



European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012



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Last year the European Commission proposed that 2012 be designated as the 'European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations'. This is an important step as we begin to discuss the challenges and benefits that our changing population will bring to Europe over the coming decades. The European year 2012 aims to help create better job opportunities and working conditions for the growing number of older people in Europe, help them take an active role in society and encourage healthy ageing. Active Ageing allows all of us to realise our potential for wellbeing throughout our lives, participate in society and provides us with protection, security and care when we need it.

The European Year 2012 acknowledges the challenges that we face as a society as the population ages, but it also recognises the benefits of having an inclusive approach to ageing. As our age demographics shift, we will need to look at policies on family welfare, education, training, employment and how we finance health care and pensions. Europeans today are living longer and healthier lives, a fact that needs to be celebrated. The challenge brought about by this historic achievement however, cannot be overlooked. On average in the EU, there are currently four people of working age (15 - 64) for every person over 65. By 2060, there will only be two people of working age for every person over 65.

Ireland currently has the highest fertility rate of the 27 EU states, with the average number of children per Irish woman standing at 2.07. This is a positive trend for Ireland as we seek to maintain a vibrant community and a strong economy into the future. As the average age of our population increases however, there will be more pressure on public services and finances. The European year 2012 allows us to discuss these issues and ensure that solidarity between generations is maintained.

The Year of Active Ageing 2012 will promote the view that these challenges give us great opportunities where we can help solve some of the most important problems facing us. By empowering older people to age with better health and security, we can ensure that they continue to contribute throughout their working lives so that we can respond to changes in a way that is fair to all in the community.

Encouraging the sharing of experience and skills through mentoring will encourage younger people to see the interdependence of the generations and the importance of learning from those who have the knowledge needed to succeed in work and life.

The European Year 2012 gives us a launching pad for raising awareness of the contribution that older people make to society. It will encourage policy makers and stakeholders to take action on these issues facing us and it promotes better cooperation and sharing of experiences and views between generations, helping to create a stronger and more inclusive community for all of us.

The Irish website for the European Year 2012 will be up and running in January. For further information log onto the official European Commission website <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp>

Questions about the European Union?

Drop by our public information centre in Dublin:
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European Union House, 18 Dawson Street, Dublin 2.
Email: eu-ie-info-request@ec.europa.eu
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