

Policy Document 3:

Inclusion: Enhancing the 65+ Population's Access to Improved Job Opportunities via Education and Social Support

In the context of an ageing population across globe, policy-makers are increasingly aware of the societal benefits of the participation among the 65+ population in a range of socioeconomic activities within and outside the labour market. At the same time, access to such activities has not been equally distributed as it depends on specific design of governmental policies.

The Problem

Despite accumulating knowledge on the significance of poverty, isolation and poor access to services for those aged 65+ who have retired with a work history of non-standard employment and/or small retirement allowance, policy measures directed at inclusion are still scarce. Two important avenues for inclusion are education and community social support.

Higher education increases labour market survival rates after 60 years old by about 5%. Despite this

important role of education in keeping older workers in the labour market, a review of policies in 11 countries examining two main categories of learning – formal higher education and employer-based training – found there was no ‘older student policy’. A similar situation exists in relation to digital divide and often these programmes are ineffective as the specific needs of older people are not incorporated.

Promising Practice

From a review of projects on employment and social inclusion of women and men of late working and early retirement age, three key outcomes for effective programs are:

- Reduced intersectionality effects where discrimination in the form of ageism collides with gender and or stigmatized race/ethnicity/nationality/religion affiliations; and/or disability; and/or citizenship status.
- Enhanced opportunity structures offering quality jobs and training suitable for local 65+ residents, ensuring a living wage (income).
- Facilitation of the formation of social support networks for those 65+ whose life course events disconnected them from families and communities.

› Practical Recommendations for Design of Social Inclusion Programmes

- Promote access to social networks for older people.
- Address transport issues that act as barriers to community participation
- Interlink community projects, community centres and schools to increase levels of intergenerational social contact.
- Identify and respect the skills of older people, including those gained in previous employment.
- Ensure people are given ordinary opportunities to participate in the wider community through person-centred care planning.

Recommended Projects

Two projects implemented at the local municipality level offer an example of programme design based on the practical recommendations in the Box.

1) The project entitled “Strength Centers” currently operates in ten towns in Israel. Following Krumer-Nevo’s (2015) model of ‘poverty aware social work’, this project operates to offer isolated and excluded individuals dialogical support from specifically trained social workers. The project facilitates social workers’ skills in three areas:

(a) Listening and learning from those aged 65+ whom they approach, about their needs and possibilities;

(b) Supporting 65+ individuals’ access to material resources and additional services by accompanying their negotiation with communities’ organizations and authorities;

(c) Connecting 65+ individuals to job opportunities, volunteering, among other social activities.

The outcomes of this project are primarily new contacts created between social workers, trainers and residents in the age category of 65+ but also for those who have retired earlier. In some cases

the new contacts have provided a setting for social activities but in other cases information on employment opportunities, primarily exams guarding in universities and chain shops, allowed participant to find employment of which they could not be aware otherwise.

2) The project “Critical literacy, e-competence and later life” at Had-Dingli (Malta): a project which lasted five months, between July and November 2012, with e-literacy and e-competence sessions being coordinated by a graduate teacher. The aim was to utilize programmes in late-life learning as catalysts for improved levels of active citizenship amongst older adults in the community. A significant objective of the learning programme was to increase the e-competence of older adults as a means to engage in political activism in their community. Some community level activism resulted from the project. This learning project provides further evidence that older adults can benefit substantially from non-formal learning as part of a fulfilling and active retirement.

Acknowledgment

This publication is based upon work from COST Action IS1409 “Gender and health impacts of policies extending working life in western countries”, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).



Funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union

For Full Policy Brief with references please see:

Benjamin, O. and Kanellopoulou, C. 2018. Policy Brief on Enhancing the Access of People aged 65+ to Improved job opportunities via education and social support, COST Action IS1409: Gender and Health Impacts of Policies Extending Working Life, Policy Brief 3 Galway: NUI Galway. Available at <http://genderewl.com/publications/>