



Regional strategies and demographic ageing

Age Proofing Toolkit



EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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Regional Strategies and Demographic Ageing

Regional organisations are becoming increasingly important in the governance of all European Member States and the strategies they develop and deliver will have a significant impact on the economic and social development of their regions.

These regional strategies are being developed at a time of change both within Europe and internationally. Economies are global, political structures are evolving and technology opens up new opportunities for communication and service delivery. As regional organisations consider how best to respond to these new opportunities and challenges, they will also need to consider the diversity of their population - as producers, consumers and stakeholders.

One of the key areas of change facing all regions is the ageing of our population. Demographic ageing – as a result of our improved longevity and declining fertility – means a profound shift in the structure of our population. The age structure of our population is growing older and the rate of change is accelerating. Older people will become more important for their contribution to economies and communities, for the demands they make as consumers and for their expectations as citizens.

The ageing of our population is something to celebrate. It represents a great success for our society that people can live healthier and longer lives. However, it provides opportunities and creates challenges which need to be understood and addressed effectively.

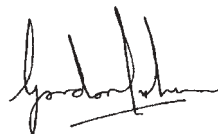
Those working at the sub-national level, need to understand how ageing interacts with other factors within their territories such as migration and the demographics of minority communities, to give subtle but important demographic differences between and within regions which impact across all areas of policy from economy to infrastructure to health.

The European Policies Research Centre at the University of Strathclyde has worked with the partners of the Regions for All Ages programme to develop this toolkit which has been sponsored by the Committee of the Regions and Age Concern England. We hope that it will help regional organisations to assess the impact of ageing on their region by providing a full discussion of the impacts of demographic ageing in the key areas of regional policy and providing a checklist of guiding questions to help shape strategies. The toolkit's content has been prepared to be relevant for the range of different administrative systems which currently exist within EU Member States.

We hope it will be a useful addition to the tools already available to those responsible for making the region an effective level for addressing change.



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Secretary-General,
Committee of the Regions*



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Director General, Age Concern England
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Section 1

Introducing the Toolkit

What is the Toolkit?

The Age Proofing Toolkit provides a briefing and series of prompt questions to focus on the key issues presented by demographic ageing in the context of regional and cohesion policy. It aims to ensure that regional authorities and organisations operating at regional level from all sectors can fully consider the issues of an ageing population when preparing their regional strategies, and can “age-proof” their documents.

Why is it important?

The Age Proofing Toolkit will help you to avoid the risks arising from not taking full account of the implications of an ageing population. Demographic ageing poses a series of opportunities and challenges for those responsible for regional governance and development.

Changes in the age profile will have an impact on a wide range of policy domains - from the economy, to demands for a range of services and the shape of our infrastructure. Future legislation in areas such as employment, health and equality and human rights will reflect age-related issues.

How to use the Toolkit

The toolkit can be used in two ways:

- As an aide-memoire on ageing issues before producing a document
- As a proofing tool once a draft document is available

To use it effectively

- Read the Toolkit to gain an impression of how ageing could impact upon your strategy.
- Use the Toolkit to help you prepare your document or to reread your draft document in a more interrogative manner looking for omissions and preconceptions about ageing and to ensure that the full range of issues reflecting the implications of ageing on regional economies, regional development and infrastructure are addressed.

- The Toolkit has been organised so that you can make notes in each section. You are welcome to photocopy pages as needed.
- The toolkit is available in either hard copy or as a downloadable pdf from:
www.ageconcern.org.uk/regionsforallages
www.cor.europa.eu
- Where necessary, changes to the analysis and proposals within a strategy or the tone of the document may need to be made to accommodate issues of ageing.
- In preparing this toolkit, the authors have sought to reflect the range of different administrative systems which operate across the European Union and the different mix of powers and responsibilities which exist in different Member States. It is recognised, however, that users will need to be selective in how they use the toolkit dependent on the situation in their state.

How the Toolkit relates to other toolkits and appraisal tools

The focus of this Toolkit is demographic ageing. Where there is a significant interface with other areas of policy such as gender, these are specifically discussed. However, the prime purpose of this Toolkit is to age-proof specific policy documents. As such it complements other toolkits to give a rounded perspective of policy.

The Toolkit and regional strategies

This Toolkit is designed to raise awareness of the role that demography and ageing plays in the regions of European Member States, both at regional and sub-regional level. Ageing is emerging as a cross-cutting theme which affects a range of policy domains. As a result, ageing should be considered when devising or scrutinising a wide range of regional strategies, such as economic, spatial, skills and lifelong learning, housing, transport, social inclusion and community plans.

Further information

The Regions for All Ages web-page provides a number of other reports and resources. In particular the report *The Implications of demographic ageing for regional policy* produced for Regions for All Ages by EPRC contains further discussion of the issues raised in the toolkit about the importance of ageing for regional strategies at European level. The report also contains more detail of the case studies mentioned in later sections of the toolkit.

In addition other partners to Regions for All Ages can provide further detailed analysis of issues to do with demographic change and regional policy.

Section 2

The Toolkit

This is the working section of the Toolkit. It provides information and prompts questions which can be used to support the development of a range of regional strategies. It has been organised into five sections which reflect the main areas of responsibility for regional and sub-national authorities across the European Union. However, it is recognised that these sections will have different levels of relevance in different states.

Working through the five parts of the Toolkit will add value to the development of most regional strategies, but the following sections are therefore of particular value to different regional strategies:

Focusing on the key issues

Regional strategies	1. General trends, themes and indicators	2. Ageing and regional economies	3. Ageing and regional development	4. Ageing and regional infrastructure	5. Ageing and regional governance
Economic	X	X	X		
Spatial	X		X	X	
Skills	X	X			
Housing	X	X	X	X	
Social inclusion	X	X	X	X	
Community plans	X	X	X	X	X
Rural	X	X	X	X	X
Transport	X	X	X	X	

Ageing

General trends, unifying themes and current indicators

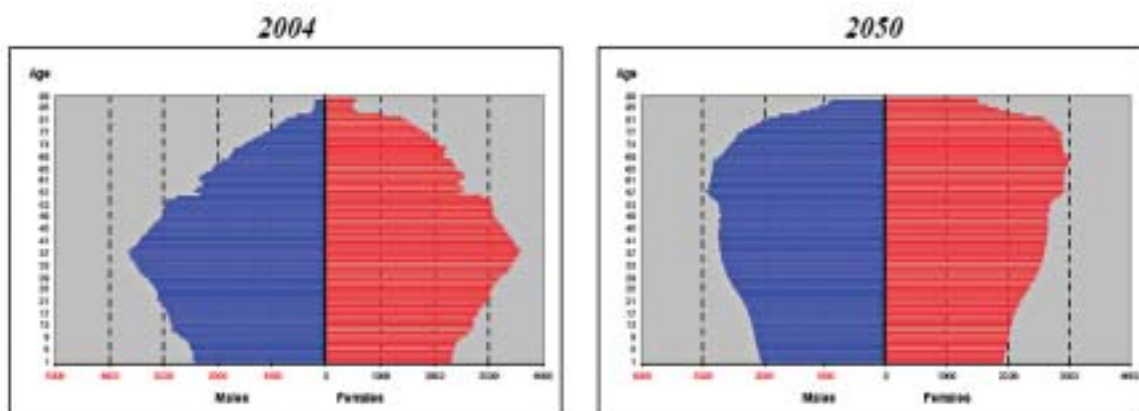
The European Union (EU) is facing a substantial ageing of its population over coming decades. Closer analysis of demographic ageing and its implications across a broad range of policy areas is informing new responses in academic and policy-making circles to the challenges and opportunities offered. In addition to debate about opportunities and challenges at Member State level in areas such as pensions and social protection, there is increasing awareness of the differentiated impact of ageing at sub-national level and the issue is moving up regional policy agendas across the EU.

In terms of demographic trends, the EU as a whole displays a combination of high and growing life expectancy and an extremely low fertility rate. These demographic trends are forecast to continue.

A recent report by the European Commission to Member States forecasted that fertility rates in all countries are projected to remain well below the natural replacement rate. Life expectancy at birth, having risen by some 8 years since 1960, is projected to rise by a further 6 years in the next five decades.

The impact of these changes on the overall population pattern will mean that between the years 2010 and 2050 (see figures 1 and 2), the population in younger age groups will decline rapidly and those in older age groups will rise.

Figure 1: Age pyramids for the EU25 population in 2004 and 2050



Source: EC (2006), "The impact of ageing on public expenditure: projections for the EU25 Member States on pensions, health care, long term care, education and unemployment transfers (2004-2050)" *European Economy*. Special Report. No. 1. 2006 p. 7.

Figure 2: Population change in selected cohorts 2005 to 2050

Eurostat base scenario, EU-25 (in thousands)	2005-2050	2005-2010	2010-2030	2030-2050
Total population	-2.1%	+1.2%	+1.1%	-4.3%
Children (0-14)	-19.4%	-3.2%	-8.9%	-8.6%
Young people (15-24)	-25.0%	-4.3%	-12.3%	-10.6%
Adults (25-39)	-25.8%	-4.1%	-16.0%	-8.0%
Adults (40-54)	-19.5%	+4.2%	-10.0%	-14.1%
Adults (55-64)	+8.7%	+9.6%	+15.5%	-14.1%
Adults (65-79)	+44.1%	+3.4%	+37.4%	+1.5%
Adults (80+)	+180.5%	+17.1%	+57.1%	+52.4%

Source: EC (2004), Green Paper, "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations" COM(2005) 94 final

Diversity of older people

In addition to the general issue of ageing, people over 50 are by no means a homogenous group but are diverse and segmented in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and in terms of the life stages by which they define themselves. The future generations of older people will be the Baby Boomers born between 1945 and 1965, some of whom have a very different life experience to the pre-war generations and are likely to be more demanding in terms of their individual aspirations as they approach older age.

Other changes are also taking place in society which have an impact; patterns of marriage and of women's employment, changes in family sizes and a re-definition of gender roles; the growth and ageing of minority ethnic communities; increasing home ownership; increased income for some and embedded poverty for others and diversity in patterns of employment and retirement; longer working lives and change in pension provision; the growth of private markets both in care services and leisure provision. All these factors will have an impact on the future needs and expectations of older people.

Improvements in income and health care and healthier lifestyles have led to more people living longer in Europe. This has meant more people needing support to remain independent in later life. However, it has also led to an increase in the number of relatively fit and active older people, many of whom are and want to continue to be active contributors in employment and in their families and communities.

The policy agenda on ageing

Traditionally, debates on ageing have focused on pensions and social protection, health and social care at national level. However, across EU Member States, new approaches to the challenges and opportunities presented by demographic ageing are emerging. A broader definition of the ageing agenda is now apparent, incorporating a range of issues:

- *Pensions and income.* The challenge ageing implies for pension and welfare systems retains a high profile in many Member States. A series of reforms have been “rolled out” across EU countries, retrenching pensions and lowering costs by reducing the basic level of benefits or incorporating the private sector and addressing issues of intergenerational fairness and the generational equity. In some states measures have been introduced to support savings in retirement and to provide incentives for extending employment beyond state pension age.
- *Economy and Employment.* Developing instruments to strengthen the status of older people in the labour market as well as to improve their chances of finding and remaining in employment in pursuit of European employment targets (for example through the Finnish *National Programme on Ageing Workers*). In addition, there is a growing recognition that older people are a growing sector for consumer spending, and so create market opportunities for goods and services relevant to older people.
- *Health care and the provision of other services.* Key challenges consist of guaranteeing accessibility, quality and financial viability, responding to the range of demands from a diversifying population and the higher capacity to provide services as a result of technological change in areas such as assisted technology and drugs (for example through the Portuguese *Integrated Support Programme for the Elderly*).
- *Individual rights.* Related aims are to tackle discrimination and promote human rights. Age discrimination is emerging as a key issue in the context of broader approaches to equality and diversity in Europe. The need to address discrimination on the grounds of age is increasingly recognised both through legislation and by promoting positive images of ageing and giving older people a stronger voice in society (for example in the Irish strategy *Implementing Equality for Older People*).
- *Housing and communities.* There is increasing awareness of the impact of policy areas such as transport, housing and regeneration on specific groups of people from all ages and increasing variety of need amongst the older population - the single, those with some form of disability and those living in deprived urban or peripheral rural areas. The main challenge here is ensuring that initiatives reach these groups (for example in the Dutch policy paper *What People Want, Where People Live*)

Some national governments are gradually developing integrated strategies or guidelines within which new, multi-stranded approaches to ageing can be coordinated (for example in the UK strategy *Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*).

European Union and Ageing

The European Union recognises the importance of population ageing in the development of the cohesion of Europe, its nations and its regions. There are a number of legal frameworks and policies which incorporate the ageing agenda and which should inform regional strategies:

Lisbon strategy

The Lisbon strategy seeks to address key economic issues of low growth rates, high unemployment and social exclusion. It recognises as a key issue the “employment deficit” in the age cohort 55-65, which contributes to weaknesses in low growth rates of the EU economy and the exclusion of many people from society. In 2001, the European Council called for an increase in the employment rate for older workers to 50 percent, an extra 5 million people¹.

The agenda was re-launched in Spring 2005, recommending that the Member States develop a “comprehensive active ageing strategy by 2006.” Other European documents in this context suggest that such a strategy should include providing incentives for workers to work longer and for employers to hire and keep old workers; increasing participation in lifelong learning for all ages, especially for low-skilled and older workers; and improving working conditions and quality in work, and action to address barriers to employment such as explicit and implicit age discrimination².

Commission Green Paper on Demographic Change

In March 2005, the Commission published its Green Paper *Confronting Demographic Change* and called for a “new solidarity between the generations”. It suggested three essential priorities: returning to demographic growth by supporting the birth rate and judicious use of immigration; ensuring a balance between the generations in the distribution of the benefits of growth; and finding new bridges between activity and inactivity in both the old and young ages³. Debate on this strategy was widespread and the Commission is currently considering how to take this discussion forward.

Cohesion Policy

Economic growth linked to the age agenda is reflected in EU Cohesion policy and the Structural Funds guidelines. Demographic ageing is now a more explicit theme in EU funding guidelines and was addressed in the Commission’s proposed financial framework for the next programme period and should work through into national programmes for distributing structural funding for the 2007-13 programming period⁴. The Third Cohesion Report identifies the ageing of the population as one of the four key drivers to Cohesion policy and proposes performance indicators for the 2007-13 European Social Fund linked to:

- The promotion of active ageing
- The promotion of life-long learning.

1 EC (2002) “Increasing labour force participation and promoting active ageing”, COM(2002) 9 final, Brussels, 24 January 2002.
 2 EC (2004), European Communities, Facing the Challenge. The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment. Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok, November 2004 p. 37.
 3 EC (2005) Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations, COM(2005) 94 final, 16 March 2005.
 4 EC (2004), *Building our common future: Policy challenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union 2007-2013*, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, COM(2004) 101, 2 March 2004.

The Community Strategic Guidelines, the Commission's outline of strategic developmental priorities for the new programming period, stresses the need to have developed labour market institutions to respond to demographic ageing, and urges the Union and its partners in Member States and regions to take steps to invest in health promotion and disease prevention⁵. The level of funding available to different regions is to change considerably, mainly as a result of the shift of Cohesion policy funding from old to new Member States. However, the more explicit reference to the ageing issue in Community documents, and the flexibility enjoyed by nations and regions to set priorities for funds within these guidelines, broadens the scope for using EU finances to develop more strategic responses to ageing.

Employment Framework Directive

In 2000, the European Council adopted an Employment Framework Directive which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age⁶. By December 2006, all Member States will have laws against age discrimination and several regions are using the directive as a means to drive their ageing strategies forward. Looking forward, it is expected that ageing and age discrimination will be a focus for the European Year of Equal Opportunities in 2007 and that there will be a focus on age in the forthcoming feasibility study report, commissioned by the European Commission, on further actions on equality due in 2007.

Social Protection and Social Inclusion

In addition to the employment issues, the Lisbon strategy expressed commitment to better social cohesion and an improved social policy agenda as well as economic targets.

Older people have one of the highest risks of poverty of all age groups and experience social exclusion due to a range of factors such as reduced social contact, health, low income, lack of mobility and abuse. As part of the EU's social protection and inclusion process, Member States have agreed to the Open Method of Coordination to streamline their National Action Plans on pensions, health and long term care and social inclusion, thus ensuring a more integrated approach.

Economic Impact

The economic and budgetary consequences of ageing for Member States and the implications for the sustainability of public spending have been assessed through a new set of age-related public expenditure projections for all twenty-five Member States, covering pensions, health care, long term care, education and unemployment transfers.

The report from ECOFIN and the Economic Policy Committee, Impact of ageing populations on public spending⁷, projects an overall increase in age-related spending in the EU25 of 3.4 percentage points of GDP by 2050 based on current policy.

However, the report recommends a more thorough investigation and decomposition of the costs of ageing since there are many variables between and within Member

5 EC (2005) Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs, Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013, COM(2005) 0299, 5 July 2005.

6 Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

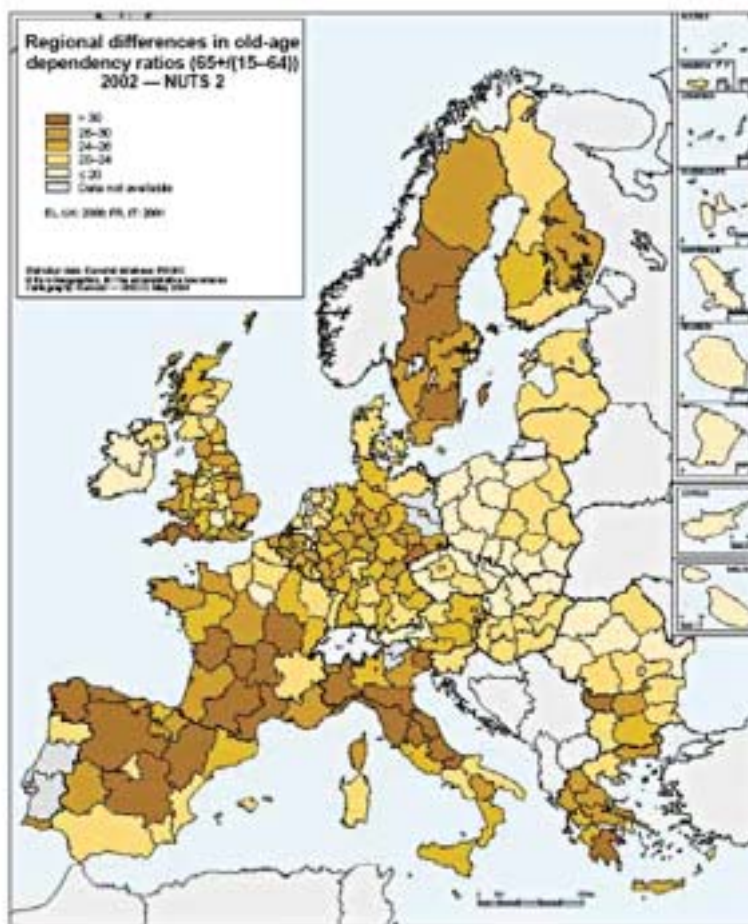
7 ECOFIN/EPC (2006) REP/238 final. Impact of ageing populations on public spending on pensions, health and long term care, education and employment benefits for the elderly. Summary report.

States and a clearer insight is needed of the key drivers operating within individual countries. It notes in particular that policy change can have a significant impact on future expenditure. For instance, pension reform and a higher employment rate of older workers can reduce public expenditure. The report also notes that age-related public expenditure on health, long term care and disability may be reduced by half if appropriate policies are introduced to encourage healthy life expectancy.

Impact on Regions

While the EU as a whole displays a combination of high and growing life expectancy and generally low fertility rates, the results of these broad demographic processes are increasingly observable at the regional level in differentiated ways. Employment and migration patterns can interact with these trends to produce particular spatial characteristics and territorial effects. Demographic indicators make clear the high degree of regional variation across the EU.

Figure 3: Map of regional differences in old-age dependency ratios (number of people aged 65 and over relative to those aged 15–64) for NUTS 2 units, 2002



Source: European Commission, Regions: Statistical Yearbook, 2004, p.22.

Relevance of ageing for regional strategies

For regional strategies focused on economic growth, social inclusion and sustainable development, key issues will include:

- Enhancing the productive contribution of older sections of the population.
- Accommodating and enabling an increasingly heterogeneous older population.
- Acknowledging the consumption patterns of an increasingly older population from both the private and public sector and developing services and products appropriately.
- Engaging older segments of the population in regional governance.
- Addressing poverty and social exclusion amongst older people.

In response to these differentiated regional situations, a number of regional strategies are emerging around the EU which seek to reflect the cross-cutting strategic impact of ageing:

- An important feature of the North West Forum on Ageing (5050 vision) in England, is providing input into the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), supporting the inclusion of ageing issues in the general process of developing regional policies. An important instrument in influencing strategies such as the RES is the Age Proofing Toolkit⁸ already created for partners of the Regions for All Ages Programme by Nottingham Trent University and available to all English regions.



Ageing

General trends, unifying themes and current indicators

Question	Current Context	Further requirements
Does the document reflect current and future demographic trends in all relevant policy areas such as economy, infrastructure and social policy?		
Does the analysis include general ageing trends and regionally specific trends such as migration and the nature of minority ethnic communities? Does the document reflect relevant legal frameworks and performance targets?		
Is the document free of generalisations or stereotypical notions about people of different age groups and reflect the heterogeneity of people over 50? In its presentation, does it avoid the use of stereotypical language or negative images of older adults?		
Does the document incorporate information about trends into specific proposals? Has a process of consultation about the document been identified with people from relevant age groups?		

Ageing and regional economies

Employment, economic contribution and skills

The labour market is growing older as people live longer and fewer younger people join the labour force. There is increasing recognition that the challenges to regional development represented by demographic change can be offset by a more efficient utilisation of older people as active contributors to the regional economy.

Older workers can and already do contribute to regional economies in several ways. For instance, many older people work in full or part-time employment or run their own businesses. There are some who are capable of working, but who are currently on sickness benefits or prematurely retired, who could be encouraged to re-join the workforce if suitable training, jobs and working conditions were available. Older people also make an unpaid economic contribution to regional development as volunteers and as carers for older relatives or grandchildren.

For a variety of reasons, developing this potential is a significant challenge. On the one hand, ageism in the culture and policies of organisations discourages employers from participating in initiatives designed to foster more progressive attitudes to older workers. On the other hand, some initiatives fail to engage older people themselves, due to their personal circumstances such as caring commitments, health and travel requirements, or the absence of specific skills.

Regional administrations and agencies have a significant role to play in this respect. It is here that policies can be coordinated and closer ties can be developed between policy-makers, the business community and employers and with older people themselves. The long term costs of older people's absence from the labour force include suppressing economic growth levels and the cost of servicing unemployment. For individuals, the costs include social and economic exclusion, ill-health, and loss of confidence and self esteem.

A number of initiatives are underway in EU regions:

- One strand of the Welsh *Strategy for Older People* focuses on unlocking the economic potential of older people. It combines efforts to incorporate the ageing dimension in mainstream labour market programmes with initiatives that target older people as a specific group in the working population. This includes initiatives to provide targeted training, to develop softer skills and build the confidence of older people or to help them to establish their own businesses.
- In Nordrhein-Westfalen, the *Arbeit und Innovation im Demographischen Wandel - Arbid* (Work and Innovation during Demographic Change), attempts to coordinate "supply" and "demand" side instruments within an ageing perspective, matching the available competencies of older people with new labour market opportunities. Relatives (often older people) that take care of older people are also supported and this includes the development of an appropriate legal framework (e.g. labour legislation) that will create sufficient flexibility to fulfil work and caring responsibilities if desired.

Ageing and regional economies

Employment, economic contribution and skills

Questions	Current content	Further requirements
Does the document recognise the economic contribution of older people in employment, self employment, and unpaid activities, such as caring and volunteering?		
Does the document identify the current position in the region of the economic engagement of older people and the potential for improving this?		
Does the document highlight and work towards existing European and national targets and anticipate legislative developments?		
Does the document propose specific initiatives in the areas of employment, self employment, life-long learning, skills development, volunteering and caring? Does the document identify key partner agencies at national and regional level in this work?		

Ageing and regional development

Consumption of goods and services

Older people are increasingly powerful economically. They are a growing consumer group in the market for housing, leisure and culture, health care products, tourism and information technology and so present new opportunities for the development of regional economies. Businesses and service providers need to recognise the different segments within the older population and ensure that goods and services are accessible and appropriate to the needs and demands of older consumers. This is particularly important in areas with higher concentration of relatively affluent older people:

- In Nordrhein-Westfalen, research concluded that a proactive response to the needs and interests of older people could result in the creation of around 100,000 new jobs by 2010 and that the state government's tax revenue could increase by a total of over €1.2 billion by 2010. Similar studies for the Federal Republic of Germany forecast more than 900,000 additional employees in the "silver economy" within the next two decades and conclude that there are no other sectors or businesses with a higher growth potential in the German economy⁹. Against this background, the task force Silver Economy (Seniorenwirtschaft) has been established. The approach of the initiative is "dialogue-oriented" which means that a variety of different actors such as businesses, trade unions, caring organisations and universities from regions across the EU are brought together in conferences and other events to look how housing, telecommunications and leisure products can be developed and marketed for older consumers.

However, the distribution of income amongst the older population is very uneven, with single older people being at the greatest risk of poverty. Since pensioners generally have a lower income than working people, demographic ageing in virtually all Member States will mean that social exclusion, income inequality and poverty rates in Europe will increase over the next 25 years¹⁰.

Older people are affected by policies targeted at specific social classes, occupations, ethnic groups and geographical locations, and the impact of demographic ageing varies spatially and socio-economically. In many Member States, different categories of older people - the single, those with some form of disability, those living in deprived urban areas or peripheral rural areas - are living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Thus, service providers need to ensure that benefits and services are accessible and appropriate to the needs and demands of older people regardless of their geographical location, spending power, occupational or family background.

9 B. Augurzky, and U. Neumann, Ökonomische Ressourcen älterer Menschen. Regionalwirtschaftliche und fiskalische Effekte einer Förderung der Seniorenwirtschaft in Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2005. Accessed at : <<http://www.silvereconomy-europe.org/news/index.htm>>.

10 Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, Unequal Welfare States. Distributive consequences of population ageing in six European countries, The Hague, 2004. Accessed at : <<http://www.scp.nl/english/publications/books/903770185x.shtml>>.

Regional policy responses to demographic ageing are recognising the huge diversity of the wealth and inclusion of older people.

- In Northern Ireland, for instance, social equity has been embodied in the principle of Targeting Social Need (TSN), a high level policy for combating the problems of unemployment, increasing employability, and addressing the causes of social exclusion. Policy actions are focused preferentially on the areas of greatest deprivation. Within this, the problems of older workers in poorly paid jobs, pensioners with no income other than state retirement pension and state benefits and older people living in unfit homes are highlighted¹¹.

Ageing and regional development

Consumption of goods and services

Question	Current content	Further requirements
Does the document recognise the significance of the purchasing potential of older people in different markets and their importance as consumers of public services?		
Does it identify the goods and services for which older people are key consumers?		
Does the document identify the issue of social inclusion and poverty amongst older people and develop actions to respond?		
Does the document propose specific actions to help ensure older people maximise their income from sources including self employment, employment, investments and state benefits?		

<p>Does the document identify where an ageing population may represent an opportunity for service or business development and innovation?</p>		
<p>Does the document identify specific actions to support business to service these markets?</p>		
<p>Does the document identify how this demand will change over time and how service delivery will need to change?</p>		



4

Ageing and regional infrastructure

Infrastructure, planning and regeneration

Demographic ageing is interacting with employment and migration patterns to produce particular spatial characteristics and territorial effects at regional level. As the population ages, there is likely to be significantly different population structures from previous generations. There will be more older people, and their circumstances will be diverse with different levels of income, health, need and potential contribution. Many older people in the future will live alone as a result of the changing shape of family structures.

Many younger people will continue to leave rural and peripheral communities to look for work in cities and urban locations. This can leave older people isolated in suburban or peripheral, rural communities. In contrast, the movement of some groups of people in middle age and in preparation for retirement to the countryside within countries, and increasingly across state borders, can both test the capacity of regional infrastructures and provide a potential driver for a regions economy.

A further factor is the location and population structure of groups based on ethnicity, gender, disability, income levels and occupation within regions. Different groups are ageing at different rates and are exhibiting different family and intergenerational infrastructures which can influence significantly the demographic composition of a region.

A key challenge is providing the right combination of housing, accommodation, care, adaptations and support to enable people to remain in their own homes or in other community locations, rather than needing to relocate to institutions. The vast majority of older people will live their older age independently and so will seek a choice of tenure and design.

Beyond housing, community design in an ageing society should look at the broader context of their physical and social environment. This involves an appreciation of neighbourhood as the “living space” which extends beyond the dwelling itself out into the surrounding environment. Security, access to local shops and health care, and availability of appropriate transport to enable people to enjoy family and leisure time, take up opportunities for employment or to make other productive contributions and to access support services, all profoundly shape older adults’ experience of their communities.

Across the EU, regional plans and strategies for housing, infrastructure and service provision are gradually taking the changing population structures into account.

- In the Kainuu region of Finland, plans for housing, the provision of welfare services and the extension of ICT use are increasingly informed by the aim of retaining

older people in rural communities, in order to prevent excessive pressure on the regional capital and to maintain a balanced settlement structure¹².

- In Italy, one objective of Emilia Romagna's, the Action Plan - A Society for all Ages is to ensure that the region's transport strategy incorporates the needs of older people, who represent 30 percent of the population.

Ageing and regional infrastructure

Infrastructure, planning and regeneration

Question	Current content	Further requirements
Does the document reflect on the current and future demands for housing stock (for couples and single households) in the context of an ageing population?		
Does the document discuss how to improve the housing choices and conditions of older people?		
Does the document seek to ensure that older people have access to appropriate transport networks to enable them to live actively?		
Does the document consider the infrastructure of shopping, retail and other services to support older citizens?		
Does the document make practical proposals to support older people to engage with new technological developments such as telephony products and Information and Communications Technology?		

¹² A. Aldea-Partanen, E. Lehto and O. Jukka, Access to Services in rural Finland: Examples for Kainuu and North Karelia, Oulu, University of Joensuu, 2004.

Ageing and regional governance

Consultation and citizenship

A distinctive aspect of emerging regional ageing strategies is their focus on the civic role of older people. This refers to two, related priorities.

Firstly, it relates to measures that will improve engagement and participation of older people in regional communities. Although their contribution is difficult to quantify, older people, through their use of regional and local services, and voluntary and caring work, can be amongst the most active participants in local communities. For instance, evidence is emerging which demonstrates the key role older people play in establishing and running rural social enterprises and that this type of activity benefits both participants and recipients¹³. This contribution to the “social capital” or cohesion of communities and regions can be facilitated or hindered depending on the degree to which the older population have a say on issues such as urban and spatial development, housing, services and transport networks.

Secondly, regional policy-makers are placing more emphasis on the active involvement of older people’s representatives in developing specific ageing strategies. This is regarded as vital to informing the content of initiatives and guaranteeing their delivery to the appropriate recipients in the older population. The extent and form of older people’s involvement varies according to national policy-making traditions and the strength of organized groups in society.

- In Wales, plans to appoint a high-level Commissioner for Older People to champion older people’s interests reflect a commitment to articulate the interests of an increasingly large but relatively under-represented section of society.
- In both North West England and in Nordrhein-Westfalen, there is a noticeable drive in emerging regional responses to ageing to increase older people’s “ownership” of relevant policies and measures by including representatives of age-related organizations in consultation processes, policy-making and implementation processes.

Ageing and regional governance

Consultation and citizenship

Question	Current Content	Further content
Does the document identify the importance of older people to the social, political and cultural life of the region?		
Does the document identify specific approaches for consulting older people and engaging them in regional governance?		
Does the document recognise the contribution older people make to community initiatives such as social enterprise and identify mechanisms to further develop this role?		
<p>Is the document free of generalisations or stereotypical notions about the roles and interests of people in different age groups?</p> <p>E.g. Use of language, negative images of older adults.</p>		

Section 3

Using the toolkit in European regions

Designing ageing strategies in different regional administrative contexts

There is a growing recognition that the regional level is appropriate for developing positive ageing agendas and “cross-sectoral” approaches to regional development.

Regional governments are often close enough to the complex interaction of factors that dictate varied patterns of demographic change to identify key demographic trends and assess impact. At the same time they operate at a sufficiently strategic level to identify and explore policy interactions and coordinate other actors. Regional governments also have the growing political autonomy and financial resources to develop ageing strategies that cut across a variety of policy domains.

Within this overall context, however, it is recognised that across Europe there is a significant variety and variability of instruments and actions available at the regional level within Member States. Consequently, there is differing potential and focus in the emerging ageing strategies at the regional level (see Figure 4). Variation is the result of differences in the trends and intensity of the ageing process, specific regional socio-economic profiles, diverse domestic policy traditions and the different allocation of finances and competences between administrative tiers. It is important to recognise how different structures and powers can lead to different strategic approaches.

Federal structures

In a federal system, many of the key policy responsibilities for addressing the consequences of ageing are at regional level and this provides an opportunity to develop distinctive age-related strategies. For instance, in Germany, Nordrhein-Westfalen has developed a series of innovative, regional level measures to address demographic ageing.

Devolved government

In states with devolved arrangements, regions are taking advantage of constitutional change to formulate arrangements for an independent, representative body or individual to “champion” the interests of older people at regional and national level. The Welsh Assembly, for instance, plans to establish a fully independent

Commissioner, who would use devolved powers to represent the interests of older people at Welsh and UK government levels.

Co-ordinating and awareness-raising structures

In some cases, new administrative arrangements are increasing the scope for regions to develop dedicated ageing strategies. In other cases, processes of regionalisation have produced a range of strategies, for instance in spatial development, transport and housing, on to which the ageing agenda can be mapped and into which it can be mainstreamed. An example of this approach is in the work of 5050Vision in North West England.

Further activities in this type of structural framework include creating conducive environments for voluntary, flexible, and innovative actions between different organisations and actors. This can be achieved, for instance, by providing frameworks and incentives for regional and local actors to participate in age-related programmes as in Emilia-Romagna. Broader processes of awareness-raising in the region through publicity campaigns, conferences and seminars can stimulate increased participation and commitment by all sectors of society as in Noord-Brabant.

Different approaches to regional policy design

Overall, it is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive: different combinations of these activities may be identified simultaneously in a given regional setting, depending on the powers and responsibilities of the regional institutions.



Figure 4:
Policy design
"cascade"

Delivering regional strategies in different regional administrative contexts

Delivery partners

Varying combinations of national, regional and local tiers and public, private and voluntary sectors can be identified in the delivery of ageing strategies. In some cases, regional governments or assemblies are taking the lead in the process of policy delivery, particularly where overarching regional ageing strategies have been launched. However, other regional organisations are also involved. Voluntary organisations and interest groups can play a vital part in targeting specific groups of older people at risk of social exclusion and regional economic development agencies can be important instruments in delivering aspects of ageing policies relating to the labour market. Across these varying regional administrative contexts, the delivery of age-related strategies faces some common challenges¹⁴:

- **Defining target groups.** Even within regional strategies, different partners may lay varying emphases on the challenges being addressed. Such differences are often definitional, relating to the specific age cohort being addressed and to definitions of the older person as a worker, carer, consumer or patient. For instance, competing perspectives within the ageing and economic growth agenda can blur strategic objectives. There may be a tension between strengthening policy that recognises the contribution of older people in “informal work” such as child care and voluntary roles and developing policies that encourage older people to participate in the mainstream labour market. The need for policy-makers to base strategies on sophisticated, flexible definitions of various groups of older people (for instance according to gender, disability, socio-economic group, occupation etc) is clear.
- **Balancing mainstreaming and dedicated initiatives.** In some cases, specific support for people or a particular category of people may be needed. However, there is also a need to integrate policies on age, with broader policy fields such as employment, social inclusion, sustainable development and lifelong learning. There could be considerable value in policy on age being integrated with other areas of public policy such as lifelong learning and equality more generally.
- **Coordination across and between administrative levels** is also important. As the requirements for greater consultative and participatory practices increase, so does the complexity of administering ageing policy. National frameworks still determine important aspects of the ageing agenda, such as pension and labour market. It is important to have clear guidelines on how national policies and interventions should be interpreted and implemented at regional level and also to ensure that the objectives of these policies are aligned to the objectives of regional initiatives. The potential involvement of a variety of regional organisations

highlights the need for an authoritative and overarching policy framework with a regional-level institution setting development goals, planning initiatives or allocating resources. Finally, involving the local level can be crucial. Local structures and “bottom-up” initiatives can be key devices for the implementation of regional initiatives and the mobilisation of older people. Local authorities often possess the policy-making competences, financial resources, and contacts with communities that are crucial to the success of regional policy responses to ageing.

- **The principle of partnership** between public, private and voluntary groups in setting the regional ageing policy agenda is vital. Support from private and voluntary groups in the process of policy formulation and implementation can develop a broad consensus and lever in vital community and financial support.
- **Ensuring adequate funding.** Given the barriers older people face in terms of labour force participation and social inclusion for example, intensive intervention is required and it is important to assess whether strategies have the required finance.
- **Setting the time-scale.** It seems that a long-term phenomenon as population ageing does not easily respond to short-term electoral cycles. The support of the political leadership is necessary over a number of political cycles. Including an initial stage in strategy development for “explaining the issue” to politicians, administrators and the wider public is vital in order for it to be understood and recognised as a political priority. However, this should be accompanied by dedicated regional arrangements to ensure ageing remains a consistent part of the long-term regional policy agenda. Policy design should include making ageing “someone’s responsibility”, for instance through the appointment of a dedicated organisation or “champion”. This helps ensure long-term investment of money and time.
- **Visibility:** Adopting some measures that produce short-term, tangible results can also be important in boosting the visibility and positive image of the overall strategy.
- **Evaluating the impact** of initiatives as they are rolled out can strengthen coordination, inform overall strategic direction and demonstrate the strategy’s credibility to potential stakeholders, particularly those in the private sector.

Section 4

The next steps and contacts

Consulting on strategy development

The Age Proofing Toolkit itself is the start of the process for making a strategy, policy or initiative more appropriate to the needs of an ageing population. It provides documentary evidence for a transparent decision-making process.

To ensure that this process is inclusive, it is recommended that regional organisations take steps to involve the public through consultation. Public involvement can lead to better quality decision-making and there are a number of ways in which organisations can include individual users, groups, representatives and the general public.

Public involvement may involve:

- Consultation: A brief dialogue is entered into to discuss and elicit opinion, and/or:
- Participation: An ongoing relationship through which people engage in dialogue which may involve looking at a range of issues over time.

Consultation in whatever form must be accessible, representative and meaningful. Older adults can be a difficult group to reach, in terms of public involvement and care needs to be taken to design the consultative process.

Public involvement will enable regional bodies to establish who will be affected by plans, policies and practices and what ideas people have for their improvement. Regional organisations should ensure that they reach both vulnerable groups and the general public.

The Age Proofing Toolkit can be used throughout the implementation of strategy in order to ensure it does in fact achieve what is intended, and should be built into subsequent reviews.

Members of AGE – the European Older People's platform – are good contact points for discussing direct contacts with older people. They can be identified and contacted through AGE's website on www.age-platform.org

About the Sponsors

The Age Proofing Toolkit is jointly sponsored by Age Concern England and the Committee of the Regions.

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Regions for All Ages promotes better understanding of demographic ageing and the development of appropriate public policy responses at European, national and regional level. The programme is jointly sponsored in the UK by Age Concern and the English Regions Network.

Regions for All Ages publications are available at:
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Publications issued by Regions for All Ages relating to Europe include:

Building Cohesion in an Ageing Europe 2005:

Report and papers from the conference held in Brussels in November 2005

The Implications of demographic ageing for regional policy 2006:

Report commissioned by Regions for All Ages with sponsorship from 5 partners from European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

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