

“Perspective for a good management of generations at work”

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SPReW Project - Social Patterns of Relation to Work

EUROPEAN DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Brussels, 16 May 2008

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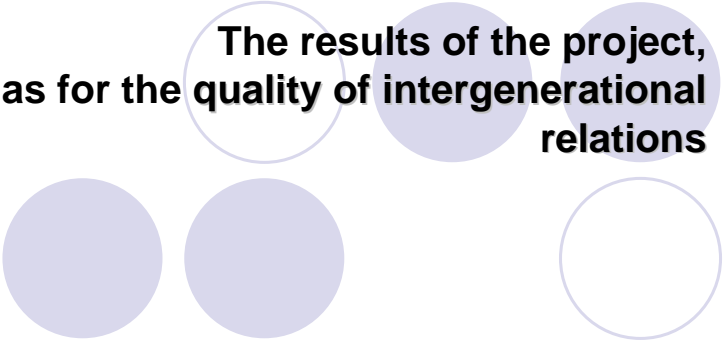


Main goals of the project

Three steps of research:

1. To describe the relation to work and its meaning for workers belonging to different generations (quantitative and qualitative analysis)
2. **To discover which factors can lead to solidarity and which one to tensions among generations and which one can contribute to social cohesion (quantitative and qualitative analysis)**
3. **To provide social actors with useful ideas to manage generations at work** (collection of good policy practices)

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**The results of the project,
as for the quality of intergenerational
relations**

The quality of intergenerational relations

The “perception” of **conflict** between generations does not emerge as an evidence in most of the countries. On the contrary, we found that:

- **age is “unspoken”, as if it did not matter**
- **there is no awareness of belonging to a generation (not even for the younger generation)**
- **other factors – like gender and education - appear more relevant as determinants of group cultures at workplace**
- **often younger people do not even work at the same workplace as elder one**

Anyway, **generations** resulted to be “objectively” **quite differentiated**.

Then, we should consider the possibility that more awareness of generations may initiate social conflicts in the future

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Three generations at work A balance of weakness and strenght for each group

With slight differences among countries:

- **Young people (< 30)** are more exposed to precariousness and unemployment but they benefit of positive educational and digital differential
- **The adult generation (30 to 50)** usually enjoys a stable position in the labour market but it is more exposed to the difficulties linked to keeping together career expectations and family care. Especially critical the position of adult women
- **The elder generation (> 50)** – when they are still at work – enjoy the best wages and security but they are the most exposed in case of company restructuring because of deskilling

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Three generations at work Different cultures and expectations

- **Young people** (< 30) ask for more social protection and higher income but also for more freedom and opportunity of self-development
- **The adult generation** (30 to 50) asks for social and company support to better reconcile work and family but also for life-long learning measures in ageing-worker's perspective
- **The elder generation** (> 50) asks for for recognition of experience but also remove constraints in working conditions

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The relations between extreme groups at work: the incomprehension is a matter of generation or of age?

The **two extreme groups** seem to face an **identical problem**, both lacking of a fair recognition at work:

- young people are undervalued as for their education
- old people are undervalued as for their work experience

Anyway, between these extreme groups a **certain amount of tension** is evident. The reasons may be:

- the psychological distance between ages
- a kind of incommunicability in the approach to work, due to a very different mix of competences
- The changing meanings attributed to work in different economical and social periods (post-materialistic vs. materialistic expectations)

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The mid generation: the most invisible but the most problematic in future?

Although the 30-50 generation often enjoy **security benefits, stable jobs and good wages**

they **feel threatened** both by the increasing deregulation of the labour market (their perception of the risk of precariousness is even greater than the youngsters' who directly experiment it!) and by their lack of new skills in comparison to younger workers

Moreover, they are soon going to be **the future ageing- workforce**

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From the research results to recommendations to social actors.

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Given this intergenerational framework, how should policies be oriented?

Taking into account the evidence from our research, institutional and company measures should be oriented at:

- re-balancing the **specific weakness** of each generation group on the labour market (i.e. more social protection for young workers, more retraining for the elder one, etc.), though avoiding the risk of increased future intergenerational unbalance
- Answering the **expectations** of each group (i.e. change in work organisation for young people, more family friendly policies at company level for the middle generations, humanization of work for old workers, etc.)
- improving **comprehension** between different age groups and foster intergenerational cooperation at work

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The collection of good policy practices

What we found.



What we found. A content-based classification of the practices

- 1. Awareness campaigns
- 2. Building good relation between generations at work
- 3. Knowledge transfer between generations
- 4. Job integration, in an intergenerational perspective

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Awareness campaigns

Practices **taking into consideration the unspoken topic of generations**. Intergenerational diversity exists but it may be an opportunity.

Public debates on specific self-representations of different generations; workshops with social actors to formulate concrete recommendations; financial support to experiences of integration between generations

- E.g. Fondation Roi Baudouin, BE

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Building good relations between generations at work

Practices aimed at **improving the integration at work, especially in high age-polarized contexts**

Information sessions at company; training programmes for middle management; HR handbooks for age-diversity management

- E.g. Accor hotels Benelux, BE

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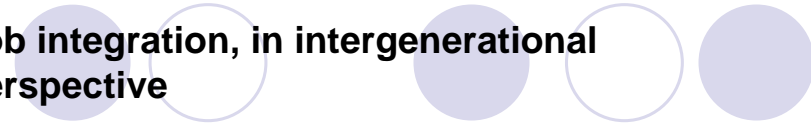
Knowledge management and knowledge transfer between generations

Practices regarding the **knowledge management of a specific age group** or the **exchange of knowledge between generations** as the pillar of intergenerational solidarity

Young and old employees analyzing and evaluating each-other competencies in order to improve communication and recognition between generations; mentoring exchange from experts to young workers or entrepreneurs.

- E.g. Lebenshilfe Brèmen,DE; Mother-daughter in Tuscany IT.

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Job integration, in intergenerational perspective

Practices addressing **both the integration in the labour market and in the workplace**

Financial support to young entrepreneurs through intergenerational exchange also in the case of familiar enterprises; integration of young workers in ancient traditional professions

E.g. Audax, PT; Wallonie Entreprendre BE; Hand project, IT; Parrainage, Missions locales FR

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A two-level classification of practices

○ Institutional level

- Most of the institutional practices were initiated by **local institutions** (local government, employment agencies, chambers of commerce, public foundations)

○ Company level

- We found **less practices** than we expected; most of them were initiated just by the management, only **few with the involvement of trade unions**

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Institutional-level practices

- **Raising awareness on intergenerational issues**
 - Fondation Roi Baudouin (BE)
- **Age management in an intergenerational perspective**
 - Start again after 45 (IT), Vuurtoren45+- training for employers and employees (DE), Knowledge pool 50+(BE)
- **Initiatives targeted to youth aimed at promoting entrepreneurship**
 - Audax (PT), Wallonie Entreprenre (BE), Mother-daughter mentoring (IT), Hand Project (IT), Firm optimising knowledge transmission in the Lorraine region (FR)

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Company-level practices

- **Building good relations between generations at work**
 - Accor (BE)
- **Assessment, updating, valorisation of older worker competences**
 - Mac-lab - new perspective for over-45 (IT); Aqua-mark (DE)
- **Knowledge transfer from more experts to young workers**
 - Somague engineering (BE); Mentoring no-profit (DE)

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Main features of the practices we analysed

- Most practices focus on a **specific age group**
- **Few** practices have an **intergenerational** orientation
- **Age-diversity management** is a considered issue, though most practices just focus on matters of **knowledge valorisation and transmission**
- **Active ageing problems** – including work organisation, ergonomics and flexible retirement - are not sufficiently addressed
- **Youth related issues** are mostly addressed by practices promoting entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer from adult to young workers and mentoring
- **Gender related issues** –especially in the middle generation work-life balance problems – are scarcely considered

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The European framework of policies addressing generational issues

General objectives (Lisbon strategy, EES, EC Green Paper on demographic challenge, Youth pact, etc.)

Full employment and higher quality work
Centrality of workers preferences and family changes
Gender as a mainstream objective
Active ageing and longer permanence at work
Attracting and retaining young workforce
Reconciliation between work and family
Solidarity between generations

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The European framework of policies addressing generational issues

General Employment Framework

(Lisbon strategy, EES, Youth pact, etc.)

Age management and incentives for older workers to stay longer on the labour market

Integration of young people in the labour market

Training for all age groups to increase adaptability

Promoting solidarity within generations ensuring sustainable and equal social protection

Demographic issues

(EC Green Paper on demographic challenge, etc.)

Supporting youth, women and older employment

Combining work and life cycle

Promoting a new pact between generations

Equality

(EES, EQUAL Community Initiative 01-03 and 04-07)

New approach to age management through mutual learning among generations at the workplace

Multidimensional approach towards age

Gender as a mainstream issue also in the age perspective

Education

(ESS, Education and training 2010)

Validation of formal and non-formal skills acquired

In the course of working life

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Critical notes on the practices we analysed.

Distance from our results

Most practices we found have just a **limited focus and a one-way direction**.

Moreover, frequently there is a **dissonance between institutional policies and discourse and actual practices**.

Distance from the European framework of policies

Generational unbalance of the **social protection benefits** (unemployment, family supports, pensions)

Lack of a **life-cycle** approach in the policies

Lack of practices addressing the **ageing workforce** in the perspective of **longer permanence** at work

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Our proposals of new practices to be included

Social protection practices

- more **security** for youth employment
- **family supports** to help **life-cycle** needs
- **flexible retirement** measures

Knowledge management

- **knowledge transfer also from young** workers to the older
- more **learning opportunities for mid generation** workers
- more **recognition of experience** for old workers

Organisation of work

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- increasing **autonomy, management of the time, self-development** opportunities for **young** workers
- organisational change aimed at a better **harmonisation of career opportunities and family care** for middle generation.
- **ergonomics and humanisation** of the organisation: shorter hours, lighter workloads and improving the workplace environment for older workers

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Concluding remarks. Managing generational heterogeneity and trade-offs

- Heterogeneity of different age groups and generations calls for practices that are appropriate for each age group and that at the same time require a solid intergenerational dimension.

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