



## ACTIVE AGEING & SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Never before has Europe enjoyed such a large proportion of healthy older people. And these ageing baby-boomers are ready to contribute to our societies. But, which are the best ways to do this, and what impact will the changing age-structure have on our social systems and the wellbeing of the next generations? Recent research takes a closer look at these challenges and how to tackle them. Find some of it here and more on our website: [www.population-europe.eu](http://www.population-europe.eu).

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## Stop wasting human capital

Five questions to NGO-Activist Anne-Sophie Parent

**Will working past the current retirement age become “normal”?**

Yes, it will become more common to work longer. We have been calling for years to get a ban on mandatory retirement ages. We would like to increase the low participation of older workers and women by addressing all the barriers that prevent them from staying at work. That includes offering affordable child and elderly care facilities. We see countries like Sweden with the best employment rates for older people and women in the EU. It has also the best offer in terms of child and elderly care.

**The reforms you are asking for would not just apply to older people?**

No, we are also calling for serious measures to enable young people to start quality employment earlier. We are worried by the fact that many young people pile up small jobs without gaining any adequate pension rights because funded schemes have long vesting periods. At the same time there is a significant number of job vacancies where employers say they can't find the skilled workforce they need. Some still think that you have a fixed number of jobs and you have to kick old people out to make room for younger workers. But this only applies to unskilled jobs, which are now becoming very rare. We recommend that older workers should be able to stay longer in their jobs, and that they can help younger people to gain the necessary experience.

**Are older people really willing to work longer?**

If you look at Eurobarometer data from about a year ago, a majority of people aged 55 plus would like to work longer. Some also have to do that because they don't have sufficient pensions. Others just want to contribute to society. We are not saying that people should be forced to work

longer. There should have the possibility to have a smoother transition between employment and retirement and work for as long as they wish.

**What is needed if we want older people to stay in the workforce?**

We need jobs that are adapted to older people, not only to their skills, but also jobs that value their experience. Working conditions should be suitable for people who may wish to work part-time, to work different hours or, for example, have the possibility to telework. However, they have to feel valued; this is the most important criterion. Now you see many companies that introduce age management and other policies to create intergenerational cooperation and understanding within the organisation.

**Should we be prepared to accept slight economic losses due to an ageing and shrinking workforce?**

We should try to avoid that as much as possible, but the GDP should also be calculated in a different way. All the contributions made by those who volunteer who provide informal and family care or who support their communities in unpaid capacities must be counted as well. The value of the work they provide should be included in these measurements because it is a significant part of the GDP and it demonstrates the capacity that a country has to function.



**Anne-Sophie Parent**

is Secretary General of AGE Platform Europe, a network directly representing 30 million people aged 50+ across the EU-27.

[Full Interview](#)

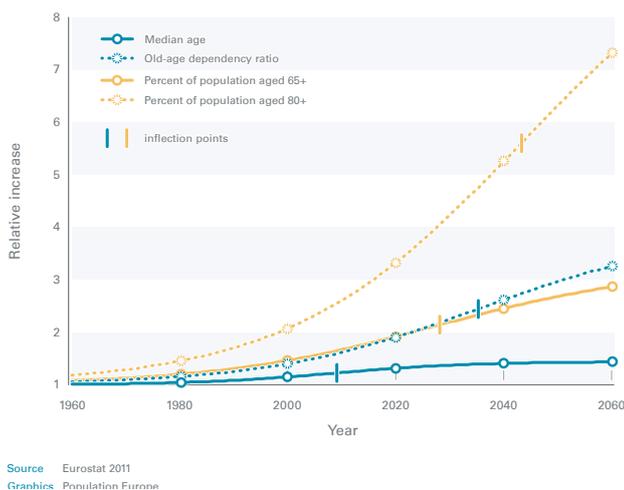
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## From baby boom to grandparent boom

The populations of all European countries are ageing but with substantial differences in magnitude, speed and timing. Building upon Eurostat projections from 2010 Giampaolo Lanzieri, head of Eurostat's Section Demography, Census and Projections, elucidates cross-country differences within Europe. The author concludes that while some Nordic and Western European countries may have already experienced the climax of the ageing process, others, mainly situated in Southern and Eastern Europe, may soon need to deal with the consequences of the rapidly increasing proportion of older people.

In order to study the ageing process in Europe between 1960 and 2060, a period seen as the life span of the so-called baby boom cohort, Lanzieri employs four ageing indicators. These are median age, proportion of people aged 65 and over, proportion of people aged 80 and over, and old age dependency ratio (OADR).

In general, all indicators increased between 1960 and 2010 and are projected to continue growing and to reach unprecedented values in the next fifty years. There are, however, timing and pace differences. For example, while the median age may already have started to decelerate in some Nordic and Western European countries, the proportion of oldest old is likely to keep growing at a high pace in almost all European states in the next thirty years (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Logistic lines of the relative increases in all countries' averages of selected ageing indicators (base year 1960, inflection points: the moment when acceleration switches to deceleration)

It is projected that by 2060 most European countries will have a proportion of elderly aged 80 and over of about 10 percent, which is an increase by a factor of 9 when compared to the 1-2 percent proportion of oldest old at the beginning of the studied period. This is why the author suggests that "we are maybe in for a grandparent boom", an argument that he grounds in the projected change of the ratio of young to old from 3:1 in 1960 to 1:2 in 2060. Europeans will likely have fewer siblings and cousins than grandparents, a shift that is known as a "verticalisation" of the family kinship structure. [Read Pop Digest](#)

**56.2%** of Europeans in 2060 will be of the age-group between 15-64 years. That means a

decrease of the main working-age-population by more than 10% or nearly 42 Million since 2010. Compared to this, the actual decrease in the share of young people under the age of 15 years is relatively minor (from 15.6 per cent to 14.2 per cent) says an article by Irena E. Kotowska from the Warsaw School of Economics on "Population Change as a main Driver of Pension Reforms in the EU" (Page 339). [Read full article](#)

## Underestimating Lifespans

To underestimate your lifespan could cause risks in individual retirement planning. A realistic view of life expectancy may also contribute to the acceptability of policies that attempt to increase the pension age. However, there have been only a few representative studies on how long people expect to live. Researcher Alison O'Connell reviews the available evidence. According to the studies, men are aware that they generally have a shorter lifespan than women. Even so, they are much more optimistic than their female counterparts. Men underestimate their lifespan by four years, whereas women expect to live six years less. Alison O'Connell asks for the reasons.

One important factor seems to be "self-reported health status". It was found to be directly linked with longevity expectations. If you feel healthy, you are more likely to expect to live a longer life. Another interesting aspect is that being overweight does not seem to have a large impact. If people are overweight, they do not generally think they would live a shorter life, although in actual fact, obesity is quite an important factor for a shorter life span. Smoking appears to have a stronger influence on subjective longevity expectations. Although smokers anticipate a shorter longevity than non-smokers, they still tend to underestimate the real risks of smoking. Another statistical fact known by demographers is that education and socio-economic status plays a role in longevity. Well-educated people tend to live longer, as those with higher socio-economic status. But because this is not as commonly known, longevity expectations tend to not reflect socio-economic factors or the role of education in affecting total lifespan. [Read Pop Digest](#)

## Events

**Two Population Europe Conferences on the Chances and Challenges of Ageing:** At a conference in Warsaw, organised together with the Warsaw School of Economics, politicians, scientists, and NGOs discussed facts, myths, and action plans on active ageing. A second conference in Prague, hosted by Charles University, focused on health and other biological aspects of ageing. The participants explored regional and social differences in longevity and mortality in context with the economic prospects of healthy ageing. [Find conference-reports here](#)