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EUROPEAN YEAR FOR ACTIVE AGEING AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS – OPENING CONFERENCE 18-19 JANUARY 2012

“VISIONS FOR EUROPEAN ACTIVE AGEING”

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- The fact that we are living longer in Europe is a good thing, however, it brings challenges - pressure on public finances and pension systems; adding to existing shortages of skilled workers on our labour markets.
- In addition, low participation of older workers is an inefficient use of labour and a waste of talent and experience.
- BUSINESSEUROPE therefore supports the European year of active ageing. It is the right moment to dedicate a special year to this issue to raise awareness at a time when our workforce starts to shrink.
- To deal with an ageing population, BUSINESSEUROPE advocates longer working lives.
- For this to be a reality, job opportunities need to be available. And companies therefore need to be able to create jobs.
- This requires suitable framework conditions on European labour markets. This is not currently the case. In fact, the economic and financial crisis has clearly revealed that there are underlying structural weaknesses on our labour markets – rising long-term unemployment, low productivity growth, skills mismatches.
- These weaknesses have to be dealt with to ensure that the shift towards an ageing population does not have long-lasting negative consequences.
- One of the main consequences of demographic change which we need to avoid is shortage of skilled workers. This has an impact on companies, which always need a supply of skilled people to remain competitive.
- We are already experiencing this. Demographic change will make the situation worse: a mass of skills will be lost as a generation of experienced and skilled workers goes into retirement; at the same time, there will be a reduction in the number of people entering the labour market.
- But there are solutions. Action is needed by companies and individuals.
- Adaptability is the key: Older workers need to adapt to new working methods, new technologies and different working patterns. Skills need to be developed and adapted from the start of and throughout the working life.
- Employers have a role in adapting work organisation to meet the needs of a changing workforce.



Joint project

European employer social partners, BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP and UEAPME, are conducting a project on “Age management policies in enterprises in Europe”.

The aim is to examine, increase understanding and share best practices regarding age management policies put in place by EU private and public service enterprises of all sectors and sizes.

The proposal seeks to:

- Map best practices from private and public services' enterprises in the field of active ageing across all the 27 EU Member States;
- Identify positive and negative framework conditions impacting on age management policies at Member States level;
- To build on, rather than replicate the body of knowledge which already exists of active age management, bringing added value to the European debate;
- Identify and discuss future actions and / or ways in which employers can work, separately or jointly with other European social partners, namely the European Trade Union Confederation, to better address demographic ageing and its impact on employment.

Findings will be discussed in September at an EU-level conference organized by the EU employers.

The project has already started and will run up until November 2012.

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