

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON ACTIVE AGEING AND AN INTER-GENERATIONAL APPROACH

Final Implementation Report
November 2021

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INTRODUCTION

In their Work Programme 2015-2017, the European Social Partners, BusinessEurope, SGI Europe (then CEEP) and SMEUnited (then UEAPME) and ETUC (and the liaison committee EUROCADRES/CEC) agreed to address the issue of active ageing taking into account intergenerational considerations. The result of this work was the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational Approach (AFA-AAIA) signed on 8 March 2017. With this agreement, the European Social Partners recognized that active ageing and intergenerational approach are interlinked and that preparing for active ageing starts at the very beginning of the career. Employers, workers as well as social partners have different roles to play, but their cooperation is crucial to come up with and implement the best tailored solutions.

The European Social Partners together with their member organisations have been raising awareness of the challenges related to demographic change, namely ageing and shrinking population. According to the Eurostat projections, the number of people aged 65 years or more, will reach almost 130 million by 2050 in the EU. This is an over 43% increase in comparison with the 2019 numbers (90.5 million of those over 65). Europe is not only getting older, but also shrinking in numbers. Over a 35-year -time period between 1950 and 1985, the population of Europe grew by approx. 159 million. But in the following 35-year period (1985-2020) it was estimated to have only increased by 35 million. It will start decreasing as of 2030.

In such a scenario, a multifaceted approach is needed to ensure the labour market integration of both young, especially new entrants, and senior workers, also tackling skills mismatches and the need for skills updating. After six consecutive years of decrease, the EU unemployment rate increased in June 2021 reaching 7.7 % in the Euro area and 6.9 % in EU-27 in July 2021. This has happened in spite of the job-retaining measures widely undertaken all over Europe to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. At EU level, the youth unemployment rate increased from 15.0 % in 2019 to 16.8 %. Among workers, those aged 50-64 are instead highly exposed to long-term unemployment thus to discouragement and exit from the labour force. As a result, their employment rate in EU-27 is only around 59%.

The aims of the autonomous agreement are the following:

- Increasing the awareness and understanding of employers, workers and their representatives of the challenges and opportunities from demographic change;
- Providing employers, workers and their representatives at all levels with practical approaches and/or measures to promote and manage active ageing in an effective manner;
- Ensuring and maintaining a healthy, safe and productive working environment;
- Fostering innovative life-cycle approaches with productive and quality jobs to enable people to remain in work until legal retirement age;
- Facilitating exchanges, mutual cooperation and fostering concrete actions to transfer knowledge and experience between generations at the workplace.

The 2017 European Social Partners Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational approach is based on the principle that ensuring active ageing and the inter-generational approach requires a shared commitment on the part of employers, workers and their representatives.

Active ageing was described in the agreement as optimising opportunities for workers of all ages to work in good quality, productive and healthy conditions until legal retirement age, based on mutual commitment and motivation of employers and workers. Positively, the employment rate of older workers (55-64 age cohort) has increased in the last decade from 45,9% in 2011 to 59,1% in 2019 for the EU 27. This final report, by giving evidence of the many initiatives that social partners across Europe undertook to implement it between 2017 and 2021, shows the contribution of social partners' actions to support older workers in the workforce. These actions demonstrate the role and the added value that the EU social dialogue brings to improving working conditions and to better functioning labour markets across Europe.

The agreement includes tools to support actions in this field, including strategic assessments of workforce demography and adapting accordingly human resources policies; ensuring health and safety at the workplace; skills and competence management; and introducing work organisation for healthy and productive working lives. An intergenerational approach is an overreaching priority.

National social partners had three years to implement and promote the agreement at the national level. The implementation should have been concluded by March 2020, although the framework agreement can still serve as a reference for actions in the following years. As stipulated in the framework agreement, the European Social Partners have also submitted three annual tables summarizing implementation progress (for 2018, 2019 and 2020). These tables are available at both the [Employers' Resource Centre](#) and the [ETUC Resource Centre](#).

This is the final report providing an overview of the actions taken to implement the agreement, adopted by the Social Dialogue Committee on 22 October 2021. It includes information on the relevant actions taken by social partners at national, cross-industry, sectoral and enterprise level, challenges related with implementing the agreement as well as initiatives to overcome them. It describes the main trends that can be identified through the different national reports submitted to the ETUC (and the liaison committee EUROCADRES/CEC), BusinessEurope, SGI Europe and SMEunited.

The European Social Partners would like to thank their members for their contributions.



SOCIAL PARTNERS TAKE ACTION

1. Overview of implementation

The table below provides an overview of the yearly reporting by national social partners on the implementation of the agreement. Overall, 26 countries submitted joint reports.

EU Member States	2018	2019	2020	2021 Final Report
Austria	X	X	X	X
Belgium	X	X	X	X
Bulgaria	X	X	X	X
Croatia		X Unilateral report from employers		X Unilateral report from employers
Cyprus	X	X	X	X
Czech Republic		X	X	X
Denmark	X	X	X	X
Estonia	X	X	X	X
Finland	X	X	X	X
France	X			
Germany	X	X	X	X
Greece				
Hungary				X
Ireland				
Italy	X			
Latvia	X	X	X	X
Lithuania			X	
Luxembourg	X	X	X	X
Malta				X
Netherlands	X	X		X
Poland	X	X	X	X
Portugal	X Unilateral report from employers	X Unilateral report from employers and unilateral report from trade unions	X	X Unilateral report from employers
Romania			X	
Slovakia				X
Slovenia				
Spain	X		X	X
Sweden	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom	X	X		
Total EU MS	18	17	17	19

EEA Countries				
Iceland				
Norway	x	X	X	X
Total (out of 31)	19	18	18	20
EU interprofessional social partners			x	
European sectoral social partners			(FERPA)	

2. Providing the basis: translation and dissemination

As the first step, to provide the basis for actions to implement the framework agreement, the national and European Social Partners actively promoted and disseminated the agreement as well as the translation of its text. The way in which this was done varied from one country to another, reflecting different national systems and practices. Joint actions were taken by national and EU social partners as well as some unilateral actions. In some cases, other actors were involved, such as governments, educational institutions etc.

The main purpose of these activities was to inform about, raise awareness and promote the framework agreement, and to encourage national social partners to start work on implementation. Some actions also served, more generally, to raise awareness on the importance of the topic of active ageing and the topics included in the framework agreement.

● National social partners

The basis for dissemination and promotion of the framework agreement at national level was in many cases translation (for example in **Cyprus**, the **Czech Republic**, **Estonia**, **Germany**, **Hungary**, the **Netherlands**, **Norway** or **Sweden**). This often marked the start of negotiations between national social partners on implementation and can be a crucial step in creating a common understanding about the content of the European Social Partners' framework agreement (for example in **Poland**, **Luxembourg** or **Spain**). It also allows to contextualise the EU agreement in the national situation. In many cases the translation was done with the help of the Translation Fund managed by the ETUC and BusinessEurope (on behalf of the European employers' organisations) as part of the European Social Partners' Integrated Programme. At the time of publication, the agreement was translated into eight languages.

Action to disseminate the (translated) framework agreement at national level ranged from direct sending to member organisations and/or relevant stakeholders, for example national administrations (i.e. **Portugal**, **Cyprus**, **Sweden** or **Norway**), publishing in social partners' information bulletins, and making available on social partners' and other websites (**Hungary**, **Austria**, **Bulgaria** or the **Czech Republic**). In **Austria**, social partners have developed a concrete and varied set of tools for awareness raising, training and learning from concrete practice. The **Maltese** social partners are planning to develop a digital tool including guidelines of good practices and distribute them to their members. The tool will also be accessible to all interested stakeholders. In **Hungary**, national social partners committed to keep their members and all relevant social and economic actors informed about the objectives of the AFA-AAIA, related domestic and

international developments, research, data, proposals, practical experiences, etc, in order to raise awareness on active aging, intergenerational relationships and the need for age-management. The **Hungarian** trade union federations also organized seminars to disseminate and promote the contents of the framework agreement, and also carried out research on the topic (e.g. League Trade Unions).

In **Portugal**, both employers' and trade union organisations engaged in a series of preparatory actions. CIP, the national employers' organisation, translated the agreement, accompanying it with a description note and highlighting the most important aspects of it; the trade unions engaged in a series of meetings and debates across the country on its contents. Such activities not only paved the way to the signature of the tripartite agreement with the Portuguese Government in the Standing Committee for Social Concertation in 2018, and of the joint commitment in 2019, they also remain relevant for the interpretation of these final outcomes and thus support social partners at all levels as well as public authorities in giving concreteness to the joint decisions in their everyday role.

In **Luxembourg**, employers' representatives have taken steps pursuant to the adoption of the European framework agreement: FEDIL and Fédération des Artisans informed their member companies about the content of the agreement and raised awareness regarding the required follow up within three years. Trade unions have taken the following steps pursuant to the adoption of the European framework agreement: the OGBL and LCGB have informed their executive committees, personnel delegations as well as members regarding the agreement; the OGBL and LCGB are cooperating with Luxembourgish Worker's Chamber (CSL) on analysing possible implementation options.

Dissemination activities were intensively undertaken by national social partners, targeting local and sectoral bodies at all levels as well as companies. Informative actions also involved government bodies, relevant national ministries and other stakeholders.

Promotion activities included presenting and explaining the framework agreement at seminars, information and awareness-raising sessions and specific conferences on the topic of active ageing and an intergenerational approach. For example, in 2018 the **Swedish** social partners organised a joint web-seminar to inform and disseminate the agreement and present some good examples of joint social partner work. Some actions were supported by EU project funding, including in some cases collaboration between several countries. This helped national social partners to exchange experience on different approaches and tools for creating inclusive labour markets. A proactive approach to benchmarking experiences across the EU has been adopted in a number of cases, showing that demographic change is a shared issue of interest at EU level, where actions, including by social partners, are important to address challenges. This was the case in **Poland**, where national social partners developed transnational projects aimed at sharing knowledge and good practices from countries with a longer experience in active ageing and an intergenerational approach. Promotion activities were targeted, for example, towards the membership of social partner organisations (jointly or unilaterally), the public, university students and companies. In some cases, promotion activities extended to press and media work. Far-reaching initiatives have been undertaken in several countries to raise awareness of the changing demographics and the need for a consistent new life-cycle approach to work and life across all ages (for example in **Austria** and **Germany**).

In **Bulgaria** several joint events were planned in the course of 2019 and 2021, such as round tables, working meetings for discussion and consulting project instruments with partners/associated partners/member federations. The Bulgarian social partners also plan an information and consultation campaign in member companies in the form of workshops, training and various awareness-raising activities. The dedicated Round Table with the social partners and the representatives of academia and state administration (Ministry of labour and social policy, National insurance institute, National revenue agency, National Health Insurance Fund etc.) was organized to discuss issues relevant for active ageing and an intergenerational approach.

In **Estonia**, social partners organised the presentation of the framework agreement to their member organizations and the public through meetings, seminars, publicity on websites. In 2018 the Estonian Trade Union Confederation held a conference on collective bargaining, where the topic of active ageing and intergenerational approach in collective agreements was actively discussed, and good company and sectoral practices were presented.

◆ European cross-industry social partners

The EU cross-industry social partners have also actively promoted the framework agreement, both jointly and individually. First and foremost, the final agreement was presented by the European Social Partners at the Tripartite Social Summit on 8 March 2017; the press was also informed about the agreement.

Following on from this event, joint activities have included presentations to EU sectoral social partners and to a broader range of stakeholders at EU and national events. For example, the agreement was regularly presented during the Social Dialogue cluster seminars, organised in the context of the Integrated Projects. The original version of the framework agreement and national translations were also made available on the [EU Employers' Resource Center](#) and [ETUC Resource Centre](#) websites as part of the European Social Partners Integrated Programme.

The Translation Fund provides financial support for those member organisations that wish to translate the framework agreement into their national languages.

At the date of this publication, the European conference is planned to take place on 15 December 2021, with the main objective of exchanging information and experiences in relation to the implementation of the agreement and presenting the final implementation report.

The active ageing and intergenerational approach has been one of the topics of the subgroup of the Social Dialogue Committee established by the European Social Partners in 2016. This subgroup focusses on the implementation of the autonomous social dialogue instruments. As part of the work of the subgroup, the implementation of the Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational Approach, along with the other agreements, was addressed in an expert report which focused on 10 target countries where national social partners have faced difficulties in the implementation of autonomous framework agreements. The report is available here: (<https://resourcecentre.etuc.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Sub-Group%20Report%20Final%20December%202020.pdf>). The European Social Partners also organized individual activities, to encourage implementation by their national members and ensure a continuous dialogue on this, as well as to broaden the target audience for promotion of the framework agreement.

◆ ETUC

The ETUC has undertaken a diverse set of activities to promote the implementation of the AFA-AAIA as well as to highlight its objectives.

The European Social Dialogue Academy brings together young trade unionists from EU member states and the candidate countries. Its objective is to increase their knowledge of the European social dialogue mechanisms. During the sessions participants were introduced to the content and background of a number of the European social dialogue results, including the agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational Approach.

The ETUC organised a project dedicated to the implementation of the agreement. The project foresaw the development of an ETUC interpretation guide on the agreement made available in different languages (EN, FR, DE, HU, PL) (<https://resourcecentre.etuc.org/agreement/framework-agreement-active-ageing-and-inter-generational-approach>). This interpretation guide provides an overview on the content of the agreement, chapter by chapter, focusing on the main issues at stake as discussed throughout the negotiations. The guide is designed to support the ETUC member organisations in the implementation of the content of the agreement and to allow better monitoring and evaluation of the results achieved. Seminars to promote and disseminate the agreement also took place as part of this project. A specific section on the ETUC website relating to the agreement and its implementation is available.

◆ Employers

> BusinessEurope

BusinessEurope promoted the framework agreement to different stakeholders and EU institutions, through presentations at a number of EU conferences and events, including the following:

- Joint event of the European Parliament and AGE
- European Social Observatory event on active ageing
- Commission conference on Employment and Social Developments in Europe
- Event of the European Chemical Employers Group on the very topic
- OECD conference on effective retirement
- Eurofound seminar on working conditions at different ages

BusinessEurope has also promoted implementation of the agreement through its Social Affairs Committee and has been involved in the joint activities mentioned above.

It also organises jointly with the International Training Centre of the ILO the Employers Young Professional Academy (EYPA), including through funding of the European Commission DG Employment. As part of this project in 2017, the framework agreement was used as an example to explain how negotiations work between the EU level social partners. A representative of ETUC was also involved in this action.

BusinessEurope was involved in the joint EU funded project led by its member federation BusinessHungary, involving employers' organisations from seven countries, entitled "Bridging the AGE GAP - development of social partner initiatives for managing age-related challenges". The project aimed to help national transposition of the framework agreement. BusinessEurope participated in a number of events and meetings related to the project, as well as providing support more generally to understand the content of the autonomous framework agreement and devise actions at national level.

> SMEUnited

SMEUnited (former UEAPME) has widely disseminated the autonomous framework agreement to all its cross-industry and sectoral members after its adoption.

The agreement follow-up was regularly on the agenda of the SMEUnited Social Affairs Committee especially ahead of the yearly reporting exercise.

Furthermore, SMEUnited participated in all European Social Partners' joint seminars "Reinforcing the European social dialogue and industrial relations" to support and promote social dialogue, where the content of the autonomous framework agreement was presented and its implementation regularly discussed.

> SGI Europe

SGI Europe widely disseminated the autonomous framework agreement throughout its network of national correspondents and to its European sectoral members EFEE and HOSPEEM. The agreement's implementation was closely monitored by SGI Europe social affairs board as a standing item on its agenda.

SGI Europe secretariat provided support to its members and, at their request, presented the agreement on several occasions during national seminars to showcase a key example of social partner cooperation at European level.

In the context of its EU funded project "Social services in cross-industry social dialogue" the Framework agreement was presented, and guidance was provided for its implementation during four technical expert seminars involving SGI Europe's members and external stakeholders throughout 2019.

3. Implementation

● Overview of instruments used by social partners to implement the agreement

The Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational Approach (AFA-AAIA) identifies a wide range of areas and proposes directions for interventions to accompany demographic change and address the related challenges on the labour market. The selection of tools designed by national social partners to implement the framework agreement reflects the huge variety of national realities and industrial relations systems: the full range of adopted instruments include legislation, agreements between national social partners, bipartite or tripartite actions at different levels and diverse country-wide policy tools.

A relevant number of tripartite agreements have been signed, proving the need of joint, far-reaching and integrated measures to ensure comprehensive interventions to address the issues at stake in the agreement. The number of bipartite and unilateral actions is also significant proof that social partners made efforts to implement the agreement in a meaningful way.

The different national social dialogue structures have determined the actors involved in bipartite and/or tripartite debates, and – consequently – also their outcomes. In several Member States, national cross-industry social partners agreements have been signed, which have often fed (or are planned to feed) the tripartite social dialogue and national legislation (for example, in **Poland, Hungary, Estonia** and **Portugal**). The bilateral commitment among social partners has thus deployed its potential and has proved to be influential in a wider perspective, where active ageing and an intergenerational approach can impact the political arena and the governmental decisions. It has proven to be an efficient vehicle to manage active ageing at all levels.

In other countries, instead, the implementation of the AFA-AAIA has reinforced the measures already included in the legislation or collective agreements (as in the case of **Norway, Denmark** and the **Netherlands**).

The phase of coordinated actions across the EU to give implementation to the AFA-AAIA has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as expected. More information on how this impacted on social partners' actions can be found in Part 3 of the report "Challenges encountered in implementation".

Although the pandemic meant that many actions did not take place as planned by social partners, nevertheless the AFA-AAIA has been given great importance since its very early stages of the national implementation processes and in most countries, even during the most severe pandemic waves, social partners have continued to work hard and use different instruments to implement the agreement. The approach proposed by the AFA-AAIA has sometimes been highlighted as useful in devising tools and actions to address the employment and labour market impact of the pandemic, making the need for sustainable employability even more urgent and obvious in some sectors. For example, in 2020 and 2021 social partners focused on maintaining employment rates and safeguarding the viability of companies, which can be observed in ongoing or new collective agreements, e.g. in the Netherlands, with the recent focus on sustainable employability.

NATIONAL CROSS-INDUSTRY SOCIAL PARTNERS' AGREEMENTS

→ **National cross-industry social partners agreements** have been signed in several member states (for example in **Belgium, Poland, Sweden, Hungary**), envisaging different tools, measures and actions, on the basis of the agreement. Social partners consider them as comprehensive, process-oriented and well-tailored to the national circumstances.

In some countries such as the **Netherlands** and **Belgium**, the issues at stake in the AFA-AAIA had already been approached by social partners since at least a decade, as part of the EU-wide debate concerning population ageing. A tripartite approach is particularly common in countries where active ageing and labour market inclusiveness across all

ages have been addressed to offset the risk of a shrinking workforce, in connection with pension reforms. In the context of retaining workers until the legal retirement age while maximizing labour market inclusiveness for younger generations, the implementation of the EU level agreement has given new impetus to the measures already foreseen to face the ageing of the workforce and the need to respond to well-being demands across the whole lifecycle.

Additionally, the policies emerging in this context years ago are remarkably timely with respect to the headline policy directions (and accompanying targets) of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the well-being-oriented approach adopted by the social partners in the joint declarations during the Porto Summit in May 2021.

In some countries, social partners that signed bilateral agreements have reported that making them fully operational would require further initiatives, including legislative and government-backed ones (Estonia being an example). Several bipartite agreements have paved the way to tripartite commitments. Also, such further initiatives could not take place in some countries yet, where they have been hampered by the urgent priorities imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. **Cyprus, Poland**).

In **Poland**, the implementation of the European framework agreement has been initiated and monitored by the permanent bilateral social partners' Working Group on European Social Dialogue (GrEDS) established in 2016, operating within the Social Dialogue Council (RDS) - the main institution of tripartite discussions between representative organizations of employers, trade unions and the government. The joint Working Group disseminated the preliminary information on the agreement and then extended the action focusing on its content-related aspects. The different member organisations represented in the Group developed their own internal discussions until they reached a bilateral agreement formalised as the national cross-industry social partners agreement. This bilateral national cross-sectoral agreement was signed on 8 June 2020 by the most representative social partners' organisations. According to it, the Polish workers' and employers' organisations jointly recognise the need to implement solutions for active ageing, including measures to raise awareness and understanding of challenges and opportunities related to demographic change, improve employment conditions for older workers, foster re-skilling as well as promote health in the workplace and beyond. Satisfied by the bilateral agreement, social partners plan to enhance its effectiveness via joint legislative proposals and identification of good practices.

In the **Netherlands**, already since the beginning of the negotiations, social partners recognised the commonality of core topics and objectives between the EU level agreement and the recommendations developed in relation to the "Policy Agenda 2020: Investing in Participation and Employability" dating back to June 2011. At that time, consultations for de-centralised collective agreements - involving the government too - were launched in the context of the 2010 and 2011 Pension Agreements, to effectively strengthen older workers' employment capacity.

The EU level framework agreement gave a new impetus to the policies already on the agenda and influenced both the bilateral and tripartite negotiations undertaken during the Covid-19 crisis.

In **Estonia** the social partners were keen to transpose the EU level agreement as soon as possible in order to offset the lowering employment rates and the workforce shortages, as well as to accompany the pension reforms. In 2018, Estonian Trade Union Confederation EAKL and Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETKL) signed the national agreement to implement the European level framework at national level.

In **Malta** the social partners have agreed to a 10-principle joint statement acknowledging the need for more policies that addressed the topic of active ageing and intergenerational approach in the context of the Maltese labour market to ensure employee and skills retention. The agreement has been widely disseminated and featured extensively in the media.

A mutually reinforcing relationship of the EU level framework agreements and national level agreements is visible in **Sweden**, where the topic of active ageing and an intergenerational approach was already on the agenda for the Swedish social partners prior to signature of the EU agreement. The AFA-AAIA has created an extra arena/platform to meet and advance relevant work as well as contribute with added value. The Swedish social partners believe that this way the EU social dialogue and the national social dialogue mutually strengthen each other. The Swedish social partners have undertaken different activities to implement the agreement. Depending on their nature, different partners were involved. Some of them are based on joint agreements involving all social partners' organisations, others are agreements between some of the organisations. There are also unilateral measures from one of the central labour market confederations and/or their member associations.

In **Hungary** the signature of the bipartite social partners' agreement has been decided in several joint online consultations. The joint text of the agreement is currently waiting for signature, the exact date depending on the evolution of the pandemic. The agreement and the commitment to its implementation is open to any national employers' organization and trade union recognizing its objectives and wishing to actively contribute to it. Social partners at national level committed to continuously assist and support their members at sectoral and workplace levels, at their request, in finding and applying concrete practical solutions and, where possible, enshrining the social partners' aspirations in collective agreements on relevant levels or other joint actions. Social partners at national level will set up a joint website to achieve the above objectives, the content of which will be jointly operated by the adoption of cooperation agreements. The aim of this website is to serve as a knowledge-based tool to share expert materials and promote collective bargaining at the different levels including topics related to European social dialogue.

→ In a number of countries, social partners have implemented (or are planning to implement) the framework agreement through **tripartite agreements** involving their respective governments. Such tripartite overarching agreements at national level reinforce the effectiveness of the measures foreseen by social partners and provide effectiveness to their joint commitments and decisions at all levels, including the company one. In general, these outcomes are common in those countries where the bi- and tripartite social dialogue structures are designed to pave the way to them. They also lead to the mainstreaming of the topics included in an agreement in different types of measures, that can have an impact both on the sectoral and cross-sectoral dimensions within a country.

Such agreements usually target retention at work of workers 55+, skill development, retraining and lifelong learning, long-term unemployment, active labour market policies but also the inclusion into the labour market of workers with long term diseases and/or disabilities.

This has been the case of **Portugal**, where the exchanges among social partners have led to the signature of the tripartite agreement with the Portuguese Government, in the Standing Committee for Social Concertation (18 June 2018). This agreement planned, among other subjects, a measure called “Contract Generation”, a tripartite political commitment that foresees incentives for companies to hire, simultaneously and with open ended labour contracts, people looking for their first job and long or very long term unemployed aged 45.

In **Poland** the social partners, generally satisfied with the final result of their 2020 agreement, have foreseen that the solutions outlined in it should be promoted, possibly with a support of the government and by adopting joint legislative proposals provided for in the agreement and aimed at identifying good practices at company level. However, further steps to make the agreement fully operational have been delayed, due to the lockdowns determined by the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the **Netherlands** the social partners and the government have agreed on various schemes to promote sustainable employability and lifelong development in companies and sectors. These schemes foresee not only the commitment of social partners, but also the financial support from the government for measures enhanced both at sectoral and at company level.

In **Luxembourg**, since the signature of the AFA-AAIA, the social partners agreed that, in order to give concreteness to its purposes, a national tripartite approach would be the most effective. Therefore, a possibility for the Luxembourgish social partners is to put the subject on the agenda of the Standing Committee on Labour and Employment. This is a longstanding, tripartite institution in Luxembourg which discusses issues related to labour and employment among the trade unions, employers and the government. Up to this point, the Standing Committee on Labour and Employment is yet to discuss the agreement.

In the **Czech Republic** a lot of work is done through the experts´ teams within the framework of the highest tripartite body (RHSD). The social partners´ representatives are involved in development of the national solutions and strategies focused on youth employment, employment of people 50+ and active ageing, i.e. the Strategy on preparing for ageing 2018- 2025 and the Strategy of Youth employment policy 2020 in implementation. It is worth noting that at the tripartite level, the Czech social partners have long supported programs aimed at maintaining employment at the time of the coronavirus, which also included older workers.

In **Spain** the Council of Ministers approved in December 2018 a new Plan de Choque por el Empleo Juvenil 2019-2021. This plan constituted the agreement resulting from a social dialogue process between the social partners and the government, carried out within the framework of the Employment and Labour Relations Social Dialogue Roundtable. This Action Plan identifies a set of measures that are fully in line with the afore-mentioned autonomous framework agreement.

The **Danish** social partners have undertaken several initiatives to secure flexible and improved conditions for senior workers both in the private and in the public sector. This also includes initiatives originating from the work of tripartite committees and commissions such as the Labour Market Commission and the Welfare Commission. The German federal and state governments, social partners and other stakeholders launched the joint framework initiative New Quality of Work (INQA), including such projects as “*Das Demographie Netzwerk*”, “*unternehmensWert.Mensch*” and “*Offensive Mittelstand*”).

In **Belgium** the National Labour Council (NLC) plays a key role in centralizing the available information at different policy levels and thus was crucial in undertaking several initiatives in order to strengthen employment of older workers. On 27 June 2012, the NLC concluded the collective agreement n° 104 intended to create a dynamic effect in undertakings, by establishing an employment plan for older workers in each company. An assessment of this collective agreement took place in 2016 (opinion n° 1.988 of the NLC. The NLC also issued the recommendation n°26 to provide guidance to the sectors on the role they can play in implementing this collective agreement.

NATIONAL/REGIONAL SECTORAL SOCIAL PARTNERS' AGREEMENTS

→ Agreements at sectoral level have been developed across many Member States, as well as actions in different regions and at different levels proving clearly social partners' will to provide concrete tools to foster implementation of the AFA-AAIA in many possible ways. In general, the sectoral agreements adapt the initiatives already undertaken at cross-sectoral level, however the link between different levels depends on the national industrial relations model.

In the **Netherlands** as part of the Covid-19 package of support measures, there have been supplementary agreements concerning crisis services and other matters. FNV, CNV, VCP, VNO-NCW, MKB-Nederland and LTO Nederland have formed 'regional mobility teams' in partnership with the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), local authorities and educational institutions in the 35 labour market regions.

In **Denmark**, in addition to the cross-sectoral parliamentary and tripartite agreements, the municipality and regional sector adopted a Framework agreement for senior workers dealing with, e.g. working conditions, health and safety considerations, competences and the organisation of workflows. The Framework agreement has been renewed by the social partners in 2021.

In **Belgium** both social partners and public authorities competent at regional level have developed a series of initiatives to give concreteness to the commitments undertaken by the federal National Labour Council, in line with the objectives of the autonomous framework agreement. Other sectoral measures relate to the implementation of the collective agreement relating to the implementation of a plan for the employment of older workers. Many sectors have developed initiatives and good practices in the context of sectoral agreements (2017-2018 and 2019-2020) concluded on a biennial basis.

In **Bulgaria** a joint social partners' project funded by the ministry of labour is developing research paths on demography-related issues and possible measures to adopt in line with the framework agreement. The outcomes will feed into collective bargaining at the sectoral level. Ten sectoral member federations of BIA and CITUB (tourism, metallurgy, construction, food industry, trade, meat processing industry, furniture and wood processing industry, chemical industry, cellulose and paper industry and culture) are currently discussing the adoption of a number of strategic documents (sectoral memorandums of understanding and sectoral partnership programs). Seven sectors (tourism, metallurgy, construction, trade, culture brewery) are discussing new clauses in their collective agreements. All these strategic documents are in line with the AFA-AAIA.

COMPANY LEVEL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

→ Exchanges of company practices have been undertaken across countries and in all member states. Company agreements are being developed and, in many cases, monitored and further disseminated by social partners via websites and mutual training actions.

For example, the **Finnish** social partners' joint recommendations have supported a remarkable number of companies/organisations to create their own "job life cycle program" using the eTool provided and annexed to the joint recommendations.

In the **Czech Republic** trade union (CMKOS) evaluates the content of collective agreements every year with a view to monitor the implementation of framework agreements of the European social partners. CMKOS and other trade unions draw up model collective agreements for their corporate members in which chosen measures oriented on active ageing are set out.

In the **Netherlands** many collective agreements relevant on sustainable employability and lifelong development are signed at the decentralized level. The number of collective agreements including a 'generation pact' is also increasing and many company level agreements on sustainable employability are struck in consultation with work councils.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION

→ Social partners in general report their satisfaction towards the national cross-sectoral agreements they signed, considered as comprehensive, process-oriented and well-tailored to the national circumstances. In some cases, bipartite agreements have expressly foreseen further steps to become fully operational, such as the **adoption of specific and related legislation**. In some other cases, as highlighted above, they have paved the way to tripartite social dialogue. In such circumstances, bilateral social dialogue widens its impact by bringing active ageing and intergenerational approach into the political arena of governmental decisions. Such practice has been all the more important in pandemic times, when the exchange between social partners and governments has increased the ownership and the enforceability of emergency measures. The endorsement of the social partners' agreements or joint actions by governments and parliaments seems to occur more often where instances for bipartite and tripartite social dialogue are present and well structured.

In **Poland**, for example, social partners report that making the bipartite national cross-sectoral agreement of June 2020 fully operational requires further legislative initiatives that would support jointly agreed measures. These, however, have been hampered so far by the urgent priorities imposed by the pandemic.

In **Hungary** the government is deemed to play an important role to play in fostering 'active ageing across generations'. Therefore, social partners are monitoring the government's actions in all the areas that are touched upon or are related to the core areas of the AFA-AAIA. In particular, they have monitored and participated into the work of the National Tripartite Committee for Occupational Safety and Health. They also monitor government measures and projects related to the topic of the framework agreement and assist in its implementation.

COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

→ **Different complementary activities** have very frequently been undertaken by social partners, both jointly and unilaterally, across Europe. Informative actions, studies, needs-based assessments, conferences and training sessions represent many of the activities reported, aimed at providing explanations and spreading a deep understanding of the core meaning of the text of the European Social Partners' Framework Agreement.

Such activities, complementary to formal social dialogue outcomes, play a crucial role in developing a new narrative on 'ageing' intended as a natural life-cycle process, that addresses not only the work-related aspects, but also societal considerations. Besides the specific measures adopted in agreements, policy and legislative initiatives at different levels, social partners also devoted great attention to transversal and comprehensive actions, that target all workers rather than one specific age group, the overall well-being of the population in all life stages rather in addition to the workplace dimension, and the mainstreaming of the life-cycle approach in all policy areas. In such perspective, complementary initiatives help frame the specific measures foreseen in a wider context and gain relevance by their comprehensiveness.

The social partners in **Cyprus** entered into negotiations for the adoption of a 'Policy Statement', intended to transpose the EU Framework Agreement at national level, in May 2021. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences on the economy and on society in general, there was a delay in the procedure. Currently, the text is under examination. It is expected that the 'Policy Statement' will be signed in an official signatory ceremony to be held in the presence of the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, as was the case with previous European Social Partner Framework Agreements.

Already before the adoption of the EU autonomous framework agreement, the **Austrian** social partners started collaboration and a series of joint actions, in addition to unilateral ones. A common website called www.arbeitundalter.at was created, targeting employers, HR managers, works councils, safety representatives, occupational health and safety (OHS) experts, occupational doctors and other experts. The adoption of the framework agreement as well as the European EU-OSHA campaign on 'Workplaces for all ages' were the reasons for a thorough relaunch of the website, which was adapted to mobile devices. In autumn 2017, a video for the web portal was produced. It contains statements

by employers' and workers' representatives from four enterprises which introduced measures to adjust the workplace or the tasks to the needs of older workers. This video aims to raise awareness and to encourage other enterprises to follow the example. The web portal itself is updated on a regular basis with new best practice examples. A brochure, containing the main features of the web portal, was printed and made available for download from the website.

The social partners presented "Tips and Tricks for active ageing" at joint seminars and conferences.

The **Austrian** social partners participated in the elaboration of the certificate "Nestor Gold", an award sponsored by the Ministry for social affairs. This award is given to enterprises who have implemented active ageing measures.

In **Norway** the agreement has been translated into Norwegian, made known to members of both the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Business (NHO).

As mentioned above, most of the means, tools and measures mentioned in the AFA-AAIA were already a part of the Norwegian legislation or collective agreements. The Centre for active ageing (*Senter for seniorpolitikk*) is still operating and has been strengthened by the involvement of the social partners, which are playing an important role in the governance of the institution and its activities. The agreement has been also further disseminated to more companies and workers' representatives.

In addition to concluding collective agreements, and on the impetus given by the AFA-AAIA, the **Dutch** social partners are actively involved, both centrally and locally, in all aspects geared to helping workers to age actively. The basic idea is for the policy to target not only older workers, but all workers. A policy aimed at fit and healthy retirement must be put into practice from the moment workers enter the labour market.

The Labour Foundation and Social and Economic Council of the **Netherlands**, where social partners are strongly represented, are working hard and in close consultation with political representatives to develop a policy on 'lifelong development' and roll it out in the private sector. A working group has been set up within the Labour Foundation to focus specifically on promoting sustainable employability taking into account an intergenerational approach and on early retirement. Agreements are being made with government on the implementation of flanking policy.

The crisis brought about by the pandemic has made the need for sustainable employability even more urgent and obvious in some sectors. Therefore, in July 2020, the Labour Foundation called on the social partners in certain sectors to engage in an early dialogue on the economic impact of the crisis and the short- and medium-term situation in the labour market. A shared sector analysis is essential so that companies and their workers can make the necessary changes and adjustments.

An example of the social partners' collaboration is partnership between FNV, CNV and AWWN in the 'Social partners together for sustainable employability' SPDI (see <https://duur-zaamaanhetwerk.nl>). They began this project because both employers and trade unions had noted how complicated it often was for an individual employer, work council or trade union to put the collective agreements on sustainable employability into practice within a company. The staff of these trade unions and the employers' organisation advise

companies on how to implement sustainable employability. In addition to company-specific research, this also requires working on a shared vision of how to structure sustainable employability. In the past year, SPDI activities have included: disseminating general information and webinars on the Customised Arrangement for Sustainable Employability and Early Retirement (MDIEU) - sector-specific information sessions; guidance on sector-building when applying for sector analysis grants and later MDIEU; helpdesk for MDIEU and sector analyses; webinars for training and development funds (2021); conducting sector analyses (2021).

Also the **Finnish** social partners had started reflecting around many aspects touched upon in the AAIA before its signature at the EU level. A joint fact-finding seminar was already held in February 2016, where a series of common lines of priorities and lines of action had been identified. Along with the translation and dissemination of text of the EU agreement, the Finnish social partners have developed a set of common recommendations, defining the “Job life cycle model”. Based on a social partners’ Framework Agreement from October 2011, the joint recommendations cover all age groups and all sectors, both public and private, and aim at creating a “win-win” policy approach for both employers and workers.

The Finnish local government sector has jointly agreed on a permanent structure for improving the quality of working life. The main structure includes other smaller projects and activities. One part of the entity is a new project financed by the “Work2030 program”, which receives funds from the State.

In **Hungary** significant assistance in the adoption of the social partners’ national agreement was provided by the National Committee for Occupational Safety and Health and the study of lectures on the employment of older workers, primarily in order to maintain their health. Of particular note was the conference entitled “Healthy Workplaces for All Ages” held in Budapest in April 2017 in the framework of the campaign launched by the National Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, organized by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, but also other conferences of Hungarian employers and workers. Responsible government officials on the subject also attended and intervened during the event.

In **Bulgaria** a series of practice-oriented handbooks have been elaborated. There are six handbooks; the two of them are in the electronic format and can be downloaded from the dedicated website. All instruments have been tested in 100 companies in the ten sectors involved in the project. Based on the received feedback, the instruments have been finally tuned and adjusted to the needs of enterprises and workers.

In **Latvia** complementary activities were a part of the “Support for longer working life” project. They included assisting in drafting and consulting the drafts of the collective agreement in parts related to benefits for workers aged 50+ and preparation and submission of proposals in relations to special protection measures for workers aged 50+. Another set of complementary activities has been foreseen within the framework of the “Balance for All (B4A)” project managed by the national social partners (LDDK and LBAS) in cooperation with the relevant ministry and with support of the European Union financing. The project was aimed to put into practice measures supporting more equal access to the labour market as well as enabling and work-life balance. Thanks to this project employers and business leaders have been provided with some recommendations related to social dialogue at the company level and the company level collective agreements that allow for more flexibility and enhanced work-life balance.

When embarking on these discussions with the employees, employers are made aware what issues as relevant for parents, carers, employees with special needs and senior employees.

TRANSNATIONAL ACTIONS

→ Among the initiatives undertaken by the national social partners, either jointly or unilaterally, it is relevant to signal those **developed at transnational level**, in some cases with the involvement of international institutions, the EU-level cross-sectoral social partners and other stakeholders. Both sides of industry felt the need to engage in transnational projects, round tables, debates, develop cross-border case studies and comparisons, undertake the EU-wide exchanges of good practices. Original analyses as well as assessments of already undertaken strategies across the EU were discussed by experts and practitioners willing to re-evaluate them in the light of the AFA-AAIA. The transnational dimension played a crucial role for social partners to deeply understand the EU level agreement and enable their constituencies in different countries across different policy dimensions to design tailored measures aimed at implementing it.

In **Poland** in April 2018, NSZZ Solidarność together with European Centre for Workers Question (EZA) from Germany, organized an international conference, during which various aspects of the European agreement were discussed and analysed with the participation of experts and social partners from Poland and abroad.

In 2019, NSZZ Solidarność in partnership with the Lewiatan Confederation has launched a project co-financed from the EC budget line: "Initiating of activities for implementation of the Autonomous Framework Agreement on AAIA" with partners from Italy, Latvia, Belgium, Romania and North Macedonia. The main objective of the project was to make it easier for the social partners to implement the European agreement and also to exchange good practices (including the analysis of 36 case studies). The parallel task was to undertake training activities on the basis of training module prepared by Polish Central Institute for Labour Protection (CIOP).

In 2020 the Lewiatan Confederation discussed the autonomous framework agreement on active ageing at a meeting of the HR Directors' Council in the Confederation Lewiatan, experts have taken up the issue at many international and national conferences. Also in 2020, the Lewiatan Confederation started to participate in the international project "Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life", devoted to the improvement of working conditions, dissemination of lifelong learning and activities in the area of labour market policy for the promotion of active ageing and employability of older people (55+). Unlike scientific projects, this initiative focused more on a practical evaluation of already undertaken strategies and measures and their adaptation to the real possibilities of the (very diverse) labour markets of the Baltic Sea countries. A working group on age management and working conditions is chaired by the Confederation Lewiatan.

In **Portugal**, AEP, member of CIP, conceived and executed the project "EMPREENDER 45-60: A Strategy to Support Senior Entrepreneurship in the North Region". The Department of Training and Knowledge from AEP also regularly participated in national or international events dealing with the subject, such as, for example the "Active Aging - Challenges and Opportunities" seminar held in Aveiro by the IEFP in 2017, which prepared the debate

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) under the theme “A Sustainable Society for All Ages - Realizing the Potential of Longevity”.

In **Hungary** the first important help for the trade unions’ implementation action was to get acquainted with the guide prepared by the ETUC, which made useful suggestions to facilitate the transposition of the framework agreement at national level, taking into account the views of workers. The first decentralized international seminar organized by the ETUC in Budapest on 1-2 March 2018, which brought together trade union representatives and experts from 14 EU Member States, as well as representatives of the ETUC Youth Committee and the Senior Citizens’ Organization - FERPA, also assisted in the interpretation and practical implementation of the Framework Agreement. The presentations and subsequent discussions were given and led by ETUC and ETUI experts. A representative of one of the European employers’ organizations, CEEP, also attended the seminar and gave a presentation on employers’ perspectives. The aim of the seminar was to emphasize the importance of intergenerational working relationships through a detailed knowledge and analysis of the content of the framework agreement. Member organizations were also informed about the material of the seminar. The results of analyses and research materials prepared within the framework of previous projects on a similar topic could be learned and used in the adoption of the joint agreement (e.g. the 2013 project of the Works’ Councils on employment opportunities for aging workers).

In **Hungary** workers’ representatives have also taken part in a number of international events on the subject (e.g. the seminar organized by the ETUC in Brussels from 31 May to 1 June 2018, or the seminars organized by the Italian and Polish trade unions.)

The most important project initiated and implemented by **Hungarian** employers was the EU Commission project they won in 2018 - “Bridging the AGE GAP development of social partner initiatives for managing age-related challenges”, which aimed to help national transposition of the framework agreement. The project involved employers’ organizations from seven countries. The program included a large-scale, science-based study of employers’ and employees’ experiences of intergenerational collaboration in the field of the best corporate and collective bargaining practices. The questionnaire used in the project was also completed by union leaders and other workers alongside employers of businesses of different sizes.

The results of this research represented an important starting point for the future implementation of the autonomous framework agreement. The knowledge related to the topic is also expanded by the serious professional studies mapping the international and the Hungarian legal solutions prepared within the framework of the project. The results of the research were shared by the employers and discussed with the trade unions in an online consultation meeting, and the trade unions were also invited to the final international conference at the end of the research.

The **Latvian** social partners are participating in the international project “Initiating activities for implementation of the AFA-AAIA”. The main activities, among others, include: organisations of the national negotiation workshop aimed at continuation of the AFA-AAIA implementation at the national level with the participation of social partners and state authorities (October 2020); development of the joint Action Plan of national social partners for practical implementation of the AFA- AAIA at the national level in 2021 as well as development of draft agreement between the social partners on AFA-AAIA. It is worth noting that the international project titled “Ageing Workforce – An Opportunity for Companies” was realised between 2007 and 2008 by employers’ organisations from Slovenia,

the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia and Austria. It was run by ZDS Slovenia in cooperation with the SPCR, MGYOSZ, RÚZ, IV and HUP. The objective of the project was to prepare confederations' positions to the possible ways of addressing evident disproportions in the age structure of employees and expected demands of manufacturing. The work done within the framework of the above-mentioned project turned out to be very valuable for implementation of the AFA-AAIA agreement 10 years later.

● Implementation of actions related to the five topics of the agreement

A. Strategic assessments of workforce demography

Strategic assessments of workforce demography, carried out and periodically updated at the appropriate levels, in accordance with national practices and procedures as well as company level practices, are crucial to design effective tools for age management. Such assessments by social partners/management are functional to develop tools tailored and adapted to the needs of both workers and enterprises, including the SMEs.

Actions related to this part of the agreement were implemented in different ways and at different levels.

The **German** joint initiative "Shaping Work, Securing the Future" encourages stakeholders to focus on challenges deriving from demographic change. Three initiatives are particularly noteworthy in this respect: "Das Demographie Netzwerk" is a network of around 300 companies and institutions with more than two million workers, aiming to actively shape demographic change and help companies prepare for and adjust to an ageing workforce. Another project, "unternehmensWert.Mensch", specifically aims to promote future-oriented human resources policies in companies. A main objective of the programme is to empower SMEs, including skilled craft companies, to respond adequately to demographic change, alongside with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the financial support of the European Social Fund. The initiative „Offensive Mittelstand“ also offers support to SMEs and skilled craft companies in various areas, including demographic consulting.

In **Austria** the social partners developed some demography counselling services, made available on their website devoted to the contents of the agreement. A series of videos and informative material has been developed and is constantly updated.

The **Bulgarian** social partners have developed a project funded by the Ministry of Labour focusing on the core topics of the autonomous framework agreement and including research and strategic assessment of the demographic characteristics of the workers on a branch and regional level. Based on official statistical data, employers' representatives in consultations with trade unions (CITUB) have created a pilot instrument for current and projected age pyramid, which is to be available for members of employers' and trade unions' organisations involved in the project, both at the national and a sectorial level. The aim is to provide the social partners with effective and up-to-date tool to support negotiation processes, contributions to state policies, as well as their own ones, related to the demographic issues. Research on the generational characteristics of the workforce will particularly focus on values and life priorities, motivation, behavioural models, attitude of the different generations of workers towards labour and trainings, new technologies and organizational change, challenges and difficulties at the workplace, etc. The research will be conducted by the Bulgarian Industry Association (BIA) and will form a basis for dialogue and discussion between project partners at a dedicated

round table. The aim is to reach a wide consensus on new policies, programs and practical tools that will be developed, tested and implemented in pilot sectors and companies participating in the project.

Based on the outcomes of the research, the project partners will jointly draft sector specific strategic documents for social partnership, programmes and samples of clauses to be enshrined in the collective agreements in five to ten branches, in order to implement the agreed measures and concrete instruments. Additionally, the sectoral programmes envisage concrete measures to be implemented on a sectoral level via joint consultation and exchange of information arising from a strategic assessment of the demographic structure. The core of the debate will be on representativeness and protection of the generational interests in the industrial relations and social dialogue; awareness raising, increase of involvement and competency on age related issues and the generation differences at the work place; integration of age diversity in the HR policies of the companies; organisation of work towards more productive and valuable work life; working environment ensuring health and safety, adapted to the needs of different generations at the work place.

The assessment of the workforce demography is highly strategic for supporting the employment of older workers and prolonging their professional activity, which is a recurrent priority for social partners as well as for governments. While the examples below are not dedicated measures/tools to conduct strategic assessment of the workforce, they are important examples of more generic actions to implement the agreement, in particular in terms of supporting employability and retention of older workers, including through improvement of their working conditions. The concerns addressed by these actions are double fold: on the one hand, there is the shrinking of the workforce related to the demographic trends; on the other, the need is coupled to maximise the labour market potential to include and retain workers until the statutory retirement age. Maximising the inclusiveness of the labour markets and ensuring the active population a full career path in good health until retirement - as per the primary aim of the EU agreement - brings social partners and public authorities to enhance the labour market participation of the age cohort 55+. Important actions target long-term unemployed and strategies for job retention and employability until the legal retirement age. Such measures may also imply actions by others, including public financial support through investment plans in skills, active labour market policies and temporary fiscal aid to companies.

The **Finnish** social partners' joint recommendations for a "Job Life Cycle Model" foresee the development of individual or group career planning and occupational well-being. This model includes actions aimed at prolonging the career and transfer of knowledge; they are monitored through the development reviews at different stages of the career. The relevant measures include, among others, creation of teamwork space, the analysis of the present situation and the development of company level age management plans. They also foresee job and task re-assignment and modifications, in order to prevent loss of work ability. In this perspective, the knowledge of the actual task requirements and accurate risk assessment is needed. The improvement of the capacity to cope with the workload and decrease strain can be achieved via instruments such as job rotation, pair work, flexible work arrangements. The measures also recommend considering systematically workers' suggestions to modify and improve their tasks, and to monitor how the possibly suggested modifications are successfully executed. In Poland a specific point of the agreement signed in June 2020 foresees the joint identification of good and bad practices and legislative initiatives aimed at promoting "virtuous" companies in job

retention of older workers – for example via the evaluation of certain practices in the awarding procedures related to public procurement.

The **Portuguese** tripartite political commitment signed in April 2019 goes in a similar direction: the national strategy aims at including into the labour market people looking for their first job and long or very long-term unemployed, aged 45 or more, and is based on public incentives to companies hiring them with open-ended contracts.

In the **Netherlands** a substantial approach to active ageing- related aspects has been adopted since almost a decade, in relation to the adoption of the 2010 and 2011 pension reforms. With effect from 1 June 2021, sectors are able to make use of the Customised Arrangement for Sustainable Employability and Early Retirement (MDIEU), laid down in the June 2019 Pension Agreement. This arrangement makes at least EUR 250 million in co-financing available for implementing sustainable development schemes for workers. A further 750 million euros maximum is available for companies and sectors encountering problems with workers who perform “demanding work”; this funding, distributed in the form of subsidies, is meant to allow workers who wish to retire early to do so by mutual agreement. This funding scheme runs from 2021 to 2025. In advance of the MDIEU funding application, 70 social partner alliances have prepared sector analyses in specific sectors. On 1 January 2020, a scheme went into effect that specifically helps SMEs invest in employee development so as to foster sustainable employability, including in other positions, with respect to other duties, and in other roles within or outside their own organisation. This SLIM Arrangement (Subsidy Arrangement for Learning and Development in SMEs) makes EUR 48 million available annually for that purpose.

The Covid-19 package of support measures in the **Netherlands** also includes agreements on flanking policy for those who risk losing their job because of the crisis. The ‘Learns through Sector Customization Temporary Regulation’, for example, has been in effect since 15 March 2021 with the aim of supporting ‘from work-to-work’ transitions and retraining programmes. Cooperating social partners, training and development funds and other parties can apply for subsidies to co-finance training, development advice, accreditation of prior learning (APL), and counselling for workers who are at risk of losing their job.

Increasing employment rate of older workers is also a part of the national policy agenda in the **Netherlands**. Already in 2017 – the year of signing the Autonomous Framework Agreement - its implementation had led to an improvement in the labour market position and to a significant increase in the employment rate of older workers. In addition, the Policy Agenda 2020 had also led to collective agreements targeting all stages of life, such as a ‘vitality budget’ and a ‘generation pact’.

In **Spain**, as per the 2018 new Plan de Choque por el Empleo Juvenil 2019-2021, the Public Employment Services will promote the “VerA” initiative. According to it, retired experts accompany the unemployed in order to provide didactic support during their training. Support is also provided at the start of vocational training activities. It is a volunteer-based programme and will be disseminated through professional organizations and youth associations. Retired experts will be those who in their working life have developed qualified technical skills and who have human capital that they want to share with the unemployed.

Along the same lines, the Council of Ministers also approved in April 2019 the “*Reincorpora-t*” Plan for the period 2019-2021, to improve the employability of the long-term unemployed, strengthening labour market integration and promoting preventive actions to avoid long-term unemployment. Among other measures, the agreement foresees the assessment processes, targeting both employed and unemployed workers (in this case with the support of the Public Employment Services), to design of training objectives within personalized employment paths. Several actions aimed at professional learning, training and retraining will be developed specifically for the long-term unemployed. The aim would be to articulate a system of lifelong learning throughout the working life that will allow to face a continuous process of change and transformation, which will be a guarantee for both workers and employers. The Public Employment Services will facilitate access to the training actions and will analyse with the participants their relevance in the process of reincorporation into the labour market.

In **Denmark** a think tank focusing on retention and improved conditions for seniors was established by the former Danish government to secure healthier and more productive lives for senior workers. This think tank consists of social partners, researchers and stakeholder organisations, e.g. pension funds. The think tank investigates how to increase the employability and retention of seniors and how the employment efforts for unemployed seniors can be strengthened. In November 2019, the think tank published its 20 recommendations to provide better opportunities and conditions for a long working life.

In **Belgium**, in its opinion n° 2.108 of 18 December 2018 relating to the Deal for employment (agreement concluded in July 2018 within the government with the aim of improving the employment rate in Belgium), the National Labour Council expressed its favourable opinion on a federal government measure granting disability allowance for workers who continue to be employed after reaching the statutory retirement age. This measure entered into force at the end of April 2019.

A series of actions aimed at fostering job retention and employment of 55+ workers have been developed also at regional level. In the **Walloon region**, the *Impulse 55 years+* measure has been adopted in the context of an Employment and Training Pact concluded in 2016 between the Walloon government and the social partners. It provides for a reduction in employers’ social contributions for workers aged 55 and over (various amount depending on the age of the workers). In addition, the Government and the social partners agreed on the need to maintain the Professional Experience Fund, which supports projects aimed at improving working conditions of older workers. Furthermore, a broad assessment of employment and training measures was carried out in 2020 by the Economic, Environmental and Social Council of Wallonia (EESCW) on the base of which a reform of employment aids is on tracks.

Since January 1, 2019, in the **German-speaking community in Belgium**, the AktiF and AktiF+ schemes allow () granting of subsidies, if specific categories of job seekers are hired, including some elderly applicants. In total, 20% of the jobs subsidized through these two schemes relate to workers between 45 and 54 years old and 12% relate to workers between 55 and 65 years old.

In **Estonia** the social partners were keen to transpose the EU level agreement as soon as possible in order to offset the lowering employment rates and the workforce shortages, as well as to accompany the pension reforms. They deemed that the AFA-AAIA efficiently addresses the needs of retaining older workers on the labour market

until the legal retirement age. AFA-AAIA was also perceived as crucial in addressing such topics as re-skilling, adaptation of work organisation to the workforce demography, and counterbalancing the high youth unemployment rates.

B. Health and safety at the workplace

In order to anticipate, prevent and assess risks for health and safety at the workplace, in accordance with the EU framework directive, tailored interventions are reported by social partners. These interventions aim at realising practicable adjustments to the working environment, they may be necessary to prevent or reduce potential physical or mental demands on workers, to allow them to be safe and healthy while at work and to remain in employment until the legal retirement age.

Social partners are committed to spreading the knowledge about “good work”. For example, the **Austrian** Chamber of Labour organised a one-day seminar for safety representatives on good work for workers of all ages in Vienna in January 2021. Also in Austria, a three half-day virtual conferences for executives from specific companies (a textile company, a crane enterprise and a hospital) have been organized. Within the framework of these conferences there were also initiatives available for workers: a 30-minute video has been recorded (the crane enterprise) and several conferences have been organized (the hospital). Some members of the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV) in Carinthia started the cooperation “NewWorkTransform@IV” with the Carinthia University of Applied Science to discuss such topics as age-appropriate work and generations.

In **Denmark** social partners are involved in research work in the field of securing healthier and more productive lives for senior workers. They have been a part of the think tank focusing on retention and improved conditions for seniors established by the former Danish government. In November 2019, the think tank published its 20 recommendations to provide better opportunities and conditions for a long working life. The Danish employment statistics show that the age group representing 55-64- year- old workers has increased its level of participation from 65.8 % in 2013 to 75.1 % in 2019.

Apart from research, disseminating the knowledge and drafting recommendations the national social partners address health and safety issues through their collective agreements. For example, the **Belgian** social partners have concluded the collective agreement no 104 that establishes a complex employment plan for older workers in each company. The plan includes, among others, prevention measures and practical solutions to remedy physical and psychosocial obstacles hindering job retention. Another Belgian initiative is the recommendation no 20 of 2008 aimed at transition from jobs with heavy workload to lighter jobs. This recommendation encourages sectors and companies to develop a proactive human resources management which takes into account the age of the workers and the quality of the work. In addition, the government introduced a measure which allows workers to receive an indemnity exempt from social security contributions granted in compensation for the loss of salary in case of transition to a lighter job. This measure applies, if a sector/company collective agreement has been concluded or in cases when modifications of the company’s work regulations have been introduced. This measure is in force as of 1 January 2019 and three sectors have concluded relevant collective agreements. At the sectoral level, 0,10% of the total wage bill must be spent on measures for vulnerable groups. It is possible to use these funds to lighten the working time by financing time credit measures for workers over 50 years old. In **Denmark** initiatives addressing sustaining flexible, secure and healthy working

conditions for senior workers are one of the everyday topics of social dialogue. Senior schemes have been introduced in the collective agreements for the private and public sectors. These give senior workers a right to reduced and more flexible working time. The collective agreements also contain paragraphs on senior strategies aimed at retraining senior workers.

Social partners are involved in implementing initiatives to help returning to work after illness or accommodate needs of workers with chronic diseases. In **Belgium** the practice of a voluntary return of workers with a health problem is monitored by the platform bringing together stakeholders, including social partners. Additional measures have been foreseen for 2021. In Flanders two action plans have been also drawn up in relation to people suffering long term illness. In **Estonia** the issues related to health at work, the provision of rehabilitation services and the adaptation of jobs to the health needs of workers are dealt in the framework of the Unemployment Insurance Fund Council, with the participation of social partners. Additionally, the **Estonian** social partners' national cross-sectoral agreement transposing the EU level one focuses on the need to assess the health of workers in the labour market, the provision of rehabilitation services and the adaptation of jobs to the health needs of workers. Similar measures have been undertaken in **Bulgaria**. The sectoral programmes define conditions for retraining or returning back to work of workers with chronic diseases.

Some measures have been implemented to address the need to transfer staff from heavy duty jobs to jobs with a lighter workload at some point of their professional career. In **Belgium**, since 2008, the NLC has addressed sectors and companies with recommendations relating to transitions from jobs with a heavy workload to lighter jobs (see a detailed description above). This measure applies if a collective agreement has been concluded at the level of the sector or the company or in cases where modifications of the company's work regulations have been introduced, in accordance with the collective agreement n ° 104. On the basis of this measure, three sectors concluded a collective agreement providing for a compensation for lightening the workload.

Mental health is also an issue of concern for national social partners. In order to address the issue of burnout, the **Belgian** social partners, following their 2017-2018 inter-professional agreement, have drawn up a comprehensive approach and a framework for the launch of pilot projects intended for the primary prevention of burnout. So far two cycles of projects have been carried out. The evaluation after the first cycle was conducted in the first quarter of 2021 and has been used by the social partners to refine their approach and to draw from this first feedback from the field several conclusions and operational recommendations for sectors and companies. An overall evaluation of the second cycle is expected at the end of the first half of 2022. In the same context, the social partners have drawn up, within the National Labour Council, a comprehensive approach and a framework for pilot projects with a view to developing innovative forms of work organization. In March 2021, the Council asked the government to implement this approach in a royal decree, in order to launch the pilot projects.

In their work social partners have addresses occupational and safety issues related to teleworking, for example in **Estonia**, where they perceive it to be an issue of a shared responsibility.

In **Germany**, the Round Table "Active Ageing" contributes to taking care of health aspects on the way to retirement. The Round Table was set up by the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in 2015 to create a sustainable framework for

healthy and active ageing. It focuses on tapping the potential of the older generations as well as managing the transition from working life to retirement. Social partners have been actively involved in this work. In 2016 the Round Table was awarded the status of “National Reference for Excellence in promoting Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing” by the European Commission. Furthermore, social partners are part of the joint German occupational safety and health initiative and the national prevention strategy, both contributing to keeping older workers in the labour force longer. The tripartite approach has been chosen in **Hungary** as the government is deemed to play an important role in fostering ‘active aging across generations’, especially in the field of health and safety at work. The National Committee for Occupational Safety and Health has conducted a study on maintaining health of older workers and organized an international conference with participation of social partners (“Healthy Workplaces for All Ages” held in Budapest in April 2017).

Widely understood health and safety considerations are the subject of collective agreements in **Denmark** (the municipality and regional sector), **Belgium** and **Poland**. The **Polish** agreement on active ageing of 2020 includes the solutions aimed at facilitating active ageing. It is assumed that the Active Ageing Agreement of the Polish social partners may stimulate the content of the provisions of collective labour agreements, with measures such as: introducing additional break from work for older workers, increasing autonomy of working time for older workers, promoting health in the workplace and beyond, for example by conducting health risk audit.

Health and safety at work is also one of the issues regulated in **Germany** by company level collective agreements. On the basis of such agreements, companies in participation with social partners can develop demographics-proof human resources policies. For example, the 2018 agreement from the chemical sector stipulates the amount that can be used for various purposes, among others flexible working time, health, additional nursing care insurance or company pension system. The railway and transport union EVG has concluded a collective agreement on demography with the Deutsche Bahn Group. Active ageing is a core component of this agreement and measures to preserve employability, age-appropriate workplace design and training provisions have been agreed. In addition, the collective agreement provides for a demographic model, special options for part-time retirement and measures to promote good health. Comprehensive programmes to promote workers’ health and longer working lives is also a part of collective agreements in the public sector. Apart from collective agreements, there is a wide range of other relevant actions such as guidelines concerning “health management” to define minimum standards for a systematic transfer of knowledge and experience. Seminars on maintaining health and performance in the workplace, coping with stress or the age-appropriate work organisation as means of preventive health-oriented action are also organized in the German public sector.

The **Dutch** social partners value appropriate arrangements for employees who, due to the nature of their work (physically or mentally demanding), have been unable to prepare adequately for an increase in the retirement age. In collective agreements, these arrangements often go hand-in-hand with commitments regarding sustainable employability. The goal is for all employees to be fit and healthy when they reach retirement age. The Dutch social partners believe that a policy aimed at ensuring fit and healthy retirement starts from the moment workers enter the labour market.

In **Sweden** activities relevant to ensuring healthy and productive working lives are available through Prevent, a non-profit organisation owned by the three labour market's partners: Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SN), the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Council for Negotiation and Co-operation (PTK). For the private sector Prevent is the leading provider of knowledge and training in the field of health and safety. Various materials, for example checklists and tools easy to use at the workplaces, are available on the website.

Additionally, *Avsiktsförklaring* is a joint venture between SALAR – the **Swedish** association of local and regional authorities and its trade union counterparts to improve health and work environment and reduce sick absences in the local and regional public sector. The written guide “Collaboration for healthier workplaces – a social partners’ project to prevent ill-health” describes how the social partners in municipalities and regions have worked together in recent years. Their aim was to create a structure for long-term and sustainable work environment and good working conditions. The guide focused on eight areas. Their joint venture *Suntarbetsliv* (“Healthy working lives”) played a central role in this work. The eight areas are: governance and management for sustainable health and reduced sick leave, local support package, strengthen managers’ conditions in work environment work, better use of occupational health care, take advantage of employees’ commitment to reduced sick leave, strengthened collaboration and higher quality in the rehabilitation process, new ways back from sick leave and activity-specific initiatives. The guide wants to facilitate dialogue and collaboration, present support functions and tools that have been developed within the framework of the eight areas of the “Intent of work for healthier workplaces in Municipalities and Regions” and serve as support and inspiration. In this way the Swedish social partners worked closely together with transition and work environment. They presented their work in the joint final report on the social partners’ “Intent of work for healthier workplaces in Municipalities and Regions” which was submitted to the Swedish Social Insurance Minister on 19 May 2021.

In **Bulgaria**, while preparing to implement the AFA-AAIA, social partners have conducted research and analysis of practice from other EU Member States. The analysis concerned policy documents, solutions related to social dialogue and collective bargaining as well as concrete HR tools. It contributed to creating a better working environment, adapted to age characteristics of different generations of employees working together, including ergonomics. Good practices on prevention and management of age-related stress were also the point of interest. The project also led to publishing six handbooks, out of which three are dedicated to health and safety at work. These are: handbook for adapting the workplace and business activities to the needs of workers with chronic diseases, electronic instrument for risk assessment of health and safety of the workplace in consistent with age and electronic instrument for assessment of the factors in the workplace leading to professional burnout.

C. Skills and competence management

Fostering workers’ employability and maximising enterprises’ human capital requires continuing skills development and lifelong learning. Social partners’ have a role to facilitate fair access to training for workers of all ages, according to national practices and procedures. At the same time workers should be encouraged to actively participate in the training.

A proactive approach to skills and competence management can be found, for example, in **Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands**. The **German** National Skills Strategy promotes the culture of lifelong learning and the proactive approach to maintaining and updating employee qualifications and skills as well as supporting them in case of career changes. The future Qualification-Employment Strategy of **the Brussels Capital Region** is under development. It focuses on strategies to retain older workers into the labour market, based on skills evaluation and promotion. In the **Netherlands**, at the regional level, 'mobility teams' have been set up to give employees extra guidance and, in some cases, also offer career advice, training/retraining, practical training in VET and help with debt. These include both benefit-to-work and work-to-work schemes.

Measures for (re)qualification strategy and a support system for retraining or reorientation towards jobs where labour is in short supply have been included in the Recovery and Resilience Plan of **Belgium**. Moreover, regional approaches have been adopted in Belgium. **The Brussels Capital Region** has focused on strategies to retain older workers into the labour market, based on skills evaluation and the promotion. In **Flanders**, the framework of the agreements concluded between the Flemish social partners and the Flemish government, includes several initiatives aimed at keeping workers at work and at stimulating lifelong learning. These measures include notably skills assessment, development of a training and career account and creation of a lifelong learning platform. The Flanders region has also focused on access to digital technologies, telework and employment of people with long term illnesses. The **Walloon region** has started a reform of its employment-oriented measures, including training of workers to help them to remain in the labour market in their current job or in another position.

In **Luxembourg** social partners stress the importance of drafting effective training plans and point out they should include the offer for digital and green skills. Digital skills have also been in the centre of attention in **Austria**. Two scientific institutes (öibf and ibw) have elaborated a contribution to www.arbeitundalter.at on "Acquisition of digital skills for all generations, with a special focus on the needs of generation 50 plus". In their publication they explain what digital skills are, which digital skills are particularly needed and how job profiles change. They also address the challenge of a digital divide and present digital competence model. Practical examples are offered to illustrate how to teach digital skills in the most effective way as well as examples from chosen sectors to explain sector-specific issues (amongst others, tourism, construction, trade sectors). Additionally, the Federation of Austrian Industries in Upper Austria is part of an INTERREG (Community Initiative of the European Regional Development Fund) project called "eDigistars". The project is focused on the (long-term) unemployed people of the generation 50+. The aim is to educate this category of persons with sufficient IT and digital skills to reintegrate them in the world of work. Skills are not the only requirement to ensure digital literacy: the accessibility of equipment to follow e-learning courses has been mentioned by the **Portuguese** employers.

The question of persistent inequalities in access to ICTs has been also addressed in **Belgium**. Social partners have observed that the digitalisation policy should pay attention to digital inclusion, in order not to deepen existing socioeconomic and generational inequalities. It has been even more important during the current sanitary crisis: the collective agreement no 149 regulated a recommended or a compulsory telework. In Flanders, the "Digibanken" project was planned to be developed in the context of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, with a view to boost access to digital technology. The Walloon region revises its initiatives aimed at facilitating the transfer of knowledge and experience from older workers to younger workers. In **Estonia** the DigiABC project,

aimed at developing digital skills for industrial sector, focuses on development of the digital skills of elderly workers.

In the **Netherlands** lifelong learning development is perceived as crucial for employment sustainability. Training efforts addressed to older workers can also be strengthened by ensuring transparency of the systems as well as providing guidance. The already mentioned German National Skills Strategy foresees reaching out with the training offer to the underrepresented groups, including older workers. The 2020 Training Plan in **the Brussels Capital Region** aims at increasing skills validation and activation allowance.

In some Member States social partners cooperate with their respective governments in the area of worker training (for example in the **Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark or Spain**). The EU funds, namely ESF, can be used to finance relevant measures. In **Germany** the ESF is used to finance a joint initiative to secure skills and adapt to demographic change (the project is called “Secure skilled labour: train further and promote equality” and is addressed to representatives of vulnerable groups, including older workers). A similar initiative is realised in **Belgium** at the sectoral level and is financed by employers: an amount of 0.10% of the total wage bill must be devoted to measures in favour of “at risk” groups. In the **Czech Republic** a special Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs project “Internships in Companies – Learning through Experience” aims to support the training of persons older than 50. The implementation of the pilot testing of a new model of support for older people approaching retirement age in the labour market called “generational tandem” where the employer can obtain a wage contribution from labour office for his/her current employee who is approaching retirement age, if he/she also creates a new job for job seekers with low or no work experience.

Initiatives aimed at education and raising awareness can be found in national social partners actions. The **Dutch** social partners are committed to educating employers and workers’ representatives on sustainable employability in practice: in 2021 they organized webinars on training and development funds. The **Polish** social partners agreement suggests that companies that promote solutions in line with their active ageing agreement should be given special privileges in tendering for public contracts. The **Austrian** web portal www.arbeitundalter.at includes suggestions and tips how to successfully implement lifelong learning in the company as well as how different generations can learn from each other. The role of work councils in promoting lifelong learning at the company level is also discussed. In **Finland** trade unions have been involved in drafting international ISO Standard on Guidelines for an age-inclusive workforce.

In **Sweden** skills provision is organised through a comprehensive programme called Sobona. The programme provides tools and inspiration for diversity and inclusion. An inclusive workplace welcomes all those with the right skills, among them, for example, immigrants, young people, people older than 55 and people with disabilities. Sobona collaborates with trade unions Kommunal, Seko and Transport, and also with several state authorities and interest organisations from different branches of the industry. Additionally, Sobona operates professional validation projects in a number of sectors. The result of the validation proves the skills and competences of professionals independent on the way in which they have been acquired. Sobona offers a self-developed supervisor training consisting of three parts: web training, handbook and workshops for member companies. An important part of the supervisory training is to make the workplace learning visible and to convey knowledge from experienced staff, for example from “a soon-to-be retired” employee to a new entrant. Sobona offers a half-day workshop in

inclusive skills provision for management. Wider recruitment and diversity are important in strategic skills provision, especially when there is a shortage of skills and in the case of new generations entering the workplace.

In the **Czech region** of Moravia-Silesia the “Go on! 50+” project is being implemented. The project is aimed to support job seekers registered at the labour office, which fall into a category “difficult to place” due to older age. The candidates will have the opportunity to complete a set of advisory and educational activities within the project (for example work diagnostics, retraining, individual counselling) that promote employability and reintegration into the labour market.

Social partners are involved in initiatives addressed to SMEs. For example, as of January 2020, the scheme supporting SMEs in investing in their workers’ development operates in the **Netherlands**. Its aim is to foster sustainable employability, including in other positions, with respect to other duties, and in other roles within or outside their own organisation. This *SLIM Arrangement* (Subsidy Arrangement for Learning and Development in SMEs) makes EUR 48 million available annually for that purpose. Across the EU there are also cases of other actors involved in supporting SMEs in securing skilled labour and managing diversity (RKW Competence Centre, *RKW Kompetenzzentrum* in **Germany**).

Training and development of older workers is one of the topics of collective agreements signed at the national, sectoral and/or company levels. In **Denmark** the initiatives include the Parliament agreement on more years on the labour market and the tripartite agreements on retraining and lifelong learning. International cooperation facilitates exchange of practices and concrete solutions. One of the objectives of the initiative of social partners from the **Baltic Sea region** titled “Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life” is dissemination of lifelong learning and promotion of concrete solutions to support active ageing and employability of those over 55.

D. Work organisation for healthy and productive working lives

Social partners agreements and actions at different levels aim to support and encourage enterprises to adapt work organisation, in accordance with the needs of enterprises and workers, with the purpose of fostering healthy and productive working lives in a life course perspective.

This is a recurrent aim tackled via agreements at different levels. Discussion about new forms of pre-/early retirement protection are also included in bipartite and tripartite agreements deriving from the AFA-AAIA.

In **Portugal** a company practice (BIAL) focuses on the assessment of the type of work performed by the workers, to verify if some adjustments are needed – change of tasks/responsibility being the common solutions, where necessary. Skills assessment is also included in the practice.

In **Estonia** social partners, involved in the state pension reform, propose in their transposition agreement to identify ways to make retirement more flexible by eliminating the obstacles to voluntary part-time work. Social partners have also proposed to the government to abolish the minimum social tax on pensioners’ wages in order to encourage participation of the elderly in the workforce with a partial workload. The Estonian social partners are committed to work jointly within the Unemployment Insurance Fund Council to promote policies aimed at assessing issues and needs of the workforce in relation to

health and work adaptation; raising the education and skill levels through training of workers; providing support to companies for developing training measures for workers when newly hired or in case of changes in the company's economic activity.

The measures undertaken in **Denmark** target flexible retirement schemes, generational change schemes, the possibility for reduced working time, in connection with a reform slightly increasing the legal retirement age on a regular basis. Every five years, the Parliament passes a law gradually increasing the retirement age, on the basis of the development in the life expectancy of the population. Moreover, the renewed agreement between the Danish social partners adds, among others, a more individual approach to senior workers. Social partners have agreed to work further on this topic.

In **Denmark**, the municipality and regional sector has a Framework agreement for senior workers dealing with e.g. working conditions, health and safety considerations, competences and the organisation of workflows. Additionally, as a result of the collective bargaining negotiations in 2021, the social partners in the state sector have agreed on a "strengthened senior effort". The effort aims at supporting a good working life for senior workers, to make it more attractive to remain in employment, and to ensure the workforce remains active, qualified, flexible and in-demand. The state sector also has a framework agreement for seniors which allows the local partners to establish senior schemes on e.g. reduced working hours or a retirement scheme.

Securing flexible and improved conditions are the subject of tripartite initiatives in Denmark. They can include such measures as possibility for a reduced working time, flexible retirement scheme, introducing innovative work organisation, a system of bonuses for older workers who voluntarily modify their working conditions, for example shift from team work to day work or continue working while being entitled to early retirement.

In **Belgium** sectoral measures relevant to the implementation of a national collective agreement relate to a plan for the employment of older workers. This employment plan can relate to a large range of issues as, for example, the selection and hiring process of workers, career building and coaching, creation of internal transfers opportunities aimed at providing the older workers with new functions more adapted to changes in their skills and abilities, introduction of possible changes in working time and working conditions, workers' health, including prevention and opportunities to remedy physical and psychosocial obstacles hindering job retention. The assessment of this collective agreement (2016) highlighted the priority attention paid to maintenance and improvement of the employment rate of older workers through a combination of actions from all relevant actors (employers, workers, social partners, public authorities).

In **Belgium** many sectors have developed initiatives and good practices via biennial sectoral agreements (2017-2018 and 2019-2020). The measures put in place under these agreements relate to bonuses for older workers which are voluntary subject to career change with modification of working conditions, who shift from team work to day work, as well as they continue to work while they meet the requirements for early retirement; work exemption (hours or days) with maintenance of remuneration; additional days off, depending on the age and seniority of the worker.

Measures to improve employment conditions, including working time arrangements, are often foreseen by the actions to implement the agreement.

For example, introducing additional breaks from work and increasing autonomy of working time for older workers is foreseen by the **Polish** national cross-sectoral agreement, signed in June 2020.

The **Finnish** social partners' joint recommendations for a "Job Life Cycle Model" foresee the development of tailored and flexible working time models. These models, while respecting employers' rights to plan working hours, can simultaneously fulfil the requirements of the business operations and clients, while responding to the needs of the personnel and individual workers. Reacting to the changes of the operating environment through development of flexible working time models can be an integral part of a strategy to increase productivity, accommodate employers' needs and improving well-being of the personnel. Starting from the assumption that "[...] working life quality is an essential factor for extending working careers", the recommendations state that if an employer wishes to establish an efficient age plan, the subsequent actions must respond not only to the employer's own needs, but must also take into account the provisions of sectoral collective agreements.

There are also actions taken regarding working conditions in relation to the ability of older workers to stay in the labour market for longer and the operation of different retirement schemes. This is the case of the bipartite agreement signed in June 2020 in Poland.

In **Spain** the "*Reincorpora-t*" Plan for the period 2019-2021, is the national strategy to improve the employability of the long-term unemployed aged over 45. It contains 63 measures and is aimed at strengthening labour market integration and promoting preventive actions to avoid long-term unemployment. This Plan is accompanied by an overall debate on the needs of elderly people, possible early-retirement after 40 years, the adequacy of pensions and the valorisation of the elderly within the society.

The **Luxembourgish** social partners recognise that measures need to be implemented to make it easier and more attractive for older workers to actively participate and stay in the labour market until the legal retirement age, while taking into account the particular elements and stresses of professions that require early retirement schemes.

In the **Netherlands**, among the national agreements giving concreteness to the principles of the European framework agreement on AFA-AAIA, the 2019 Pension Agreement foresees a provision to introduce a threshold exemption between 2021 and 2025 in respect of the tax penalty for early retirement in accordance with the Early Retirement Scheme (RVU). The threshold exemption (€22,164 annually for a maximum of three years prior to the state pension age) was introduced on 1 January 2021 and runs until 31 December 2025. This has led to arrangements in almost 80 collective agreements about early retirement options.

Another arrangement in the 2019 Pension Agreement foresees that, as of 1 January 2021, workers will be allowed to save 100 weeks of extra-statutory leave without the employer having to levy tax on this. This used to be 50 weeks. This arrangement makes it easier for workers to plan (the end of) their careers as it suits their needs, obviously in close consultation with their employer.

In **Belgium**, in connection with the biannual agreements setting the priorities and activities of the social partners at inter-professional level, several collective agreements have been concluded within the National Labour Council for the periods 2015-2016, 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 (some were even running until June 30, 2021) relating to time credit at the end

of the career. These collective agreements set an inter-professional framework with a view to lowering the minimum age required for end-of-career schemes. These schemes are specifically intended for workers who have a long career, exercise a heavy workload or are employed in a company facing difficulties or undergoing restructuring.

In line with the reforms planned in the government agreement of 30 September 2020, the Annual Employment Conference was planned for September 2021 focused on policies for a smooth career ending. To this end, the government has asked the social partners, at the level of the Group of Ten (which brings together the leaders of employers' organizations and trade unions at federal level), to propose an action plan to be operationalized by the social partners, taking into account social and financial sustainability issues.

Since April 2019 the disability allowance has been available in Belgium for those workers who continue to be employed after reaching statutory retirement age. In the Walloon region, the government and social partners agreed to maintaining the Professional Experience Fund, which supports projects aimed at improving working conditions of older workers.

The **Estonian** social partners have proposed to abolish the minimum social tax on pensioners' wages in order to encourage part-time participation of the elderly in the workforce.

Work organisation practices aimed at maximising the potential of employees irrespective of age is another theme addressed by some social partners.

In **Portugal**, as a consequence of the AFA-AAIA, the company practice mentioned above (BIAL, pharmaceutical sector) is reported, relating to a policy that expressively promotes hiring policies irrespective of the candidates' age, based on the competences and the skills reported in their CVs. Senior employees, when hired, are also expected to coach employees who are already in the company.

The **Finnish** social partners' joint recommendations for a "Job Life Cycle Model", already mentioned above, foresee the promotion of cooperative skills at the workplace, to create positive attitude towards people of all ages. Extending working careers and simultaneously improving well-being at work remain on the public agenda, as well as on the agenda of many enterprises in Finland. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has started a new national program for active ageing. It covers all aspects of active ageing for senior citizens and some unions are participating in these activities. They are also participating in drafting the international ISO Standard on Guidelines for an age-inclusive workforce.

The **Bulgarian** social partners have designed a model for description, ergonomics and design of the workplace, adapted to different generations and encouraging longer work life and employability.

AFA Insurance is owned by **Sweden's** labour market partners: the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Council for Negotiation and Cooperation (PTK). Employees from the private sector, municipalities and regions are insured. About 150 million SEK annually is devoted to research to improve work environment. A special research program *Hållbart arbetsliv* ("Sustainable working life") was initiated to focus upon the challenges to be met in creating conditions to extend a healthy working life. Several studies are included in the *Hållbart arbetsliv* program.

Two examples of these studies are: “Working place strategies for a sustainable working life – attractive jobs and adjustments of work in relation to the workers’ job abilities” and “Paths to a sustainable digital working life”. The research program was concluded in June 2020 and the results from the different research projects was presented at an online conference on 4 June 2020.

A new research program titled “*Ung i arbetslivet*” (“Young people in working life”) started at the beginning of 2019 in **Sweden**. The programme includes eight different projects. Some topics are relevant for creating conditions for health and productive working lives. The addressed issues include methods to introduce young people into the working life, prevent occupational illnesses and introduce a safe way of working at the workplace. The research programme runs until 2022. The results will be presented at a conference.

Another **Swedish** programme – already mentioned – aiming at improving the work environment is *Suntarbetsliv* (“Healthy working lives”). The programme is created and owned by the social dialogue partners in the public local and regional sector. Managers and safety representatives are the primary audience. The organization has created a web-based work environment training program tailored for the public sector. In addition, a number of tools and checklists for topics such as threats and violence at the workplace, sharps injuries, organizational and social conditions, and running more effective meetings have been created. All materials are available free of charge. News and information describing good examples of collaboration are made available on *Suntarbetsliv*’s website. The idea is that the systematic work environment management will affect the operations and the workers in a positive way through the whole working life.

Yet another institutional solution is available for the government employees. The **Swedish** Agency for Government Employers; SAGE (*Arbetsgivarverket*) and the unions in the Central Government sector have formed the Central Government Social Partners’ Council, a non-profit association. The main task of the Council is to support social partners at the agency level with implementation of core issues in central agreements or joint positions. Work environment is one of the priority fields on the Agency. In different agreements the social partners have committed to work jointly for healthier and sustainable work life. Based on that, the social partners have started and developed joint projects which are ongoing. Four areas of special interest for promoting sustainable working life have been identified. For each area, the social partners at the local level can apply jointly for a package of services to develop further sustainable working life within their own organization. The social partners signed an agreement in October 2016 on the common work in the field of healthy work lives; the earlier declaration of intent has served as the basis for the agreement.

In **Latvia** the State Employment Agency (NVA) in cooperation the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) and Employers Confederation of Latvia (LDDK) implements the project titled “Support for longer working life”. The aim of the project is to promote working capacity and employment of senior workers; it is to be realised between January 2017 and December 2022. The main activities realised between January and July 2020 included project presentations and discussions on ageing workforce with employers and employees in various regions of the country, updating LBAS and LDDK websites with relevant information, developing informative material for employers on the implementation of age management policy and ageing-related issues.

E. Intergenerational approach

Social partners stress the importance of creating a working environment that facilitates cooperation and talent development. Such an environment contributes to mutual transfer of knowledge and experience between workers from different age groups. Passing the knowledge from mature to younger workers is crucial in preparing companies for outflows of retiring workers.

National contributions reported a few examples of actions to enhance the inter-generational approach. In some countries the social partners and authorities sought cooperation with youth organizations to identify best legislative solutions to challenges of workers of all ages. In some others the actions focused on the workplace, where mentoring and tutoring programs were put in place to ensure transfer of knowledge, skills and company culture.

In **Spain** the new *Plan de Choque por el Empleo Juvenil 2019-2021*, resulting from a social dialogue process, includes important measures to promote the dialogue and transfer of skills between generation. The first measures, “Intergenerational Training Chain” promoted by the Public Employment Services, is designed to avoid training failures. This initiative implied that retired experts accompany the unemployed during their training to provide didactic support and prevent from training failures. The retired experts with technical skills are especially valued. Another Spanish solution that encourages training and knowledge transfer is “relief contract”. Under this measure, knowledge and skills are transferred between a partially retired worker and a worker hired under a “relief contract”. So-called “relief contracts” enable knowledge and skill transfer between the “soon-to-be” retired experienced workers and a new hire.

In **Belgium** the Brussels-Capital Region enabled program “Tutor premium” which is available to employers and foresees training young people on work-study programs. This bonus thus enables workers with the most advanced skills (including older workers) to transfer their knowledge to younger people. Additionally, at the sectoral level, the Royal Decree of 19 February 2013, establishes that an amount of 0.10% of the total wage bill must be devoted to measures in favour of ‘at risk’ groups. This includes projects in enabling transfer of knowledge and experience from older workers to younger workers. Furthermore, the collective agreement number 104 puts tutoring and mentoring of younger workers in practice.

The **Latvian** employers’ organisation, LDDK, together with partners is promoting rising pedagogical competencies of business managers. Intergenerational approach is applied in the process of work-based learning: the experienced professionals are teaching youth in a work environment.

In **Austria**, in cooperation with the demography counselling service, social partners developed seven instructional videos, some of them answering crucial questions such as: “How do baby boomers and generation X learn?”, “How do different generations learn from one another or with one another?”. Additionally, the Young Industry, a sub-organization of the Federation of Austrian Industries in Salzburg, hosted an event called “Age-appropriate working and generations” in December 2020.

In **Germany** an initiative which preceded the framework agreement was set up jointly by Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, with active involvement of social partners in 2015. The Round table on Active Ageing creates a sustainable

framework for healthy and active ageing that focuses on using the potential of older generations. In order to prevent possible shrinking of the workforce in the coming years, the social partners in the public sector developed a planning instrument called “Demographic bridges”. This employment and apprenticeship scheme works towards an aged balanced administration by promoting longer overlaps between expiring and new employment contracts. Thanks to this approach the retiring workers can train new workers over a longer period.

Another joint initiative of the **German** social partners is called “Shaping Work, Securing the Future” and was launched in 2022 with the aim to ensure a new higher quality of work across all ages. The European framework agreement on AAIA further encouraged INQA stakeholders to focus on challenges deriving from demographic change.

In **Estonia** the social partners agreed on training support for the employer for developing knowledge and skills of workers when starting work or adapting to changes in the economic activity of the employer. In 2018 and 2019 the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) joined the employers’ project “Promoting practical learning in society”, which aimed at training company managers and worker representatives to contribute to a better integration of both young and elderly people in companies. In September 2018 EAKL held a conference on collective bargaining, where the topic of active ageing and intergenerational approach in collective agreements was actively discussed, and a good example of the company Swedbank was presented. Additionally, EAKL members took part in Development Program “Development of the Capacity to Protect the Interests of the Elderly” in 2020 – 2021, organized by the Tallinn University.

In **Finland** the state fund program ‘Work 2030’, in which the social partners are involved as key stakeholders, includes the webinar series *Kohti työtä 2030* (‘Towards work 2030’), the social media campaign #muntyö2030 (mywork2030) for young adults and a video series on work life success stories from Finland during the coronavirus crisis. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, with participation of some trade unions, has started a new national program for active ageing that covers same topics as the European autonomous framework agreement.

In **Hungary** the international seminar organised by ETUC with participation of the CEEP, took place in 2018. Its aim was to emphasize the importance of intergenerational working relations. It was done through a detailed analysis of the content of the autonomous framework agreement.

In the **Netherlands** the social partners made several arrangements to prevent emergence of the ‘lost generation’ in the situation when the Covid crisis impacted the working lives, incomes and education of many young people. Additionally, the number of collective agreements including a ‘generation pact’ has increased.

In **Norway** most of the means, tools and measures mentioned in the agreement are already part of the Norwegian legislation or collective agreements.

In **Portugal**, after discussions with social partners, a measure called ‘contract generation’ was introduced. It foresees incentives for companies to hire, simultaneously and with open ended labour contracts, people looking for their first job and long or long term unemployed (45 years old or older). Additionally, the best practice was recorded in BIAL, pharmaceutical company and member of CIP, where HR department designs

talent development programs that include mentoring and talent development initiative engaging workers with knowledge of the company and its culture.

As part of a comprehensive approach to demographic change in the **Polish** collective agreement on active ageing of 2020; it foresees implementation of the mentoring contract.

In **Bulgaria**, as part of the social partners' research and strategic assessment of the demographic characteristics of the employees, there has been a particular focus on the generational characteristics of the workforce. The analysed issues included: values and life priorities, motivation, behavioral models, attitude of the different generations of employees towards work and trainings, new technologies and organizational change as well as various challenges at the workplace. Two concrete tools have been made available: a handbook for managing of generational differences and a handbook for mentors including methods for transfer of knowledge and exchange of experience among generations.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN IMPLEMENTATION

While concluding the autonomous agreement, the EU social partners were aware of the fact that success in addressing challenges related to the context of demographic change, high unemployment and the need for an inclusive labour market does not depend exclusively on their action. The appropriate framework which promotes and facilitates active ageing and the intergenerational approach should be ensured by the EU and national public authorities and/or other relevant actors. For example, the Maltese social partners have identified legal irregularities in the fiscal treatment of workers that retire at a certain age, which go against the spirit of active ageing. Both employers and trade unions are committed to work jointly by addressing these issues with the **Maltese** government.

It is equally important to fight against existing stereotypes of both older and young workers as well as raise awareness about the lifecycle approach to managing professional careers. These factors, beyond the control of the EU and the national social partners, are important elements strengthening their actions, or even underlying their successful implementation.

The unexpected and most serious challenge was the outbreak of the **Covid-19 pandemic** in March 2020, which has seriously interrupted implementation of the agreement. Almost all member organisations that have submitted their final reports indicated Covid-19 as the reason for delays or even abandoning already planned activities. The pandemic-related emergency has forced the social partners as well as public institutions at different levels to shift their attention to emergency priorities. For example, in **Cyprus** the translation of the agreement and the start of negotiations for adoption of a “Policy Statement”, have been delayed. All unilateral actions in **Austria** have been cancelled for the same reason. In **Latvia** the project “Support for longer working lives” was suspended in July 2020. In **Estonia** social dialogue meetings at all levels have been difficult as of March 2020. The Finnish social partners observed that the time and resources needed to be reallocated; for example, the time and other resources have been withdrawn also from the area of developing a balanced working life and improving safety, health and well-being at work. This resulted in less efforts for initiatives related to implementation on the European Social Partners’ Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational approach.

In **Poland** consecutive lockdowns have hampered the launch of autonomous talks between social partners in the framework of the Social Dialogue Council’s Problematic Teams. It is worth noting that in the **Netherlands** the leeway has been sought to continue encouraging sustainable employability even within the framework of the Covid-19 support programmes agreed with government.

The timing of the pandemic outbreak was even more unfortunate given that often many events, seminars or conferences are organized in the last year of implementation and building on previous work. A “positive side effect” of the pandemic was intensified contacts between social partners and companies. A good example of such contacts is the **Austrian** Fit2Work initiative.

Austria: supporting workability during Covid-19

On the occasion of the corona pandemic, the Austrian social partners brought to the attention of companies and works councils' representatives the Fit2Work advisory offer available on www.arbeituntalter.at. The offer has been adapted to the corona pandemic context and its objective was to maintain the ability to work. The Austrian social partners were convinced that in times of the Covid-19 pandemic being able to work is more important than ever.

In the Upper Austria, the WAGE Network has also addressed the issue of Covid in its actions: they were disseminating information on exceptional preventive measures for vulnerable groups.

The social partners have been trying to find ways to continue implementation despite the lockdowns. In **Bulgaria** the multi-stakeholders Round Table on active ageing and intergenerational approach was conducted via electronic means through the project website. Participants were invited to share their recommendations and remarks in writing.

The post-pandemic times can also be challenging for implementation of the active ageing-related solutions. The **Luxembourgish** social partners indicate that there are many challenges related to safe and sustainable return to work.

National traditions and practices of social dialogue can be also somehow challenging for finding the most meaningful way of implementing the agreement. For example, in **Estonia** implementation of the EU level agreements is mostly realized through legislation. At the same time, in Estonia as in other countries of round, in particular for complex/interdependent topics like active ageing and/or intergenerational considerations. The **Hungarian** social partners have admitted that they had limited experience with the subject of the framework agreement. Their first steps in its practical implementation were to prepare both workers and employers separately, clarifying and formulating specific aspects of the topic and each side's interests, and then finding common solutions. Collection of the available materials has proven very helpful at this stage. It is worth noting that using existing structures can significantly help to overcome obstacles in the dissemination phase and increase its effectiveness. For example, the **German** social partners use the already existing structures that Initiative New Quality of Work (INQA) to accelerate the dissemination of information and strengthen raising awareness.

The issue of longer working lives is embraced by the **Dutch** social partners in their *Policy Agenda 2020: Investing in Participation and Employability* drafted in June 2011. The impetus for drafting the policy came from the 2010 and 2011 Pension Agreements. Employers' organisations and trade unions jointly decided that raising the retirement age meant that social partners and government had a responsibility to offer older workers – whose retirement age was increasing – a future in the workforce, and support their employability and career perspectives. The implementation of this agenda has already led to a significant increase in the employment rate of older workers: the employment rate of those aged 55-65 in 2011 was around 52% and increased to 71%, meaning by 19 percentage points in 2020. As a consequence, the average retirement age has increased to around 65,5 years old (it was around 63 years old in 2011).

Lack of reliable and accurate data can negatively influence the choice/design of the relevant measures. A shared sector analysis is essential so that companies and their workers can make the necessary changes and adjustments. With this objective the **Dutch** Labour Foundation called on the social partners in certain sectors to engage in an early dialogue on the economic impact of the crisis and the short- and medium-term situation in the labour market.

National political scene/calendar can also become a challenge in implementing the EU agreement at the national level. For example, in **Luxembourg** the social elections in spring 2019 have slowed down re-starting work of the tripartite Standing Committee on Labour and Employment that was to discuss the agreement. Soon after the Covid-19 crisis has struck and become the dominating subject of the debate. As a result, up to date the agreement has not been implemented in Luxembourg.

It is natural that there are some joint and some unilateral initiatives while implementing the EU level agreements at the national level. The challenge is to ensure that there are as many joint initiatives as possible, and that maximum synergy is ensured among unilateral projects.

Covid-19 disrupted education of many young people. The **Dutch** social partners point out that it is necessary to ensure additional arrangements for these group, so severely affected at the beginning of their careers to prevent the 'lost generation' and avoid that their perturbed professional start translates into difficulties in employment at a later stage.

In conclusion, the biggest challenge for implementing the active ageing agreement was the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic that practically took out the whole 3rd year of the autonomous framework agreement implementation. This is an unprecedented situation, and the assessment of the implementation results should take into account this context.



CONCLUSIONS

Demographic changes and the capacity to make labour markets more inclusive vis-a-vis the progressive ageing of the workforce represent shared areas of interest and challenges or concerns for all Member States. There is a general consensus on the need for actions to make sure that these changes and their impacts on the labour market are accompanied in a successful way. Social partners, public institutions and different stakeholders are aware that these phenomena are impacting the labour market, especially, if coupled with increasing digitalisation and skills-related needs. Fostering healthy active ageing and undertaking an intergenerational approach to address these challenges in all possible dimensions – including the European one – represents a priority across Member States. The overall aim of the EU social partners has been to design effective tools to support initiatives at all appropriate levels (national/sectoral/company) as well as using the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-generational Approach (AFA-AAIA) as a basis to raise awareness and devise actions with other stakeholders and governments to deal with the challenges in a proactive way.

The agreement identifies a wide range of areas and proposes directions for interventions to accompany demographic change and address the related challenges on the labour market. The selection of tools designed by national social partners to implement the framework agreement reflects the huge variety of national realities and industrial relations systems: the full range of adopted instruments include legislation, agreements between national social partners, bipartite or tripartite actions at different levels, diverse country-wide policy tools, complementary actions and transnational activities.

A relevant number of tripartite agreements have been signed, showing the value of joint, far-reaching and integrated measures to ensure comprehensive interventions to address the issues at stake in the agreement. The number of bipartite and unilateral actions is also significant proof that social partners made efforts to implement the agreement in a meaningful way. The implementation process was particularly rich in activities that present their own value with respect to social partners' agreements, tripartite agreements, and the adoption of legislative initiatives.

The phase of coordinated actions across the EU to implement the AFA-AAIA has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as expected. Although the pandemic meant that many actions did not take place as planned by social partners, nevertheless the AFA-AAIA has been given great importance since its very early stages of the national implementation processes and in most countries, even during the most severe pandemic waves, social partners have continued to work hard and kept the topic of active ageing high on their agenda.

Also, the approach proposed by the AFA-AAIA has sometimes been highlighted as useful in addressing the pandemic-related risks of job loss and further negative impact on employment rates. The core lines of the EU level agreement have been incorporated into some national programmes elaborated by the government in response to the Covid pandemic. For example, implementation of measures foreseen in the AFA-AAIA has been undertaken in combination with work from home, which has been a necessity due to the

sanitary situation. Also, many social partners have reported that the crisis brought about by the pandemic has made the need for sustainable employability even more urgent and obvious in some sectors.

Such a forward-looking approach reveals – beyond the pandemic-related emergency - the enduring importance of recognising the emerging needs of the workforce and of identifying and adopting solutions fostering active ageing and an intergenerational approach.

In the European perspective, the commitment to the implementation of the agreement and its promising outcomes, even in times of such unpredictable events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, must be considered as a positive result of social dialogue. Its capacity to bring proactive solutions to complex issues on the agenda of competent decision makers is confirmed by the efforts of social partners and institutional actors in designing tailored measures to address such changes.

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