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# Ageing in Employment

A PROPOSAL FOR

## A European Code of Good Practice

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The logo for EuroLinkAge, featuring a stylized Euro symbol (€) on the left, followed by the word "EUROLINKAGE" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "A" in "AGE" is uniquely designed with a curved top that loops back to the right, resembling a stylized arch or a bridge.

This proposed Code of Good Practice contains guidelines intended to assist employers and others responsible for recruitment and training to productively manage the ageing of the workforce. This will help to promote an age-neutral approach to employment and avoid the unnecessary exclusion of workers as they age, as well as to ensure better employment prospects for older workers. It will also be a source of reference for all of those in the labour market and in policy making positions who can influence life-long career development and the maintenance of ageing workers in employment. Hopefully too it will contribute to raising awareness about age discrimination and how to avoid it.

The Code was prepared as part of a European project, carried out for the European Commission, involving eight countries (Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom). A draft was sent to a wide range of employers, employers' organisations, trade unions, government officials and other active labour market policy makers and participants in each of the countries (Annex 1). After extensive consultation this draft was revised on the basis of the many positive and helpful suggestions that were made.

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# The case for a Code of Good Practice

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This Code was drafted following extensive European Union (EU) research on age barriers in employment. There is general agreement in the EU that the widespread practice of excluding older workers from employment and training opportunities should be replaced by positive and inclusive strategies for managing an ageing workforce. Both the ageing of the workforce and the rising costs of pension systems demand a reduction in early retirement and the general extension of working life. Therefore it is vital to overcome existing barriers to the employment of older adults and to improve the employment opportunities open to them.

Some national governments have taken action already, for example, Finland has anti-discrimination legislation and a national programme for ageing workers running from 1998 to 2002; Ireland introduced anti-age discrimination legislation and special measures for older workers in October 1999; the Netherlands proposed a ban on age discrimination in employment in 1999 and, in September 2000, a special Task Force on Age and Employment was established by the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment to develop a national action programme to promote the labour market participation of older workers; and the UK has operated its Code of Practice for Age Diversity in Employment since 1999.

Some employers have developed their own ‘business case’ for ending age barriers and creating equal opportunities in the labour market. For example, they recognise the value for modern enterprises to employ a diverse age range, the waste of skills and talent caused by the exclusion of older workers from recruitment and training, and the need to reflect the changing demographic customer base.

Employers are recognising increasingly the positive attributes of older workers such as maturity, experience, loyalty and reliability. Employees and trade unions too are having to change their often early exit-based attitudes and open-up to life-long learning opportunities and career changes in response to calls to extend working life.

At an EU level the Member States have acknowledged the importance of combating age discrimination in Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force on 1 May 1999. Subsequently, the Community action programme to combat discrimination 2001–2006 and the EU Directive on equal treatment in employment were adopted in October 2000.

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## What is a Code of Good Practice?

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- It is a set of guidelines on good practice (do’s and don’ts)
- It is voluntary and, therefore, intended as advice
- It is not necessarily an alternative to legislation against age discrimination but provides guidelines on how to avoid such discrimination and, therefore, could be very useful alongside such legislation.

Codes of good practice in the employment of certain groups of workers (eg. women, ethnic minorities, disabled people) already exist in several Member States. No country, with the exception of the UK, has a national code of good practice on age, although there are references to older workers or age in some sectoral codes in other EU countries.

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## Who is the Code aimed at?

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- ▶ The Code is directed at organisations and, in particular, those within them responsible for employment and other human resource matters (including both employers and trade unions)
- ▶ It is designed to help organisations to adjust to the ageing of their workforces and to avoid the unnecessary exclusion of workers as they age
- ▶ It is also designed to assist employees in preventing their age becoming a negative factor in their employment and assumes that they will take advantage of all opportunities for employment and training
- ▶ It is relevant to other actors in the labour market such as personnel agencies, officials in employment agencies, recruitment agencies and so on
- ▶ It applies to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as large organisations
- ▶ It covers public and private organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and professional bodies.

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## What is good practice?

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Good practice on age and employment has been defined as a combination of:

- ▶ specific measures to overcome or minimise age barriers
- ▶ general employment or human resource (HR) policies which provide a work environment in which individuals are able to achieve their potential without being disadvantaged by their age.

The six universal dimensions of HR management in the cycle of employment underpin the Code of Good Practice:

- ▶ job recruitment
- ▶ learning, training and development and promotion
- ▶ promotion and internal job changes

- flexible working practices and the modernisation of work
- workplace design and health promotion
- employment exit and the transition to retirement.

Some examples of good practice can be found in organisations that nonetheless have various other age barriers. The comprehensive elimination of age barriers requires a broad ‘age management’ strategy, involving a change in attitudes within organisations, which is included in the Code as a seventh HR management category. The final aim is to eliminate the impact of ageing on employment and to achieve a position of age neutrality.

So far evidence of good practice has been demonstrated mainly in large organisations and there is clearly considerable scope for sharing that experience with smaller ones. Many examples of good practice can be found in the publication, ‘Combating age barriers in employment: A European portfolio of good practice’ (see below).

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## Further reading

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Results of EU research projects on ageing and employment carried out for the European Foundation for Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin:

*Combating Age Barriers in Employment: European Research Report*, Walker, A. (1997) Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

*Combating Age Barriers in Employment: A European Portfolio of Good Practice*, Walker, A. and Taylor, P. (1998), Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

*Active Strategies for an Ageing Workforce*, Naegele, G. (1999) Dublin, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

*Managing an Ageing Workforce – A Guide to Good Practice*, Walker, A. (1999), Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

# Ageing in employment: a European Code of Good Practice

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## **1** Learning, training and development

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**Encourage all employees to take advantage of relevant and suitable training and ensure that, as far as possible, all employees have access to learning, training and development opportunities throughout their working life.**

**To create a skilled and up-to-date workforce:**

- ▶ ensure that learning and training opportunities are an integral part of career planning and not purely job-specific
- ▶ ensure the learning, training and development needs of all staff are regularly reviewed and that age is not used as a barrier to training
- ▶ encourage workers of all ages to take up learning and training opportunities
- ▶ focus on the individual's as well as the organisation's needs when providing training and development opportunities
- ▶ ensure that different learning styles and needs and the diversity of previous occupations and skills are taken into account in the delivery of training
- ▶ work to combat negative age stereotypes about motivation and capacity to learn (among both older and younger workers and managers).

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## **2 Flexible working practices and the modernisation of work**

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**Adjust working time and other aspects of employment to reflect changes in the way people work and in family and caring responsibilities of the workforce.**

**To respond flexibly to the changing needs of employees over their working lives:**

- ensure flexible working opportunities are provided, on the full range of jobs available, to meet the changing needs/capacities of workers at all levels
- enable workers to have greater flexibility in their hours and conditions of work
- encourage and assist workers at all ages to be involved in the implementation of changes in work conditions and work organisation
- ensure that caring responsibilities are recognised at different phases of the life cycle and do not interfere with other rights (eg. pension rights).

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## **3 Workplace design and health promotion**

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**Work processes and the organisation of work should enable employees to perform well and ensure their health and capacity to work are optimised.**

**To enable employees to realise their potential:**

- use workplace design creatively both to prevent physical and mental decline and to compensate for it and to account for variations due to ageing
- aim to reduce work-induced illness and disability and to promote a healthy workforce
- encourage employees to maintain healthy life styles and safe working practices
- use workplace design to facilitate re-employment
- ensure that all regulations concerning safety and hygiene at the workplace are adhered to.

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## **4 Recruitment**

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**Recruit on the basis of the skills and abilities needed to do the job. Select candidates on merit by focussing on skills and abilities and on performance at interview.**

- ▶ avoid using age limits or age ranges in job advertisements
- ▶ target advertisements to reach and attract a wide age range
- ▶ focus on the skills, abilities, experience and potential of the candidates and not on age
- ▶ ensure all those involved in selecting staff are trained to avoid basing decisions on prejudices and stereotypes.

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## **5 Promotion and internal job changes**

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**Base promotion on the ability, or demonstrated potential, to do the job.**

**To ensure fairness in promotion and other job changes:**

- ▶ make sure that promotion opportunities are made available to all staff who have demonstrated the ability or the potential to do the job
- ▶ focus on the skills, abilities, previous experience and potential of the candidates when sifting applications, including transferable skills
- ▶ ensure those responsible for promotion decisions are trained to avoid basing decisions on prejudices and stereotypes
- ▶ offer opportunities for flexible late career development both inside and outside of the organisation.

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## **6** Employment exit and retirement transition

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**Base any redundancy decisions on objective, job-related criteria and ensure that retirement schemes offer a choice of options and are fairly applied.**

**To promote fairness and flexibility in employment exit:**

**a) Redundancy**

- ❑ where permitted by law use objective, job-related criteria when considering candidates for redundancy and not age
- ❑ look at flexible alternatives to redundancy such as part-time working, tele-working, job-share or career breaks and short-term contracts
- ❑ ensure that workers made redundant are prepared for job-seeking and re-employment.

**b) Retirement**

- ❑ give individuals as much choice as possible in the way they retire
- ❑ avoid using early retirement without evaluating its impact on both the individuals concerned and the organisation
- ❑ use flexible or phased retirement schemes and/or flexible work schedules where possible
- ❑ allow workers the freedom to work beyond pension age if they wish, including via the use of outsourcing
- ❑ make sure that full use is made of the skills and experience of ageing workers before they retire
- ❑ make retirement preparation available to employees.

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## **7** Changing attitudes within organisations

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**Educate the whole of the workforce about how age barriers and age stereotypes arise and why they must be combated.**

To achieve effective age management, reduce age discrimination and provide an environment in which age diversity flourishes:

- ▶ challenge the acceptance and use of negative age stereotypes
- ▶ introduce age awareness training for key personnel such as line managers and recruitment staff and consider extending this to all staff
- ▶ regularly reinforce messages about the benefits of age diversity
- ▶ learn from good practices in other organisations
- ▶ include the prohibition of age discrimination in collective agreements
- ▶ encourage a wide age range in representation on works councils and other company bodies
- ▶ regularly analyse the organisation's own age profile to assess the age diversity of employees
- ▶ widely disseminate this Code of Good Practice.

## Annex 1

Organisations whose representatives were consulted during the course of the project

### A: Private sector

#### *i) Employers' federations*

Algemene Werkgevers  
Vereniging Nederland (AWVN)  
BDA (Deutschland)  
Confederació de Petita i Mitjana Empresa  
Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales  
Confédération générale des petites et moyennes entreprises (CGPME)  
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)  
Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana (CONFINDUSTRIA)  
Confederazione Nazionale dell'artigianato e delle piccole e medie imprese  
European Association of Crafts and Small and Medium Size Enterprises  
European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation  
Fédération française des sociétés d'assurances (FFSA)  
Federation of Small Businesses  
Gesamtmittel (Deutschland)  
Kunnallinen työmarkkinalaitos  
Midden en Klein Bedrijf Nederland (MKB)  
Mouvement des entreprises de France (MEDEF)  
RKW (Deutschland)  
Suomen Yrittäjät  
Teollisuuden ja Työnantajain Keskusliitto ry (TT)  
The Electricity Association  
Union of Industry and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE)

Vereniging Nederlandse Ondernemingen/Nederlandse Christelijke Werkgevers (VNO/NCW)

#### *ii) Employers*

Aérospatiale Matra  
Axa France  
Derbyshire County Council  
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria  
Bong Ljungdahl Sverige AB  
Carlson Investment  
Electricity company (España)  
France Télécom  
Gas company (España)  
Handelsbanken  
Hewlett Packard France  
Hörby Bruk AB  
Imperial War Museum  
Laboratoires Boiron  
Marks and Spencer Limited  
MCT Brattberg AB  
Merloni Elettrodomestici SPA  
Nationwide Building Society  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
Palvelutyönantajat ry  
Renault (France)  
Sainsburys Ltd  
Saint Gobain  
SlipNaxos AB  
Svenska Arbetsgivareförening (SAF)  
Svenska Kommunförbundet  
Transport and communication company (España)  
Usinor (France)  
Water company (España)

### B: Trade Unions

CCOO (España)  
Confédération française de l'encadrement – Confédération générale des cadres (CFE-CGC)  
Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT)  
Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens (CFTC)

Confédération générale du travail Force ouvrière (CGT-FO)	British Cabinet Office
Confédération générale du travail (CGT)	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung (BMA)
Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro – sezione Politiche del Lavoro (CGIL)	Commissie Gelijke Behandeling (CGB)
Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro – Sindacato Pensionati Italiani (SPI-CGIL)	Committee of the Regions (COR)
Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori – sezione Politiche del Lavoro (CISL)	Department for Education and Employment (Adult Disadvantage Policy Division)
DAG (Deutschland)	Department of Social Security (Diversity and Equality Branch)
Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund	Economic and Social Committee of the EU
European Trades Union Congress (ETUC)	Eläketurvakeskus (ETK)
Fédération Services (CFDT)	Generalitat de Catalunya
Federazione Nazionale Pensionati della CISL	Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und berufsforschung – Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (IAB)
FNV (Nederland)	Kansaneläkelaitos (KELA)
GMB Union (UK)	Kuntien Eläkevakuutus
IGBCE (Deutschland)	Landesarbeitsamt Nordrhein-Westfalen
Industriegewerkschaft Metall	Local labour market offices in Sweden
Kommunalarbetarförbundet	Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité: Délégation à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle; Direction des relations du travail
Landsorganisationen (LO)	Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken
Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö SAK ry	Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid
Svenska Metallindustriarbetarförbundet	Ministero del Lavoro (Sottosegretario di Stato per il Mercato del Lavoro e la Formazione Professionale)
Sveriges Akademikernas CentralOrganisation (SACO)	Näringsdepartementet
Tjänstemännens CentralOrganisation (TCO)	Opetusministeriö
Toimihenkilökeskusjärjestö STTK ry	Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö
Trade Union Congress	Stichting van de Arbeid
UGT (España)	Suomen Kuntaliitto
Union nationale des syndicats autonomes (UNSA)	Työministeriö
USO (España)	Valtiokonttori
USOC (España)	Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG)
<b>C: Public sector</b>	Westfalia (Deutschland)
Arbeidsvoorziening Nederland	
Arbetsförmedlingen (AMS)	
Barcelona City Council	

## D: Others

Includes: labour market experts, management or personnel organisations, research institutes, political parties, NGOs

ADECCO, Società di Fornitura di lavoro temporaneo SPa AfA der SPD (Deutschland)

Äldrecentrum, Stiftelsen Stockholms Län

Algemene Nederlandse Bond van Ouderen (ANBO)

Arbeitslosenverband – Association of German Unemployed People

Associazione Nazionale Lavoratori Anziani d'Azienda Bernard Brunhes Consultants

Centre de recherches et d'études sur l'âge et les populations au travail (CREAPT)

Collegi de Periodistes de Catalunya

CONEX (España)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Personalführung e.V. (DGFP)

Foment del Treball

Forum 50+ – Pensionsforum

Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft

Institute of Personnel Development

Istituto di Ricerche Economico – Sociali

Kommission Demographischer Wandel

Landelijk Bureau

Leeftijdscriminatie (LBL)

Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council

MACROS SRL Divisione Ricerca

Nederlandse Vereniging voor Personeelsbeleid (NVP)

Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro (ILO)

Platform Leef tijd en Arbeid (PLAN)

SECOT (España)

Somerset Training and Enterprise Council

Sosiaal- ja terveystalan tutkimus- ja kehittämiskeskus (STAKES)

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The proposal for a Code of Good Practice is the result of independent research and does not necessarily reflect the views of Eurolink Age or the European Commission.

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