

ETUC Action Plan on Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations

Adopted at the Executive Committee Meeting of 5-6 December 2012

Introduction

The ETUC's ambition: To continue and intensify mobilisation

The European Union decided to designate 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. This EY 2012, which comes to an end now, provided the opportunity to address current and future problems of younger and older workers in the light of the deepest financial and economic crisis the European integration project has ever faced. The ETUC and its affiliates together with its Youth Committee and FERPA, have committed fully to this year (see ETUC Declaration¹) Their ambition is to ensure that this year gives new impetus, leading to a real commitment in the coming years.

Indeed, the originality of the ETUC's and its member organisations' action throughout 2012 was the opportunity to address problems faced by young people and older people in the labour market, as well as their quality of life. .

The ETUC is convinced that promoting active ageing does not necessarily require raising the statutory retirement age, and rejects any automatic mechanism to increase the statutory retirement age or set a uniform retirement age for all Member States. The ETUC calls for strong sustainable and adequate public pension schemes based on inter- and intra-generational solidarity, which maintain living standards.

Developing an Active Ageing Agenda essentially means implementing preventive measures that will enable and encourage older workers to remain in the labour market until the statutory age, taking into account the particular features and stresses of professions that require early retirement schemes.

The measures taken must comply with the aims of intergenerational solidarity, which means simultaneously combating all potential obstacles preventing younger people from entering the labour market and older worker from remaining employed. .

The ETUC's work will focus on two core issues for both older and young workers:

- Guaranteeing highest quality jobs.
- Guaranteeing quality of life.

The objective of the European Union is to harmonise living standards upwards, therefore the ETUC and its member organisations will work towards implementing a set of measures they consider to be a priority.

The social partners' priority at EU and national level is to improve social dialogue, particularly in connection with the implementation and regular assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy. For the ETUC, this means adopting an action plan for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations that focus on three objectives.

¹ <http://www.etuc.org/a/9433>

- Objective 1: Take action at legislative level.
- Objective 2: Improve living and working conditions
- Objective 3: Make education and training systems more effective.

Objective 1: Take action at legislative/government level

- Member States should develop broader employment policies, preferably based on social dialogue initiatives, open to all age groups with the specific focus to maintain older workers in the labour market until the statutory pension age.
- Guarantee of / working for:
 - Adequate pensions with replacement rates that maintain living standards
 - High quality working conditions with decent salaries which contribute to the social security system and safeguard health
 - Employment security through the abolishment of all forms of precarious contracts (Reregulation of the labour markets)
 - Training opportunities for all ages, improved back to work services for older workers and new programs of mutual learning through the European Social Fund based on a renewed and more efficient Role for Labour Market Agencies
 - Work life balance legislation and incentives for workers with family responsibilities but also for older workers for example to facilitate phasing out of the labour market through flexible partial and/or gradual retirement schemes
- Develop information and awareness raising campaigns about anti discriminatory practices and to promote a change of attitude towards an older workforce including the promotion of the opportunities of a 'Silver economy'.

Objective 2: Improve living and working conditions

- Investing in and improving of social services and social protection that would benefit everyone and fulfil the growing needs of society as a whole while creating new jobs, particularly in personal services.
- Improve and grant access to long-term health care and increase the number of institutions providing appropriate support to the people in question.(For example: Set targets for the increase in infrastructure like the Barcelona target for childcare).
- Public authorities should take action concerning banks in order to make it easier for young people to be granted credit, should control rent and energy prices, and more generally should facilitate access to affordable accommodation for young and older people.
- Mobilise to combat the undermining of the social welfare system through privatisation, which in general restricts access to healthcare services and reduces statutory pensions, raising the risk of old age poverty, particularly among women.
- Social partners could envisage negotiating the right to access time credit or partial retirement schemes for workers over 55 as part of collective or company agreements.
- Social Partners should add youth employment to the agenda of company-level negotiations, particularly when it comes to replacing older workers.

- Introduce an obligation to negotiate an action plan for older workers and an age management system and link them to a number of penalties (that are sufficiently dissuasive to be effective) to be applied in cases of non-compliance.
- Change attitudes of employers; if people are to work longer they have to be valued, trained throughout longlife training and kept employable in the intervening decades

Objective 3: Make education and training systems more effective

- Introduce personalised monitoring plans for young people who leave school early without any qualifications as part of an active labour market strategy.
- Draw up training programs predominantly geared towards older workers to help them get to grips with new technologies, making particular use of resources made available by the European Social Fund (ESF).
- Increase the value of training courses with internships and key skills training courses.
- As part of company strategies and negotiations, introduce the right for on the job training and support young people by allocating them a mentor from among the oldest employees (sharing knowledge/Succession planning).
- Prioritise campaigns and initiatives at sector and/or company level, , that focus on training, which facilitate the return to work for women after a break, as part of the implementation of the European social partner agreement “For an Inclusive Labour Market”, signed on 25 March 2010.

The ETUC will continue to:

- Mobilise for actions that promote employment, greater solidarity, social and fiscal justice and fight against austerity;
- Advocate for a European Youth Guarantee
- Have a distinct and firm position on the White Paper on Pensions and the consolidation of statutory pensions;
- Advocate for sanctions (such as those applied to guarantee budgetary discipline) against Member States that do not adhere to social dialogue;
- Call for tighter legislation combating all forms of discrimination;
- Monitor/assess established initiatives or the implementation of legislation relating to the employment of young or older people; Company actions and their results shall be regularly assessed at local, national and European level
- Collect evidence on progress (or lack of progress) made concerning the employment of young and older people;
- Promote training for young trade unionists throughout Europe.

To conclude:

Each ETUC member organisation should respond to this call for action and contribute to long-term solutions for the employment of young and older people, as well as looking for ways to improve their living conditions.

The ETUC secretariat will continue to promote an Active Ageing Agenda as part of a long-term engagement together with its affiliates in the ETUC committees concerned (youth committee, women's committee) and FERPA .