

ACTIVE AGEING AND THE "SILVER ECONOMY"



1. State of play: High rates of physical inactivity and a rapidly ageing society

In the coming decades Europe will have to face a serious demographic challenge with European life expectancy increasing by three months per year. The demographic consequences are high levels of physical inactivity across Europe. According to Eurostat 18% of all EU citizens are currently age of 65 and older, but this number is expected to have doubled by 2060.

The current context shows that physical inactivity is the fourth biggest killer in the world (1).

The Council of the European Union recognises physical inactivity as a leading risk factor for premature mortality and disease in the high-income countries, being responsible for about 1 million deaths per year in the WHO European Region alone. The implications of a lack of physical activity are well known: physical inactivity is the main cause of non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer, etc.

Alongside the health and social benefits of physical activity, it has as well a significant positive impact

on reducing the health cost expenditure of Member States. Several scientific studies argue that investment in the promotion of healthy lifestyles with focus on physical activity and nutrition have a significant financial return. A recent study by the Centre for Economics & Business Research estimated the cost of physical inactivity to be EUR 80 billion per year in the EU.

Furthermore, physical Activity will enable ageing people to stay healthy and remain longer in employment, thus, sustaining pension systems and most importantly, having an improved quality of life in later years (2). The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic PA weekly or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic PA weekly or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity. Muscle-strengthening activities should be done for major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week (3).



2. The European Silver Economy

The European Silver Economy is the part of the economy that concerns Europe's older citizens. It includes all the economic activities relevant to the needs of older adults, and the impact on many sectors. For example, health and nutrition, leisure and wellbeing, finance and transport, housing, education and employment. In this context, the demographic change represent an opportunity to drive a triple win for Europe:

- Better Quality of care for citizens
- More efficient health and care delivery systems (development of the e-health)

- Competitiveness (including new economic opportunities, jobs and investment).

The European Commission's Silver Economy Strategy is driven both by the emergence of new consumer markets and by the need to improve the sustainability of public expenditure linked to ageing. Merrill Lynch estimates the global Silver Economy will grow from \$7 trillion per year to \$15 trillion by 2020, which makes it the 3rd largest economy in the world. By comparison, public spending: expenditure linked to ageing in

(1) WHO, Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/>

(2) Centre for Economics & Business Research: The Costs of Inactivity in Europe, UK 2015.

(3) World Health Organisation: Physical Activity And Adults.

the EU accounts for 25% of GDP or about 50% of general government expenditure and it is projected to grow by more than 4% of GDP until 2060. The strategy aims to boost an innovative ICT industry with large companies but also innovative SMEs, developing many new products and services.

The European Commission funds research and applied research under the Seventh Research

Framework Programme and its successor, the Horizon 2020 funding instrument. With the Member States, the European Commission participate in the Active and Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL JP). In 2011 the Commission started the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA) and eHealth Action Plan 2012-2020.

3. The role of fitness in active ageing

By all means, the role the European Fitness sector can play in increasing levels of physical activity among the aging population is significant. With an annual growth of 3-4%, the fitness sector is the largest growing participant sport and the only area showing growth in the past 4 years. All other grassroots sports have "flat-lined" in their

participation levels. Consequently, the fitness sector being dynamic and growing, is able to adapt quickly to social developments and changing demographics. Lifelong-learning will be crucial to reply to changing demands of clients and new skills will be needed to adapt to the needs of the ageing society.

4. EuropeActive's recommendations on the promotion of Active Ageing

The European Fitness sector has great potential to successfully increase levels of physical activity among the ageing European society. Already 52.4 million consumers in Europe (European Health and Fitness Market Report, Deloitte 2017) benefit from the opportunity to be more active. However, it is worth noting what remains to be done to make fitness and physical activity more inclusive by addressing as well the needs of the elderly.

EuropeActive:

1. Calls for innovative and imaginative ways to promote and encourage people to be and remain active, with **a focus on hard to reach groups such as the elderly.**

2. **Asks for more cross-directorate coordinating role between the different Directorate Generals** of the European Commission and committees of the European Parliament to propose a more

coherent approach and avoid double interventions (e.g. SANTE and CONNECT for active ageing);

3. Urges for more evidence-based interventions.

A coordinated and scientific approach will be needed to enhance positive results and promote good practice among stakeholders.

4. Provide fitness professionals with the relevant skills:

it is considered essential that fitness professionals have to be equipped with the relevant technical skills in active ageing. In addition, there is a big need for motivational and behavioural skills to respond to the needs of the ageing population.

5. Asks the EU institutions to encourage the Member States to **adopt exercise prescriptions when possible, instead of medical ones.**