Western CE, inadequate policies concerning, for instance, the position of women and older workers in the work force are present and social support for families (e.g. early childcare facilities, better work-life conditions, etc.) needed.
- In wealthy urban conglomerates in CE the integration of a large number of citizens of migrant origin into social life needs to be accelerated and the 'care crisis' (formal and informal care) solved.

Building age- and family-friendly (barrier-free) structures and environments and guaranteeing accessibility of the environment and the inclusion of vulnerable people into social life will enhance social and economic participation in all CE regions. In respect to social inequality 'active ageing across all ages' is recommended including intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational justice of public policy regimes as well as the better activation of human capital. Fostering social innovation may assist in resolving societal challenges and, in addition, can help to overcome inequalities.

Adaptation of CE governance systems to change

The CE-Ageing Platform stresses the need for the adaptation of CE governance systems to demographic change as an overall requirement. Courageous democratisation processes and participatory decision making need to be enforced and sustainable social security system/s build. Investments in staying healthy throughout life is regarded the basis. In regard to the pension policy system, for instance, flexible models (e.g. innovative part-time transition models) should be promoted



which support persons willing to work to stay in the work force as long as possible. Policy change is also needed with respect to discouraging early retirement and towards less generous pensions relative to wages, for early retirement in particular.

Investments in human capital

While the main target course of the Demography Report (2010) was confirmed by the CE-Ageing Platform, the minor role given to human capital was criticised. Investments in human capital, i.e. all forms of education, training and life-long learning should have priority. The CE-Platform regards developing life-long learning skills so that everyone learns the skills required for acquiring new knowledge and new skills throughout the life course as the base for inclusion and participation in our knowledge and information society. Consequently, there is an urgency seen in rethinking and making major investments in human capital. Investments need to rise in particular also for high-quality (publicly subsidized) early childhood education and care service for the age group 1-6 years old.

In addition, proactive employment and active ageing policies need to be undertaken in CE: Although economies in ageing societies will rely on an ageing workforce and older consumers for generating wealth (i.e. companies will have to be proactive to attract and keep older workers), efforts need to be made to overcome negative stereotypes about particular age groups of the society (older workers in relation to productivity and health problems for instance) and to combat ageing discrimination. Working conditions need to be adapted to workers needs (e.g. enhance possibilities for combining care-giving and learning with employment), employment, especially of particular groups of the society such as women and older persons, encouraged and multiple careers supported.

Making work-life-balance happen

Next to organizing permanent education and training the adaption of the work environment to the capabilities and aspirations of workers including facilities for flexibility and variation in work schedules is recommended. Making work-life-balance happen includes solving the conflict of “work for pay versus work for family” as well as the expansion of work and improvement of health over the life span.

Making work-life-balance happen is not only addressed to the public. Employers will need to be more flexible about how and where people work and how they are rewarded. To this end, solutions have to be offered in order to combine work with family and care. A paradigm shift with respect to organising and valuing work and private life is required and the conflict of “work for pay versus work for family” needs to be solved.

Joint actions

Population ageing is a challenge across CE. Immense policy changes are required in the up-coming decades with proactive roles and responsibilities taken by various actors. Their main tasks comprise:

- *steering the processes of policy change*: the public (the CE-states, regional public authorities, municipalities, the EU, etc.);
- *adapting to demographic change within the enterprises*: the private (enterprises, private agencies, industry, private business lobbying organisations, etc.); and
- *assisting for change, accompanying (and driving ?) the change process*: the civil society (Non-for-profit, NGOs, social service associations, volunteers, citizens, etc.)

All stakeholders are in demand in supporting policy change. It is the CE-Platform's belief that the required policies changes should be implemented in cooperation with stakeholders: a multi-governance matrix is needed in which various perspectives are integrated and efforts as well as responsibilities jointly taken to build a desirable future. A sustainable socio-economic setting for CE and its various regions can be build by setting up bundles of measure at the local and regional levels, aligning regional and local actions with policies to taken at the national and international levels and, thus, together contributing to minimising negative effects of demographic change.

For further information please see www.ce-ageing.eu