



European Voices for Active Ageing

„Adoptar una actitud positiva ante la vida, independientemente de la edad“

„Participer à la vie de la communauté“

„Continuità nella vita“

„Rompiendo fronteras, favoreciendo trabajo intergeneracional“

„Envejecemos como vivimos“

„Garder des activités qui apportent plaisir et réalisation de soi“

„Ageing with awareness and resilience“

„To die as young as possible as late in life as possible“

„Continuità nella vita“

„Participer à la vie de la communauté“

„Mezilidská úcta a tolerance“

„Být společensky zapojeni!“

„Una fase della vita ricca e arricchente“

„Una conclusione soddisfacente e motivata della propria vita“

„Progressivo disinserimento dall'attività lavorativa“

„Geistige Offenheit, Mut und Risikobereitschaft, Teilhabe, Denkmuster überschreiten der Grenzen“

„Mit der Zeit gehen“

European Voices for Active Ageing (EVAA)

Empowering older adults through dialogue

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Danklstraße 30 • 81371 Munich Germany
Tel. +49 89 76753987

Imagine:

A span of generations



Six key topics about active ageing,
European cultural diversity,
six countries,
many languages ...

... all combining
to create a
common voice
about the
potential of
active ageing
in Europe.

The aspiration of the **European Voices for Active Ageing** project is to foster the active participation of older adults in all walks of life to develop a common understanding of the productivity and creative potential of adults aged 50+.

Through the use of the World Café process, this pan-European project has explored strategies to reduce barriers to engagement, tap into wisdom and foster leadership in adults. The participants in these dialogues have been empowered to explore the potential of their collective wisdom in order to effectively address a multitude of issues facing an increasingly ageing Europe today.



Over the next 50 years, the number of well-educated, experienced and engaged older adult Europeans will double. Their path of a life which embraces active ageing will profoundly impact European society, governmental policy-making and business opportunities for decades to come. But ageing is still cloaked in stereotypical images of older adults as well as language which implies loss rather than accrued life wisdom. This depiction does not

reflect the reality which generations of older adults are experiencing in Europe today.

The **European Voices for Active Ageing** (EVAA) project was envisioned to foster a sense of community and promote pan-European thinking about active ageing through

a series of six participatory dialogues held by and for older adults. In cooperation with its EVAA partners, the **European Voices for Active Ageing** project created a forum for intercultural and participatory dialogues for these adults aged 50+ to 95. The dialogues fostered a new culture of conversation and empowered the participants to discover their creative and innovative spirit. This approach and dialogue format enabled individuals to exchange their views and discover new approaches to addressing the key issues of active ageing. A rich spectrum of recommendations emerged out of these conversations which are highlighted in this project overview. World Café Europe and its partners plan to share these insights with policy makers in government, civil society and business to initiate a new wave of demographic opportunities throughout Europe.

Led by and for older adults

By design, the EVAA Thematic Cafés on Active Ageing provided a voice to generations of adults aged 50+ to 95. The aim of these dialogues was to empower these individuals to re-define their active role in an increasingly ageing European society. Led by older adults aged 50+, the dialogues provided an intimate peer-to-peer as well as intergenerational environment for reflection and discussion. The decision to have these dialogues led by and for older adults deepened the conversations, increased their credibility and magnified the dynamics of this stakeholder-driven approach.

A central element of the **European Voices for Active Ageing** project concept was to actively involve older adults in both the conceptual development and hosting of the Thematic Cafés. By involving older adults in the planning process in this way, opportunities for both personal leadership development and lifelong learning were created.

Interviews with the adult facilitators confirmed that the World Café Europe's coaching approach to fostering adult leadership instilled a personal desire to enhance their know-how and share these skills with peers. These insights have provided valuable input to create a new generation of more advanced coaching workshops. Such workshops would provide an ideal in-depth learning opportunity to enhance the skill-sets of older adults in order to independently design and facilitate high-quality participatory dialogues. More importantly, such a continuing learning experience would provide older adults with a platform for peer-to-peer coaching. This would foster network leadership which would empower an expanding network of motivated and highly experienced older adults to create meaningful and effective dialogues about issues that matter to them across Europe.

Active Ageing

– An issue that matters to us all

“At this time of my life, I can choose what I want to do. I want to continue the work (inspired by this project).”



Our vision

is a Europe where citizens engage to find concrete solutions for the key issues of their time

A first-hand experience of a World Café is exhilarating. It empowers individuals in conversation with each other to discover new ideas and imagine innovative possibilities. It is not therefore surprising that the founding of World Café Europe was inspired by the energy of such conversations

over five years ago. Established as a non-profit organisation, our work focuses on the discovery of “next practice” by exploring cutting-edge approaches in all aspects of the planning, realisation and sustainable impact of large group dialogues.

World Café Europe dedicates itself to exploring effective approaches to transforming the way in which citizens engage in and take responsibility for the key challenges facing Europe. Our network of seasoned practitioners combined with our language expertise enables World

Café Europe to design and realise dialogues of the highest quality which are accessible to Europeans either regionally or across national borders.

Accelerating effective communication through networks of conversations

Powerful questions, deep listening and intimate conversations form the heart of the World Café process. Throughout the ensuing conversations, seating places are exchanged and new table configurations help to disseminate ideas. A group's understanding of a topic or an issue takes on a new dimension. Through the movement of people and ideas, a collective creativity unique to the group emerges. New approaches are discovered, innovation is sparked and an intrinsic motivation to put ideas into action is fostered.



BILBAO

The First Wave



Partner:

innobasque
berrikuntzaren euskal agentzia agencia vasca de la innovación

Necessary agents in the process of social innovation

It is a far too common assumption that creativity and innovation is the métier of the young. In a world of ever increasingly rapid technological developments, this stereotype is subtly reinforced. Innobasque has recognized another resource – its well-educated and motivated older population who bring years of wisdom and experience to any exchange on the develop-

ment of new ideas. In its efforts to transform the Basque country into the most innovative European region by the year 2030, Innobasque has recognized the importance of tapping into the wisdom of this older segment of the population to foster social innovation.

We need to value people in our communities regardless of their age

Age discrimination has cast a shadow on the ability of older adults to pass on both their values and experiences to the rest of society. After many years of having others make decisions on their behalf, these older citizens want to put a stop to this discreet form of age discrimination and be recognized as active members of society who bring about change on the issues that matter to them. This positive shift in society’s attitude towards the key role which older adults can play in social innovation opens up new horizons for inspiring mutual creativity across generations.

Learning, sharing and listening together

The invitational strategy of the Thematic Café **Social Innovation and the Role of Adults Aged 50+** focused on bringing different sectors of society together to explore ideas and identify specific collaboration projects between older and younger members of Basque society. By reflecting upon the abilities and skills which each individual in the room offers to society, a sense of the incredible power of their joint contribution emerged. This was visualized in the form of a “word cloud” which highlighted the kinds of skills which the participants believe are central to intergenerational cooperation in order to generate new approaches to social innovation. Both experience and empathy were the most mentioned skills required





QUOTE

“Su papel es clave. Es conveniente para ellos mismos y para la sociedad que se involucren en la evolución de la sociedad.”

[Older adults] have a key role to play. It is fitting for them personally as well as for their social milieu for them to be involved in society's evolution.

for this kind of endeavour. It is no surprise that the participants ranked themselves high in these skills: 67 % of the participants in Bilbao assessed the role of “purpose” in their ability to age well as “good” while 70 % chose **“I have empathy for other people’s feelings”** as one of their personal strengths and skills. The ability to listen, creativity and a positive attitude were mentioned as an important skill set to support the process of social innovation.

Conversations among the participants involved in this dialogue about social innovation explored concrete opportunities for collaboration with each other. Their mutual challenge was to make a meaningful contribution to active ageing in the Basque country. Fifty-five ideas for intergenerational social innovation emerged out of these conversations. It is interesting to note that 27 % of the proposed ideas recognized the importance of **fostering closer links between generations** by finding common interests amongst them. Three other collaboration fields emerged with similar levels of interest (18–20 %): **Perception and Empowerment** of older adults to encourage active participation in society; **Participation and Lifelong Learning** to give older adults a voice and foster the retention and improvement of their skills; and **Networking** by fostering intergenerational knowledge-sharing. The focus of these collaboration projects reflects the stated interests of the participants as well: 54 % are interested in fostering intergenerational fairness and the elimination of age discrimination; while 57 % and 63 % respectively voiced a great interest in civic engagement (participation) and lifelong learning.

This participatory dialogue demonstrates that older adults are a vital resource for the resolution of everyday social issues facing European society. Their combined wisdom and accrued life experience, skills, willingness to offer time as well as the diversity of age (more than half of the participants were more than 50 years old) fosters an intergenerational cross-pollination of knowledge and provides an optimal platform for exploring new possibilities. This unique skill set of older adults opens a new window of opportunity which will provide fresh insights into today's important societal issues.



Fascinating Facts

- ☞ Held in the University of Deusto library with a bird's eye view of the Guggenheim Bilbao
- ☞ Use of the word cloud to harvest the ideas and visualize the collective intelligence in the room
- ☞ Cut-crystal sphere was used as a talking stick to symbolize the multi-faceted wisdom of age
- ☞ Over 55 collaboration projects between older and younger citizens were developed
- ☞ Designed as intergenerational dialogue to foster cross-pollination of ideas
- ☞ More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:

Social Innovation and the Role of Adults Aged 50+

Location:

Bilbao, Spain

Partner:

Innobasque – The Basque Innovation Agency

www.innobasque.com

BONN

The Second Wave

Civic Engagement of Adults Aged 50+



Partner:



Do good things and talk about it

An ever increasing demand for civic engagement is evident in all aspects of European society – from dealing with environmental challenges, providing support in the health and social fields to participating in sport activities. Like a full moon on a clear evening, the appeal for doing good work in many aspects of today's society is bright and clear. But there is another, less visible side. Both the expression of appreciation and the acknowledgement of the value of this contribution

to society by older adults are key factors in fostering an environment of sustainable civic engagement. Serious and thoughtful attention to these two aspects is required by organisations which cooperate with older adults. Without this fundamental basis of mutual respect, fostering an increasing interest and participation of these individuals will pose a challenge in the long-term.

Civic engagement is successful when it is personally satisfying

Older adults want to share their passion for civic engagement with others and win them over to follow in their footsteps. However, one central recommendation from the Thematic Café **Civic Engagement of Adults Aged 50+** is clear – if civic engagement is going to take on more meaning as well as being sustainable for all involved, a deeper sense of appreciation for the efforts of adults aged 50+ needs to be cultivated. These motivated citizens desire on-going positive feedback from the organisations with whom they choose to cooperate.

Civic engagement should not be an obligation

More than half of the participants in the dialogue (55 %) are already actively engaging in society. These older adults want their efforts to be truly valued, not just taken for granted. Some raised the question whether civic engagement was expected of them due to the increasing financial challenges facing municipalities, provinces and central governments to provide certain services. In this vein, the dialogue participants provided helpful food





QUOTE

„Den Begriff Engagement vom Begriff Alter trennen. Engagement ist eine Lebensaufgabe.“

Separate the notion of engagement from age. Engagement is a life's work.

for thought to constructively address this issue. Honorary pins for their engagement are not sufficient. Ideas range from the simple reimbursement of their incurred expenses to the development of a true recognition system for the value of their civic engagement by offering a tax credit for the hours worked and/or providing additional points for pension qualification.

What are my desires and what value does civic engagement have for me?

The participants in the dialogue confirmed that civic engagement is most successful when the work provides a sense of personal self-worth and satisfaction. Both the personal desires and dreams of older adults need to be fulfilled through their engagement with society. They recommend that organisations become more aware of the sensitive balance between the supply and demand for civic engagement. Older adults expressed a desire for self-determination and co-creation of programmes in which they invest their time. In addition, they want to see careful and appropriate matching of the needs of society with their personal willingness for civic engagement. A deepening of their emotional engagement is required through a variety of experiences from face-to-face reflection with others about this work, holding “civic engagement marketplaces” to exchanging ideas, experiences and challenges with each other first-hand in order to create resilient networks of engaged people in society.

Give meaning to your life!

To encourage more civic engagement in the long-term is, on one hand, an obvious and, on the other, a subtle shift in perspective. 48 % of the participants stated after the dialogue that they were very motivated to actively engage to spread the word about civic engagement by adults aged 50+. Those who dedicated their time to causes are motivated to continue doing so. However, this good work itself is not enough. Organisations are called to take a new look at their relationships with older adults, reflect on how to best meet and fulfil their expectations, effectively cooperate with them and, by doing so, encourage adult leadership in order to successfully address societal needs for civic engagement today and in the years to come.



Fascinating Facts

- Story-telling by engaged older adults used as part of the dialogue design
- First use of live-stream video at a World Café Europe event
- Talking stick and choice of music inspired by Beethoven's birthplace in Bonn
- One of the facilitators was head of EVAA – a European-wide athletics association
- The use of real-time coaching on-site for an emergent graphic recorder
- More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:
Civic Engagement of Adults Aged 50+
Location:
Bonn, Germany
Partner:
Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Seniorenbüros (BaS)

www.seniorenbueros.org

PRAGUE

The Third Wave

Prague as an Age-friendly City



Partner:
Institute of Gerontology



ŽIVOT 90
občanské sdružení

Use our voice to change things
There is a history of citizens coming together in Prague to lead transformation. The peaceful protest of the Velvet Revolution led to the collapse of a political system. More than two decades later, older adults want to have their ideas heard by their families, neighbourhoods and institutions to make their surroundings more age-friendly for all generations. The Thematic Café **Creating an Age-friendly Prague** provided the platform for these older adults to express their voice with an active attitude and initiate a wave of positive change in their capital city.

I'll talk about the problem openly whenever possible
This is a generation which grew up and lived behind the Iron Curtain where there was no freedom of speech. Would a dialogue on age-friendly cities enable these older adults in particular – 43 % were over the age of 71 – to find the courage to have a say in a large-scale dialogue? Both the energy of the conversations and the multitude of ideas overwhelmingly confirm the potential of Prague's adults aged 60+ to make a difference. **"Taking part in events like the World Café is of great importance to us because we can see the problems of older people and intergenerational issues which exist in our country and in EU countries. We are not alone."** The dialogue process enables older adults to communicate with others, helps them to understand the needs of others and discover solutions together. After the event, more than 50 % of the participants were very or extremely motivated to engage more with the theme of creating an age-friendly Prague.

Greater mutual respect and tolerance between people of all ages
No more age discrimination! 58 % of the participants stated that age discrimination and intergenerational fairness were issues of interest to them. Older adults assert that a change in attitude towards the ageing process is needed not only amongst older adults but in



society as a whole. As one of the participants remarked: **"All the generations need to wake up and think about it."** The discussions reveal a genuine desire for older adults to reach out and foster intergenerational contacts to address the challenge of creating an age-friendly Prague. This process is envisioned in many diverse forms from fostering mutual understanding through conversations, sharing experiences and skills, engaging in action projects and by establishing intergenerational cooperation groups and networks.

Help each other to exchange information
A network of "communication bridges" between citizens of all generations, organisations and local government will be needed to help citizens create a more age-friendly city. Older adults should inform each other about activities and possibilities for their own generations. They should find ways to engage in conversation with younger people, associations which foster an active ageing agenda as well as communicate their ideas to municipalities, mayors and local authorities in order to initiate age-friendlier improvements in the city. Last but not least, the use of all possible media channels (TV, radio, print and internet) will inform the citizens of Prague about the life of older adults and breakdown both stereotypes and prejudice towards them.

Improve the appearance of Prague with flowers in every window
Starting small but focusing on the big picture was the emphasis of the ideas put forward to make Prague a more age-friendly city. According to the participants in the dialogue, the role of older adults is to express their voices with an active attitude, mobilize and make things happen – like the person who said: **"Thanks to my personal activity, I was able to ensure barrier-free access to our house at the Prague 10 housing association. Older people are now no longer prisoners in their own homes."** Other ideas addressed a broad spectrum of issues ranging from affordable housing, transport and safety in the city to senior discounts for events, the establishment of an "age-friendly



QUOTE

„Snažit se navazovat komunikaci mezi generacemi i mezi vedením města a dalšími dobrovolnými organizacemi.“

Start intergenerational discussions as well with the city representatives and other volunteer organisations.



label” for products, “senior adoptions” and the creation of a network of cafés as a meeting place for older adults throughout Prague.

Older people must have a voice that is listened to and heard. This dialogue brought a large group of older people together to experience how they can become a positive force of change to make their city a friendlier place. It was a pioneering effort to generate creative ideas by combining conversation and listening in order to receive feedback from older adults on what an age-friendly city means to them. However, more importantly, it laid the foundations for a sustainable buy-in of their active role as a partner in the process of making the city accessible to all its citizens – no matter what age.

Fascinating Facts

- 14 % of the participants were aged 80 or older
- More than 100 ideas to make Prague an age-friendly city were generated
- The event was held in the Národní dům historical building dating from 1906
- A variety of hand-made wooden spoons were used as talking sticks
- 17 % of the participants described their working situation as care-giving; 15 % were volunteering
- More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:

Prague as an Age-friendly City

City:

Prague, Czech Republic

Partner:

Institute of Gerontology / Život 90

www.zivot90.cz

A Celebration of Age –
Changing the Perception of Ageing

LONDON

The Fourth Wave

Partner:



Do not put people in boxes

A keener eye and more acute listening is all that is needed to recognize both blatant and subtle ageism towards older adults. This is omnipresent not only in the media but also in people's own personal attitudes towards positive ageing. A recent article in a renowned newspaper claimed that vitality and imagination are talents of the young. Such assertions just perpetuate stereotypes and caricatures of ageing in the

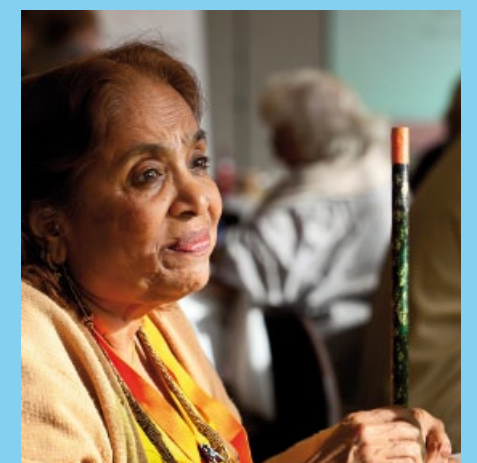
worst possible fashion. Can older adults not be optimistic, energetic, flexible and creative? Such blatant ageism has no role in a society which aims to foster intergenerational solidarity and dispel prejudice of any kind towards anyone.

Deliver a common message to all

Older adults recognize that the challenge to change perceptions towards ageing is two-fold – to address the negative attitude to age which so many older people have of themselves and to work to create a bigger and stronger movement to combat ageism using a common message. Older people are here to stay. These adults recognize that they have to see themselves more positively by raising their own expectations, demands and aspirations for living in their communities. Both talking about and putting into practice positive perceptions of ageing will send out a common message that older adults are an invaluable resource, not a burden to society. An “age-assumption free day” would be a great start in the right direction.

Let's stop talking just to ourselves – the converted. Talk to others!

Older adults have a deep conviction that they must endeavour to empower themselves to take their legacy further in order to reach the younger generations. This can be done by encouraging the “lost act of communication between the generations.” They acknowledge that only through more intergenerational interaction will the perceptions of the young and the old be positively changed. The fostering of mutual respect between all members of society, regardless of age, will emerge from this kind of interaction. Older adults promote





QUOTE

“Not all old are frail and in need of help. Many give help to others.”

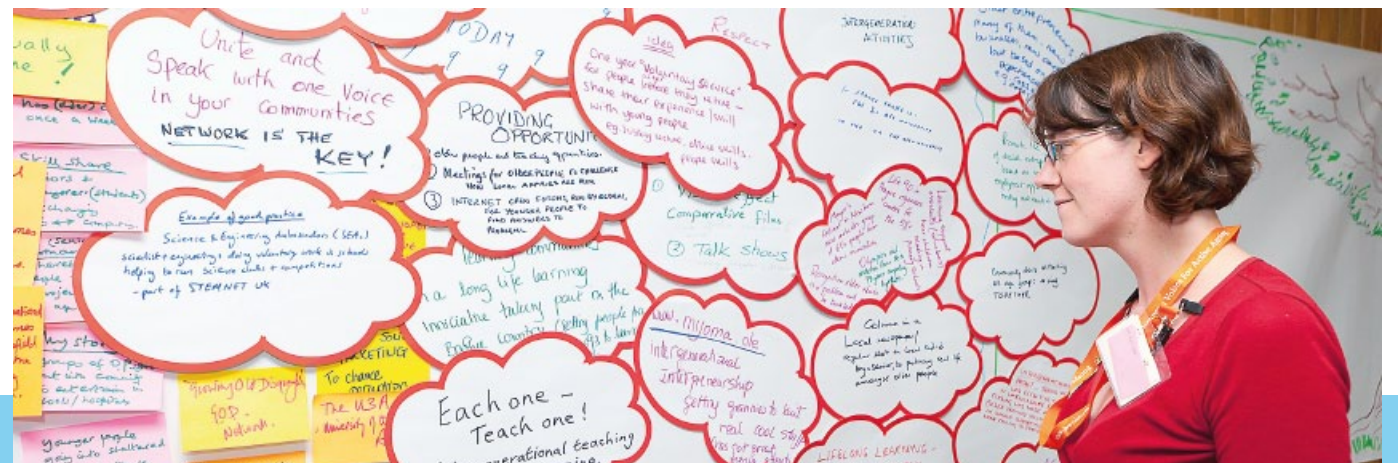
the idea of teaching “life cycle development” which highlights every stage of life, its tasks and its rewards. In their opinion, the promotion of this nature of intergenerational work should begin with the young in primary and secondary schools and continue right up to college. Older adults are eager to find new ways like these to bring both ends of the age spectrum together. They envisage a new generation of meeting places and neighbourhood events where all age groups meet and socialize to get to know each other and share life’s wisdom and skills. Taking on a positive role and being ambassadors for the potential of older adults in society must take on a deeper meaning and responsibility.

We want results and to see them

One of the biggest challenges today is to change the perception in society towards older adults – not only in the minds of people but in the media landscape. There is a need for the development of an entirely new vocabulary – both verbal and visual – about ageing in the 21st century. Finding new ways to tell positive stories by and for older adults is central to addressing this challenge. From portraying celebrity “active agers”, sponsoring columns (print or virtual) by older adults to providing serious programs on older people’s issues on mainstream television and radio, lobbying efforts are needed to change the way an increasingly ageing Europe is portrayed in the media.

Challenge, campaign, stand up for your rights

The majority of participants of the Thematic Café **A Celebration of Age – Changing the Perception of Ageing** stated that after their conversations, they were either very motivated (44%) or extremely motivated (25%) to actively engage in changing the perception of ageing in Europe. As one participant remarked: **“The world does not end at 60. Be active, social. Keep changing with the modern world.”** However, not only do older adults need to take constructive steps to initiate change, society needs to change their perceptions of ageing as well. The civil rights, women’s rights and gay rights movements have all successfully established new norms for society. It is time for the voice of the older generation to be heard on an important human rights issue for the 21st century – creating a positive attitude towards ageing in all segments of European society.



Fascinating Facts

- Use of a Steering Committee of older adults to design and host the Thematic Café
- The oldest moderator was 81 years old
- Venue had a view of Big Ben and the London Eye along the River Thames
- Diversity of participants mirrored the UK’s multi-cultural society
- Development of a “Magic Wand” talking stick by **Men in Sheds**, a project that supports older men
- More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:

A Celebration of Age – Changing the Perception of Ageing

Location:

London, UK

Partner:

Age UK

www.ageuk.org.uk

BOLOGNA

The Fifth Wave



Partner:



Europe is getting older

By 2025, more than 20 % of Europe's population of citizens will be aged 60 or older according to Christian Werner, Head of Strategic Workforce Planning at Allianz SE and board member of Germany's Demographic Network (ddn). This current demographic shift will have a substantial impact on

the demographics of Europe's workplace. While the number of workers aged 55+ is predicted to rise by 15 %, the age cluster of the workforce under 55 will decline by 25 %.

Most companies are ill-prepared for this radical change. The Thematic Café **Work After 50** demonstrated that workers aged 50+ have not only a deep understanding of this challenge but are full of creative and innovative ideas to redefine the workplace for the good of all generations. Results and recommendations from this dialogue between participants – half of whom were working adults over the age of 50 – reflect the untapped collective wisdom of this growing segment of society.

Stop labelling me!

The first step demands that commonly-held myths, ageist stereotypes and prejudices about older workers are openly addressed. Positive attitudes need to be modelled by employers and co-workers who recognize the abilities of older workers. Adults aged 50+ must remain open to change and welcome new approaches to their role at the workplace. Maintaining the balance between age and self-esteem is especially important for older adults.

Intergenerational thinking is needed

A workforce must adapt to the on-going demographic shift and develop a heightened awareness of the different generations at the workplace. It will embrace intergenerational equal opportunities by fostering **“relationships of equality, a change of attitude, participation, social responsibility and solidarity.”** Intergenerational conflicts will be resolved through pro-active initiatives designed to integrate teams of younger and older workers through mentoring, bidirectional transfer of knowledge and intergenerational apprenticeships. An approach to age management in the workplace will become a strategic imperative.





QUOTE

“Adattare la scarpa al piede e non il piede alla scarpa.”

Adapt the shoe to the foot and not the foot to the shoe.



Fascinating Facts

- 50 % of participants are interested in intergenerational fairness and age discrimination
- Use of the expertise of Christian Werner, Head of Strategic Workforce Planning at Allianz SE, to provide factual input about demographic change in Europe
- 50 % of participants are interested in lifelong learning
- Thematic Café designed to provide real-time results from dialogue process
- 58 % of the participants aged 50–65
- More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:

Work After 50

Location:

Bologna, Italy

Partner:

AIP2 Italy

www.aip2italia.org

Workers aged 50+ have lots of powerful ideas

Accrued years of working experience should not go to waste; older workers possess a wealth of knowledge and insight into their specific area of work. Older workers are not just waiting for retirement; many want to take on new challenges. They are open to the concept of job rotation in different roles to encourage better working relationships with colleagues in the workplace. Older workers envisage themselves as the optimal trainers, coaches and mentors within their companies – not only to provide job training but also to serve as stewards of organisational processes, to guide the integration of younger workers and to communicate a company’s values through role modelling. They would like to see government incentives to develop more age-friendly workplace policies and recommend that benefits should be given to companies that hire workers aged 50 and older.

Older workers would like to foster a sense of group solidarity and, as a result, are aware of their responsibility to younger workers in the workplace. However, they want to see the practice of forced retirement stopped and encourage financed active early retirement instead – either through socially useful work or consulting. There is an expressed need for the development of innovative gradual retirement initiatives which offer flexible work hours for those nearing retirement, thus offering more opportunities for younger colleagues. Through the combination of workshops and coaching/mentoring among equals, older workers would like companies to provide support of their transition phases into retirement.

Using participatory dialogues like the one held in Bologna offers a forum for both employees and employers to discuss how the workplace will evolve over the coming years in order to find workable solutions for all the generations. According to one participant, the conversation about working after 50 has just begun and must continue.

Maintain your Élan! –
a World Rhythmics Café®

STRASBOURG

The Sixth Wave



Partner:
Cercle des Seniors Actifs

Take time to listen to our bodies

For the last five years, World Café Europe has been developing a unique experience inspired by the World Café which combines verbal communication, music, physical movement and the senses. The World Rhythmics Café® joins the mind with the heart by connecting words and language through the senses and experience.

Valuing experience over performance

Stereotypes abound about movement of adults after the age of 50. Especially designed for older adults, this World Rhythmics Café® uses both movement and conversation to shift the mental model about the body after the age of 50 and be more aware of the body as it ages. 56 % of the participants were personally interested in wellness and rated **“Enjoying doing activities which involve my body, movement and physical activity”** as one of their top personal strengths and skills. The combination of conversation and movement for these older adults creates an environment to reflect about moving in comfortable and healthy ways as well as considering new possibilities for movement.

Maintain your Élan!

This World Rhythmics Café® began with a meditative warm-up supported by improvisation with musical quotations which set the pulse for the activity. Sitting in circles of four, participants interact with each other through variation of movements with brightly coloured bean bags – across the legs, over the head, behind the back ... ripples of laughter are heard throughout the room. Both body and mind have been warmed up. A greeting through gestures – but no words – introduces the first dialogue round about body awareness. The murmur of voices sharing stories becomes audible. Before starting another round of delightful bean bag variations, participants “mirror” each other’s movement providing another variation of body/mind awareness. A wordless goodbye through gestures ends the dialogue round. Accompanied by a carpet of sound of live piano and percussion, the participants move to different circles of chairs in slow-motion movement. But for some,





QUOTE

«Accepter que l'on ait pu, que l'on ait fait et que l'on puisse encore faire.»

Accept that I could, that I did and that I still can.



Fascinating Facts

- ✔ A gymnasium served as the concert hall for a baby grand piano and musical accompaniment
- ✔ 100 bean bags were used during the World Rhythmics Café®
- ✔ Various older adults said: **“I couldn't do this movement before – and now I can.”**
- ✔ A large group of diverse people were all moving in a harmonious rhythm together
- ✔ Simultaneous choreographical facilitation was provided in French and English
- ✔ More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

Topic:

Maintain your Élan! – a World Rhythmics Café®

Location:

Strasbourg, France

Partner:

Cercle des Seniors Actifs
CREPS – Strasbourg

www.creps-strasbourg.sports.gouv.fr/

it is hard to slow down. Another round of greetings using only gestures opens the next dialogue round with new conversation partners. Each shares his/her thoughts about their own personal body experiences leading to a deepening of the conversation about body awareness of adults aged 50+. After the dialogue round comes to an end, bean bag variations are repeated and more laughter begins to break out. Goodbyes are said through gestures. The dialogue continues ... “Tips and Secrets” to help others lead a healthy life are shared on a puzzle piece and form part of a collective sculpture of inspirations and recommendations which reflect the wisdom of a lifetime.

Accept that while we are not as young as we used to be, we can still be in top form at any age.

This and other comments indicate the amazing richness of the reflection about well-being in all its dimensions as defined by the World Health Organisation – physical, psychological and social. Since the experience was held in a gymnasium, it was not surprising that reflections about the physical aspects of health were made: **“Do regular body ‘maintenance’ – walk up the stairs!”** However, the majority of the recommendations addressed the psychological and social aspects of health through comments such as **“Think positively, even about our age”** and **“Meet friends, laugh, get involved, exchange and accept.”** Both the “Tips & Secrets” written on the puzzle pieces as well as the analysis of the evaluation results confirm that the combination of dialogue, movement and music heightens the affective impact of the World Rhythmics Café® experience as well as fosters a renewed sense of community amongst the participants.

The participants' positive feedback confirms that this combination of dialogue, movement and music has great potential to foster wellness in all its dimensions among older adults. The World Rhythmics Café® offers enjoyable and healthy movement to a broad spectrum of adults and offers them the opportunity to listen to their bodies to foster their own personal wellbeing. As one participant noted: **“Learn and keep on learning: the only brakes are the ones you put on yourself!”** Learning together with adults aged 50+, the evolution of this multi-disciplinary approach to fostering wellbeing will continue.

EVAA Project Results

Initiating

a wave of change through dialogue

The **European Voices for Active Ageing** project brought large groups of older adults aged 50–95 together to explore the challenges of an increasingly ageing European society. A multitude of ideas and innovative recommendations emerged from these conversations about issues that matter to older Europeans. This combination of stakeholder involvement and participatory dialogue revealed a valuable and **untapped resource for Europe** – the older generations of its citizens. Mostly undiscovered due to patronizing stereotypes and age-based prejudice, this wealth of wisdom and life experience is waiting to serve Europe to find novel approaches and identify realisable solutions for all sectors affected by the current demographic shift.

The simple solution is to give all generations of older adults a voice to be heard

The results of the **European Voices for Active Ageing** dialogues identified that older adults across Europe possess a **commonality of hopes and needs about issues** related to fostering active ageing. They expect to be actively involved in the deliberation on policy decisions by representing large cross-sections of communities. From working adults aged 50+, to engaged citizens aged 70+, to the increasing number of adults aged 90+, this broad spectrum of Europe’s older generations expect to be actively involved to inform the policy decisions which affect their lives.



More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>



A new form of cooperation with older adults must evolve

An integral part of these pan-European dialogues was to empower older adults to discover their personal capacity for leadership. Hosting conversations about older adults via **dialogues held by and for older adults** symbolizes a shift in thinking. Such a change of emphasis will be required from organisations which aim to effectively and successfully cooperate with the current (and future) generations of older Europeans. Both the personal expectation for self-determination and desire for co-creation will shape the way older adults will cooperate with these organisations in the years to come. New approaches and processes for cooperation will need to be explored, prototyped and developed.

A voice for positive change and intergenerational understanding

The desire to **leave a positive legacy** in the communities in which older Europeans live is a powerful force. This inner motivation encourages them to seek out contact with people of all ages. They feel that both their heightened sense of empathy as well as skills accrued during a lifetime of experience are uniquely suited to fostering meaningful dialogue about issues that matter for Europe across the generations.



Age discrimination represents the “dark side” of active ageing. The acknowledgement that **ageism is a major form of discrimination** will break barriers which currently challenge active ageing for many older Europeans. During the analysis of the results of the **European Voices for Active Ageing** dialogues and project evaluation, the issues of lacking self-esteem, prevalent ageist stereotypes and intergenerational conflict – all signs of age discrimination - emerged as leitmotifs. A next phase of the analysis of the **European Voices for Active Ageing** dialogue results will be to connect them with other research projects on age discrimination, such as Age UK’s recent report **Ageism in Europe and the UK** (2011). Such additional in-depth analysis will undoubtedly reveal areas where engagement with older adults through dialogue would provide important impetus to combat ageism in Europe.

Expanding participation through dialogue

All of the dialogues held with older adults aged 50–95 throughout Europe encouraged their productive engagement. This participatory approach raised their awareness, gave them a voice and created peer support among the participants. The results confirm that the **European Voices for Active Ageing** project provided a successful platform for older Europeans to actively contribute their ideas to fostering active ageing in all sectors of society. These older adults are both eager and willing to share their wisdom, skills and strengths as active citizens in Europe.

They are just waiting for their voices to be heard.

www.worldcafe.eu

Leading and preparing a World Café is tremendous organisation work. You always meet new people, the surroundings are new, and circumstances are different. Is that a challenge or a great opportunity?

Interview

with Patricia Munro &
Jeffrey Beeson
Founders of
World Café Europe

Pat: Working in really well-oiled teams is an art. I am proud of all the partners and facilitators with whom we worked and all the older adults who participated. It was a lot to do very quickly. We did five of the six World Cafés – all of which were very complicated – within a period of eight weeks this fall. That was a logistical and spiritual challenge. You have to be in the moment- leaving the past and the future aside – so that you can be truly present in the space with the participants.

Jeff: Leaders need to be able to create the conditions for people to thrive. By creating those conditions, they will be able to tap into the energy, spirit and the wisdom of people in society. People are truly an incredible resource. We provide the space for people to really give of themselves. If we do our work well, I think that happens naturally. We enjoy it when that happens. It is both wonderful to watch and experience.

During this project you specifically chose to work with older adults. How is that different to other World Cafés you have worked with?

Pat: They were so humble. They have so much life experience to share. They brought a lot of wisdom to the table. That depth enriched the whole planning process. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to work and to cooperate with such wonderful older adults.

Jeff: There was general wisdom about why this kind of participation was important. I find that this is not always the case with younger groups. One of the Spanish facilitators said “This is just natural.” Another German facilitator shared with us how he was “infected” by the ability to engage people in something which is so meaningful. This depth of perception was something particularly special about this experience of working together with older adults.

During the project you worked with over six hundred older adults from Europe. The intent was to create a ripple effect to start the dialogue happening for more and more people. What do you say to those who attended the World Cafés and would be interested in hosting their own events?

Pat: I'd say: Yes you can! One of the beauties of the World Café is that it is a simple and elegant way to be in conversation with each other. All of the participants can have conversations about an issue that matters to them and really make a difference. It does not have to be a big thing like this project. It could just be like having a picnic in the backyard of your apartment building with your neighbours. I would tell them not to be afraid. Feel good about your age. Do what you love and are passionate about because that is infectious.

Jeff: During the course of coaching the older adult facilitators from various countries, we aimed to transmit the fundamentals which are important to making this kind of dialogue a success. Authenticity is one key element. You host a World Café because you are really passionate and the topic really moves you. If you are doing it from the heart, if you are doing it from a deep personal commitment, this is a great inspiration for any World Café.



During the World Café in London we gave the participants a magic wand and asked them what one thing they would change to enable active ageing. After having listened to six different countries in six World Cafés, if you could choose just one thing that the European Union possibly could do to support active ageing – what would it be?

Pat: Give older adults a voice. Help them to design, plan and envision the future for all of us. Really listen to them and find forms to do that authentically.

Jeff: I would like the European Union to seriously consider the power of grassroots information as a way to inform and formulate policy. Not only as confirmation of a policy but as a vital source of valuable information for policy making. If this would happen, it would be a major step forward for all generations of older adults in the European Union.

How can World Café influence policies and decisions with competing issues on the table at the same time? We have a fine dialogue but will somebody listen?

Jeff: Part of that is going to depend on us! We have to craft the messages that we are hearing and put them into a form in which they are easily understood. We have to make sure that the message gets out to as many people as possible and is communicated in a way that makes sense.

Pat: We need to find the champions who really want to make that wave continue. Part of our job is to be ambassadors. Everyone – our partners, all of the older adults who participated in the World Cafés as well as people from the World Café Europe network – all need to communicate to people who could be multipliers and real advocates of active ageing.



Democracy seems to be suffering a crisis of legitimation in the eyes of the people. Citizen participation might be able to revitalize democracy and deepen it. Over the last decades a number of approaches, processes and methods, have been developed. Why did you choose a World Café?

Pat: People have forgotten what it is like to be in conversation with each other – how to really listen to people when they are talking, hear their ideas in full and not interrupt as well as recognise the power of a question which is really well formulated. By asking questions you can open all different kinds of horizons. That is really the magic of the World Café: rediscovering that ability to be in conversation with one another is the DNA of good participation.

Jeff: If you take a look at how people begin to understand public issues, it is through the exchange with other fellow citizens. It is not just about gathering information from citizens. It is about developing a mutual consciousness and understanding about the issue. In our society, people are still extremely fragmented. People choose the information they want to hear and block out the rest. In a World Café you are confronted with people with different points-of-view and opinions. As you listen to them, it helps you to grow as an individual and understand the issue at hand more deeply. That is public participation at its best.

Our gratitude to Johannes Bönig from World Café Europe, Tracey Avison from Age UK and Prof. Rodolfo Lewanski from AIP2 Italy for this interview.



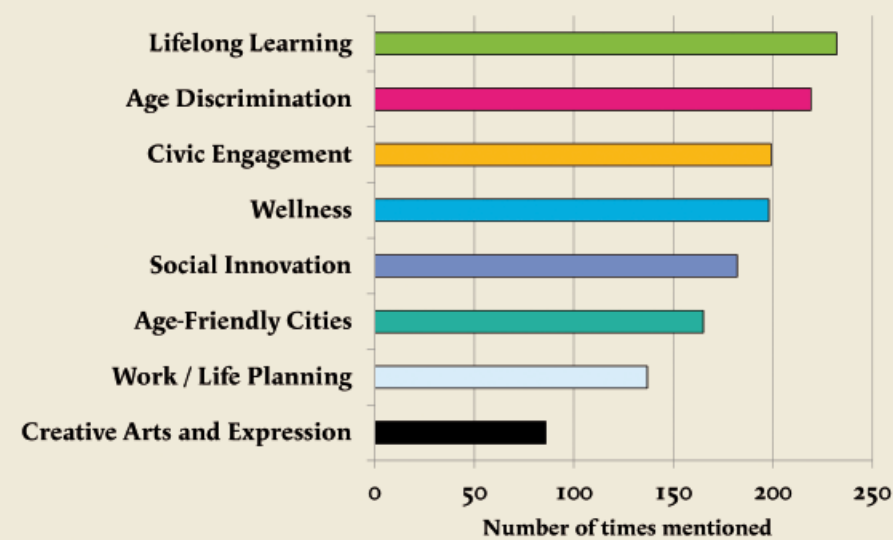
The Impact of participatory dialogue

The following six graphs provide an overview of the results of a comparative evaluation which consisted of 11 quantitative and 2 qualitative questions (N=404). It was administered with all EVAA project partners in 6 languages. More than 2/3 of the participants participated in this evaluation.

More detailed information is available at <http://bit.ly/EVAAwebsite>

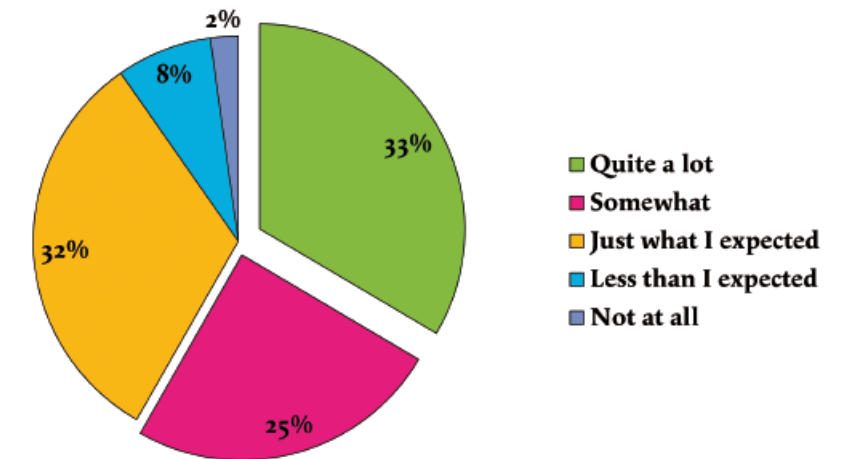
1.

Topics of most interest to EVAA participants



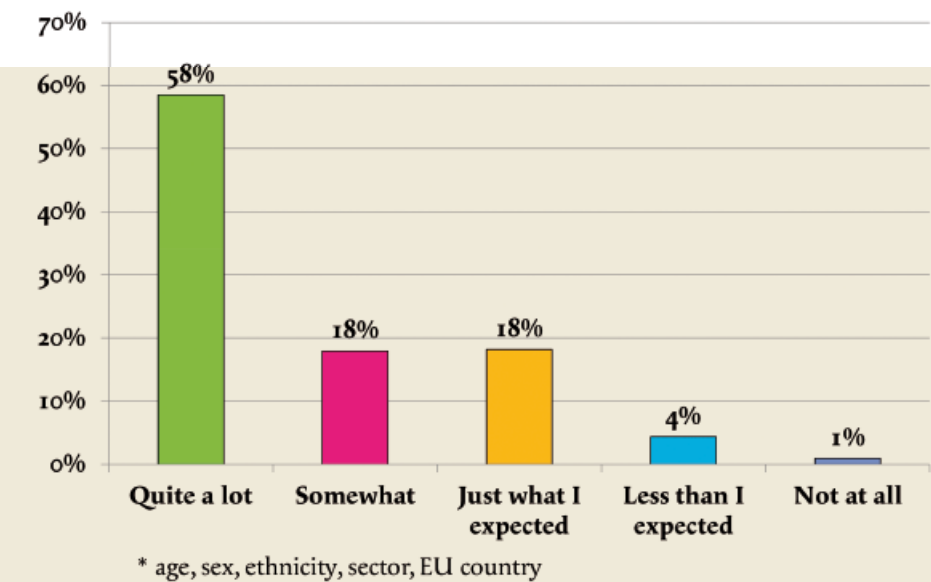
2.

Do you have a better understanding of the role which 50+ adults could play in society?



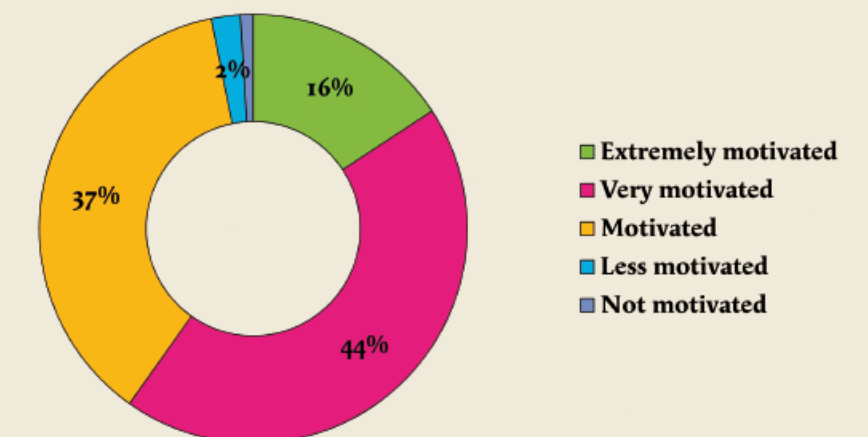
3.

Did participant diversity* enrich the conversation?



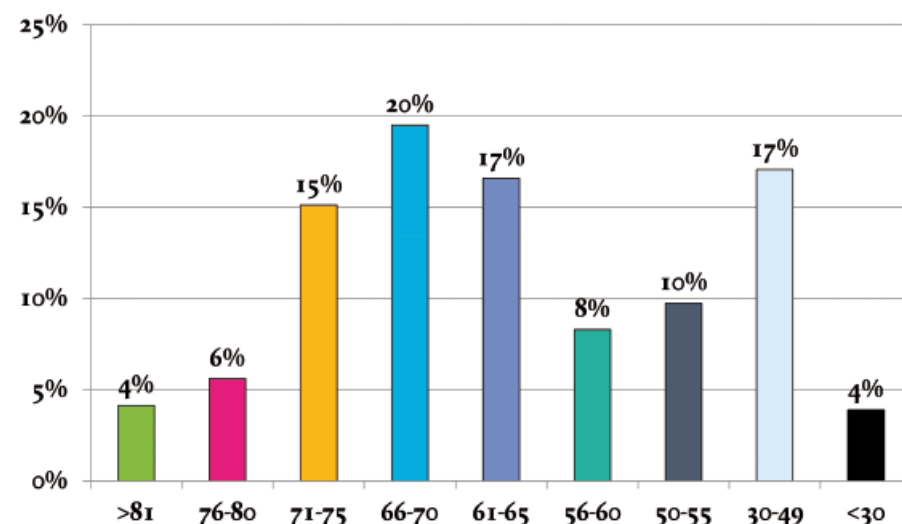
4.

Motivation to further engage with today's topic



5.

Age of EVAA participants



Baker & Harrison, Translation Services
 Johannes Böning, Choreographer
 Suzanne Bürger, Translator/Language Coordinator
 Christian Debaisieux, CREPS Strasbourg
 GLS Bank
 Dr. Janet Hively
 Dorothea Hunziker, Grafikdesignerin

Heartfelt thanks
 to a group of passionate people

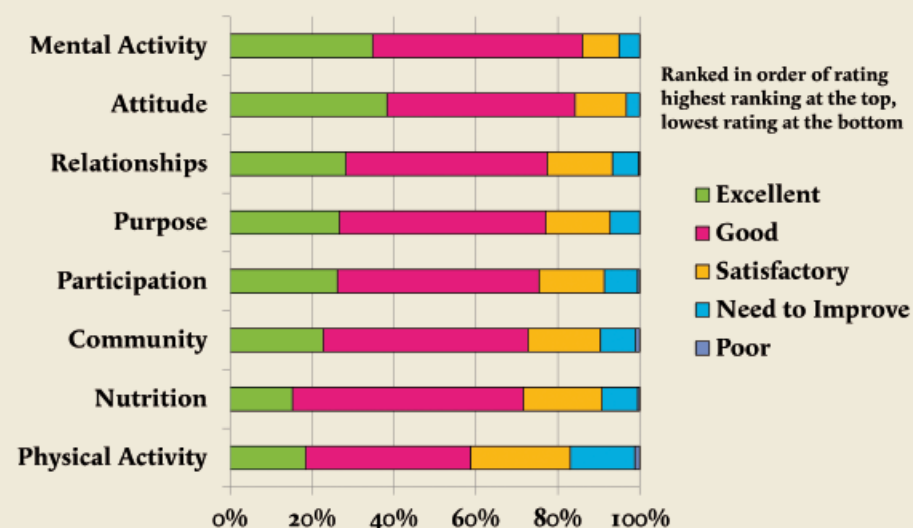
Lombego Systems
 Sascha Mock, Musician
 Alexander Otto, factum Public Relations
 Eckart Reichl, Streaming Video Camera
 Gabi Schluttig, HEKURA Medienproduktion
 Harald Schluttig, weissraum
 Prof. Christine Straumer, Rhythmics Specialist
 Daryl Upsall Consulting International
 Christian Werner, Head of Strategic Workforce Planning, Allianz SE
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 World Café Europe

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6.

Rate your ability to age well in the following areas:





- „Prendre soin de soi en tant qu'acteur“
„Sentirsi ancora utili agli altri e godersi la libertà“
„Vivir de forma saludable y creativa interactuando con la comunidad que me rodea“
- „Continuità nella vita“
„Integrazione fra generazioni, valorizzazione delle specificità di ogni età“
„Becoming aware of your life and then sharing those gifts with others“
„Accepter le vieillissement dans tous ses phases“
- „Another step in life towards more shared wisdom“
- „Mantenere il livello più alto possibile di autonomia“
„Zapojit se do života v každém věku je nádherné“
„Nenechat zahálet mozek ani tělo“
- „Prendre le pas sur la vie, se bouger, s'activer physiquement et mentalement“
„Ser activo no puede ser más que una actitud vital“
- „Generationsübergreifendes Weitergeben von Lebenserfahrung und Erlebtem“
„Engagiert für sich auch durch Engagement für andere“