

Project 21LT07

Comprehensive Review of Policies to Facilitate Active Ageing in Lithuania

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Good Practices in Employment and Skills Development of Older Workers

Output 2: presentation of good practices from EU countries that have successfully implemented active ageing policies

Activity 2.1: Identification and compilation of best practices from other countries along with key lessons and applicability



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1. Good practices in employment and skills development of older workers

1.1. Introduction

The objective of this note on good practices is to show measures implemented by other EU countries with the objective to improve labour market inclusion of older people by retaining them in the workforce for longer and integrating them back to the labour market following job loss. Experiences gained in other countries should guide key stakeholders in Lithuania, including the Ministry of Labour, the Public Employment Service, employers, training institutions and other actors in improving current measures and strategies or introducing new ones.

This note starts with a short summary of the key challenges for retaining and hiring older workers followed by an overview of main measures and activities implemented in other OECD countries in the following four policy areas: removing employer obstacles to promote the hiring and retention of older workers; promoting health at the workplace and good quality of jobs; support to lifelong learning and active labour market measures. Finally, the note presents 6 in-depth case studies in lifelong learning and active labour market programmes with examples from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Scotland and Austria.

1.2. Overview of main measures to improve labour market inclusion of older people

1.2.1. Challenges

Demographic change all over the EU has led to an increasing share of older workers in the workforce as well as a decreasing ratio of population in working age to persons above retirement age. The old age dependency ratio has already increased from 0.25 to 0.31 between 2010 and 2020. Therefore, pensions reforms have been implemented to lengthen working lives. Also employers are increasingly faced with the need to employ older workers in a context of raising labour shortages.

The employment rate of older workers aged 50-74 in the EU 27 has risen from 40.7% in 2010 to 47.6% in 2020, with the strongest percentage point increase being in the age group 55-64.¹ Reasons for this increase are manifold and relate to the extension of retirement age, and the implementation of life-cycle resource management approaches by companies which have to deal with an ageing workforce. Over the past one or two decades, different types of actors have started to implement a wide range of measures to retain older workers in employment and increase their productivity. Although, impressive progress could be achieved in a number of countries over time major challenges remain across countries: age discrimination and prejudices remain prevalent; making use of the experience and skill of older workers;

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/employment/ageingandemploymentpolicies.htm>

older worker participate still less often than other age group in lifelong learning; working conditions need to be improved over the lifecycle to prevent older workers from having health issues; adapting work organisation to the health issues of older workers; and bringing unemployed older workers back to work (hiring rates of older workers are generally much lower than for other age groups).

1.2.2. Removing employer obstacles to promote the hiring and retention of older workers

Tackling age discrimination and negative employer attitudes towards older workers

Most EU countries have launched a number of ad hoc initiatives to tackle age discrimination and to change the attitudes of employers towards older workers. For example, in France, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland these initiatives include legislation (except in Switzerland), awareness raising campaigns, development of “tool kits”, promotion of best-practices as well as consultation and co-operation with the social partners (Sonnet, Olsen and Manfredi 2014).² In the case of Norway, the Centre for Senior Policy was established in 1969 as the «Joint Committee for Preparation for Retirement Age». Among the 19 members of that Committee, there were the social partners, “Norsk gerontologisk institutt” (Norwegian gerontology institute) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 1990, the Joint Committee switched focus from preparing for retirement to discussing senior policy and the development of older workers.³ The center conducts research, launches information campaigns and implements a range of activities with the aim to promote employment of older workers.

Effective implementation of anti-discrimination legislation across EU countries proves often to be challenging. Individual victims of discrimination often face strong barriers to bring a case before the courts, as legal action remains a costly, complex, time-consuming and adversarial process. A way to overcome these barriers is to strengthen the role of labour inspectorate (as has been done for example in Belgium).

Concrete measures to tackle age discrimination in hiring include the screening of vacancy announcements (as done e.g. in the Netherlands) or through the “simulation” recruitment method enabling new hires to be selected through aptitude tests (*Pôle emploi* in France).⁴

Lifecycle human resource management of companies

Age management tools such as work organisation, working-time arrangements, health and upskilling and reskilling measures based on the needs of age diverse workforce can improve productivity declines that may occur for some workers. Given the benefits of these practices, mainly large companies have developed human resource management strategies and tools to cope with the demographic change in their companies and at the labour market. SMEs may also implement age diverse management measures, however, there is less visibility about their activities, and often they do not have a dedicate human resource management service.

Tools used by companies include for example a “demography check” or an “age structure analysis” of the company, e.g. in Switzerland (Duell, 2015⁵) as well as tools for assessing the workability of workers as

² Sonnet, A., H. Olsen and T. Manfredi (2014), “Towards more inclusive ageing and employment policies: the lessons from France, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland”, *De Economist*, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10645-014-9240-x>

³ <https://seniorpolitikk.no/om-oss/centre-for-senior-policy/business-idea/>,

⁴ <https://www.pole-emploi.fr/employeur/vos-recrutements/selectionnez-des-candidats/la-methode-de-recrutement-par-si.html>, accessed 7 September 2022.

⁵ Duell, N. (2015), “Local economic strategies for ageing labour markets: Management practices for productivity gains of older workers”, *OECD Employment Policy Papers*, No. 11, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5jrnwqkwpj-en>.

developed e.g. in Finland by the Finish Institute for occupational health. Other measures include for example the adaptation of the work organisation, flexibilization of working time, working time adaptations to the needs of older workers, workplace adaptations and improving working conditions, continuous training, as well as preventive health measures.

Governments can support the initiatives of employers and social partners through setting up and managing networks for experience exchanges, conducting research e.g. on the impact of working conditions, and through counselling services for SMEs (as done for example in Germany through the initiative new quality of work INQA⁶). At the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Employment and INQA the demography network (Demografienetzwerk⁷) was launched, a platform where companies can exchange their practices.

1.2.3. Promoting health at workplace and good quality jobs

Good working conditions and preventive health policies implemented at the workplace are crucial for permitting workers to stay at work in good health as long as possible. In addition, workplace adaptations are necessary to allow people with health impairments to continue to work. Employers and social partners are important actors when it comes to negotiating issues related to the working environment. In countries with a strong social dialogue culture, these issues are taken up in bilateral or tripartite collective agreements. The box below presents the Inclusive Workplace Agreements in Norway.

Box 1.1. Inclusive Workplace Agreements in Norway

In the case of Norway, Inclusive Workplace Agreements (IA) have been signed by the social partners and the government. The first agreement was signed in 2001, and the latest one in 2018 (valid until the end of 2022). About 60% of employees were covered by the agreements in 2011 (OCDE, 2013). The first IA agreement listed three aims: a 20 % cut in sick leave, helping more people with various handicaps enter the labour market, and help the over-50 extend their work activity by one year. Preventive working environment was one of the focus areas in the IA period 2014-2018. Working life was eventually prolonged, while the other two objectives have not been met, although improvements have been recorded. A literature review on studies on the implementation and effects of the IA agreements by Frøyland et al. (2019) indicate that it has been possible to reduce sick leave levels in companies with good leadership. Dialogue meetings, external medical examination, information about the work ability assessment made by occupational health services, implementing activity requirements, allowing for graded sick leave and preventive health measures were among success factors. For people with disabilities individual work placement activities and employer guidance have found to be effective. According to some of the reviewed studies, companies that have implemented preventive working environment measures have also been able to recognize the need for assistance and receive such assistance from the working life centres and/or the occupational health service.

National strategies for occupational health and safety have been established and national programmes set up. In the case of Denmark, they include for example obligatory psychosocial risk assessment of working practices, which leads to a good awareness of psychosocial risks at company level, including in small and medium-sized companies.⁸

⁶ <https://www.inqa.de/DE/startseite/startseite.html>

⁷ <https://demographie-netzwerk.de/>

⁸ European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (2022), "Managing psychosocial risks in European micro and small enterprises: Qualitative evidence from the Third European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER 2019). Country Report Denmark"

National governments can also support companies with counselling services. This includes the elaboration of toolkits and guidance material for companies with a focus on older workers to mitigate the effects of bad working conditions e.g. Austria. Going beyond providing information, programmes for counselling services have been implemented in some countries. In Austria, the Fit2Work programme⁹ is providing a nationwide low-threshold counselling service. The programme raises awareness for health-friendly working environments, reducing sick leaves and pre-mature exits from the labour market, sustainable (re-) integration of clients in health-adequate workplaces. There is a multi-actor involvement (PES, the Labour Inspectorate, social insurance institutions, the Federal Social Office (co-ordinator), different Ministries and the social partners).

1.2.4. Support for lifelong learning

Financial support to participation in continuous vocational education and training

Depending on the type of training and type of participants a variety of mixed financing modes of continuing vocational education and training between employers, individuals and the government can be observed across countries.

For instance, in a number of countries training measures of the PES have also been made available for selected groups of vulnerable employed workers (see also case studies on a measure implemented by the German PES in section 3 below).

Training programmes are most effective when they train for skills in demand. One good practice example in this regard is a training programme called “Placement Foundations” by the Austrian PES.

Box 1.2. Placement Foundations implemented by the Austrian PES

The Placement Foundations (Arbeitsstiftungen) are long-term training measures for unemployed to train them in occupations with labour shortages (one typical sector would be health care and elderly care). This measure benefits from a mixed financing and a joint commitment of various actors. Older unemployed are one specific target group of this programme in various regions. The placement foundation can either be set up by one or more companies in a region or industry. Placement foundation services and measures include staff selection processes, training and further education, possibly practical training (internship) and, if employment in the company does not materialize, active job search. The details for the implementation of the scheme are defined at regional level. For example, in Upper Austria, the participating company commits to provide the practical part of the training. The company commits itself to employ the participant after successful completion of the training measure. An earlier study favourably reviewed Placement Foundations (Wagner et al., 2005). Reforms introduced to the scheme nationwide in 2016 include requirements for a quality management system.

Source: OECD 2022, “Public private partnerships in employment and related services. Innovative policy design of active labour market policies (ALMPs)”, unpublished.

Individual Learning Account

Individual learning accounts (ILAs) encourage savings for education. In general, ILAs can be used to develop knowledge, skills and abilities that increase their human capital. There are different natures of accounts, including individual saving accounts, individual drawing rights (which may be considered as “virtual accounts”), vouchers (customized or lump-sum). The schemes can be universal or targeted at

⁹ fit2work, <https://www.fit2work.at/>

specific groups. The schemes vary with regard to the financial participation structure of the state, the government and the workers and the type of accompanying services (information, counselling, guidance of the beneficiary; certification and evaluation of training providers).

A key objective of training accounts (as for vouchers) is to replace supply-driven by demand-driven training. This implies the existence of a market for education and training, with competing providers. It also implies that individuals are well-informed and able to make rational choices. However, workers may not be in a position that allows them to get an overview of the training market (this will be more likely with a lower skill level). Workers may also not detect a training need, although those needs exist. Probably, those having a higher skill level will identify training needs. Free choice of the workers enhances at the same time choice and responsibility of workers and makes them less dependent on the firm. Effectiveness may alter in relation to sectors. This is shown by a study on the ILA initiative in the Netherlands, running since 2001 (see an overview in Oosterbeek and Patrinos, 2008¹⁰). As OECD (2017¹¹) points out, it is important to combine demand-led financing mechanisms with a system of quality assurance through which providers are certified – a point which applies equally to some of the subsidy schemes discussed in the previous sub-section. The advantage of ILAs and time accounts is that they provide some time flexibility, time being one important barrier. However, with regard to increasing incentives for the low-skilled to engage in lifelong learning, ILAs suffer from self-selectivity into training activities. They are more likely to be used by high- than low-skilled individuals. One reason of unequal take up is likely to be the lack of information as well as financial illiteracy (OECD, 2017¹²). Countries have moved towards including the provision of information and guidance in ILA schemes in order to better cover different groups of workers as well as to steer the choice of training (see the example of the French individual learning account system in section 3).

Vocational and career guidance for adults

Vocational and career guidance for adults is an important instrument to promote participation in lifelong learning. They are mostly offered for free to workers, mainly financed by the governments and its institutions (mainly the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and PES). Also employers may offer career guidance, at least for specific groups of workers. Career guidance systems to be effective build their services on information produced by the skills anticipation system.

One specific challenge the vocational guidance systems face is to be taken up by disadvantaged groups. Often employers as well as the individuals themselves tend to underinvest in lifelong learning, when the individual has not already accumulated a good stock of human capital and has been used to learning. An online-survey survey on the use of career guidance conducted in five OECD countries (Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States) show that most adults who do not use career guidance services report that they do not feel they need to (57%). Older adults and less-educated adults are over-represented in this group. Another 20% of non-users report that they were not aware that career guidance services existed (OECD 2021¹³).

To promote the use of career guidance for older workers and provide skills information, some countries have provided funding to increase the incentive for career guidance for workers including those in mid-career. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment had introduced a subsidy programme called "Development Advice for All People over 45" (Ontwikkeladvies). This programme

¹⁰ Oosterbeek, H. and H. A. Patrinos (2008), "Financing lifelong learning", Policy Research Working Paper 4569, The World Bank, Human Development Network Education Team, March.

¹¹ OECD (2017), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, .

¹² OECD (2017), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>

¹³ OECD (2021), *Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a94bfad-en>.

provided career guidance subsidy to workers over the age of 45 who work at least 12 hours per week. The guidance included insight into the worker's current job, capabilities, and future career prospects. It also included advice on how to reach retirement age while still employed, how to prevent absenteeism close to retirement age, and favour a smooth transition into retirement. The selected counsellor was responsible for applying for a subsidy (EUR 600) to the government. The counselling was confidential and employers were not informed of the worker's participation in the programme. Guidance can be provided by private career counselling providers or trade unions (OECD, 2020[13])

To improve the effectiveness of career guidance services some countries undertake an in-depth skills profiling of the individual (e.g. through specialised skills assessment services called “*bilans de compétences*” in France¹⁴ and Belgium. In France this service can be financed through the individual learning account (see section 3) or may be financed by the employer. Often a cooperation among various actors becomes necessary. Some countries have developed one-stop-shops to ensure individuals get all the information they need to make informed decision in one place (e.g. in Luxembourg through the House of Guidance (*Maison de l’Orientation*), OECD 2019)¹⁵.

Recognition and validation of prior learning

Recognition and validation of prior informal learning, possibly linked with upskilling activities, helps to increase employability of workers as they make informally acquired skills transparent and marketable. Challenges for implementing validation systems targeted for low-educated adults and long-term unemployed are linked to the often low visibility of the related services and therefore a lack of knowledge about their availability and the lengthy processes of validation (Endrodi, 2019)¹⁶. For example, in Portugal a programme for validation of prior learning has been implemented since 2005. From 2005 to 2010, the New Opportunities Initiative (INO) provided low-qualified adults (employed workers, unemployed and inactive persons) with formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning and skills acquired in the course of working life. A new programme for the adult population was launched in April 2016 under the name of *Qualifica*, with a focus on lifelong learning. The programme’s objectives are to qualify half of the labour force with upper secondary education; achieve a 15% rate of adult participation in lifelong learning activities; and expand the network of *Qualifica* centres to 300, located across the country (OECD 2018)¹⁷.

1.2.5. Active labour market measures, the activities of PES and other institutional actors

Active labour market programmes are being used to support older unemployed to be in work. In some countries measures are not targeted to specific groups, as the individualised approach is the guiding principle. In this case older unemployed may still participate in ALMPs. Other countries have listed older unemployed among vulnerable groups of targeted ALMPs. There are also examples of measures that are specifically targeted to older workers. Short overview of measures targeted at older workers.

¹⁴ <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/droit-a-la-formation-et-orientation-professionnelle/bilan-competences>, <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/tout-savoir-sur-le-bilan-de-competences>, <https://www.bilandecompetences.be/> accessed 10 September 2022.

¹⁵ OECD (2019), *Getting Skills Right: Future-Ready Adult Learning Systems*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311756-en>

¹⁶ Endrodi, G. (2019). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update. Thematic report: The role of validation in an upskilling pathway for young people not in education and training (NEETS), adults with low skills and long-term unemployed people.* http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Upskilling.pdf

¹⁷ OECD (2018), “Key policies to promote longer working lives in Portugal”,

The following main approaches of ALMPs and employment services that are taken up by older unemployed, or that are designed for older unemployed, can be identified.¹⁸

Intensive counselling and coaching for workers with health limitations

Intensive counselling and coaching for older jobseekers (e.g. in the Netherlands, Switzerland as shown in more detail section 3 below). In the Netherlands, on-the-job coaching services are available for workers, including for workers with health impairments, that have been newly hired. This may be an external where someone works via a job coach organisation, or an internal job coach whereby this is arranged by the employer e.g. a colleague who has followed a specific course or training.¹⁹ An assessment of PES services indicates that employers find coaching-on-the-job of importance, as well as having a financial safety net (Berenschot 2019²⁰).

Delivering employment services and ALMPs targeted at older workers through local partnerships

Since employment barriers of older workers are complex, reinforcing cooperation between various partners at local level may improve effectiveness of employment services. In the box below an example of a partnership approach for older jobseekers receiving means-tested minimum income in Germany is shown in the box below.

¹⁸ See country notes available at: <https://www.oecd.org/employment/ageingandemploymentpolicies.htm>

¹⁹ Bekker, S. (2020), „Towards an inclusive labour market: ambitions of the Dutch Public Employment Service”, Host Country Discussion Paper – the Netherlands, , Peer Review on “Employer service delivery” 26-28 October 2020, Mutual Learning Programme, European Commission.

²⁰ Berenschot, 2019. Onderzoek naar de ervaringen van werkgevers met de Participatiewet; Uitkomsten van de derde meting van het ervaringsonderzoek Participatiewet, https://www.eerstekamer.nl/overig/20191120/onderzoek_naar_de_ervaringen_van/meta

Box 1.3. The programme Perspective 50+ in Germany

In the case of Germany, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs financed the “Perspective 50 Plus – Employment Pacts for Older Workers in the Regions” from 2005 to 2015. This programme, aimed to reactivate and integrate older workers (50+), predominantly those who are low- or semi-skilled and long-term unemployed, into employment. Furthermore, the programme worked to change the attitudes of employers as well as to identify and share best practices and innovative tools. 77 regional employment pacts were set up, in partnership with nearly all jobcentres (in charge of jobseekers receiving means-tested minimum income) as well as with a wide range of local stakeholders such as companies, chambers and various associations, trade unions, municipalities, training institutions, churches and social service providers. Services made available through the programme include coaching, profiling, training in communication skills, job application training, job training, internships and wage subsidies. An early evaluation of the first phase of the programme conducted in 2007 showed that its success rested on the combination of individualised counselling and coaching and proactive outreach towards employers. The most recent evaluation showed that placement results were better than in the case of more traditional approaches, including a model using less intensive counselling and more ALMPs (Knuth, Stegmann and Zink, 2014). However, participants were only rarely older than 60 years. Since the Perspective 50+ programme ended, the new focus has been on specific programmes for the long-term unemployed – in particular the very long-term unemployed. The incidence of long-term unemployment is high among older workers.

Source: OECD 2018, “Key Policies to promote longer working lives in Germany”

Employment incentives

The rationale for implementing wage subsidies is to compensate employers for a temporal lower expected productivity. Wage subsidies may therefore be suited to help overcome prejudices. Targeted wage subsidies have been implemented in various countries (e.g., in Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia). Social security contribution reductions or exemptions when hiring older workers have been applied e.g. in Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden.

Vocational training and rehabilitation

Vocational training and rehabilitation have been key active labour market measures for jobseekers with disabilities, among whom many are older workers. In order to identify who should get which type of support, an assessment of the workability of the individual is highly relevant, as are services for employers who want to get informed about possible support. One example of this approach is the Work Ability Reform in Estonia.

Box 1.4. Work ability assessment in Estonia

The Estonian PES developed and implemented a specific work ability assessment and introduced specific support measures for persons with reduced work ability and for employers willing to offer jobs for the target group. This included: (i) the design, conceptualisation, implementation and follow-up of the work ability assessment concept; (ii) the introduction of benefit payments based on individual work ability; (iii) the design and implementation of support mechanisms to employers and to persons with reduced work ability; (iv) the introduction of disability employment counsellors as new specialised staff along with staff training.

Source: European Commission (2019), Work ability reform: A way to enhance employment opportunities for people with long-term health problems or disabilities

1.3. Case studies

1.3.1. Tailoring lifelong learning to the needs of older workers and the low-skilled

Financial incentives to boost participation in lifelong learning: Personal training accounts (CPF) in France

France has developed and implemented an individual training account system. The French Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF) was created in 2015 and reformed in 2018. This instrument enables over time the accumulation of credits for the right to training for every individual since his/her entrance into the labour market. The account is entirely transferable from one occupation to another, and preserved when changing or losing one's job.²¹ Initially, these rights were measured in of hours of training but, since January 2019, the unit of measure has become monetary (Perez, Vourc'h 2020²²). For jobseekers and employees, the scheme is financed through a compulsory training levy on firms equivalent to 1% of gross wages²³ to be paid by employers with more than 11 employees, and 0.55% for micro-enterprises.²⁴ These accounts permit to finance certified training for an individual. Financing training by using the CPF may not be sufficient to get training financed. Additional funding is provided for the unemployed by the French PES Pôle Emploi, by employers and specific regional or sectoral institutions.²⁵

²¹ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/matching-skills/all-instruments/personal-training-account>

²² Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account – CPF), OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 245, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en>

²³ Wage base used for the social security contributions

²⁴ <https://www.urssaf.fr/portail/home/espaces-dedies/contributions-de-formation-profe/la-contribution-a-la-formation-p.html>, accessed 2 September 2022

²⁵ <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/les-chiffres-cles-de-mon-compte-formation-1>, accessed 18 August 2022.

The CPF was initially available to employees and jobseekers only. Since January 2018, the self-employed are also covered. Take-up has been low at the beginning. In March 2022 the national association of self-employed has engaged in a partnership with institution that is administrating the CPF.²⁶

Credits can be used to pay for training fees of programmes that are required to deliver a certificate (certification), skill assessments (bilan de compétences), actions for skill recognition, driving licenses, and training for business creation can also be covered. Training programmes undertaken are mostly non-formal (OECD 2019).²⁷

The reform of 2018 is linked to the individual right to training (new law from 2018 *Liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel*). Thus, the new law encourages the individual to become more involved in his or her own pathway and to participate in its construction. The autonomy and the empowerment of the individual are put at the heart of the changes in the system. Therefore, a free of charge voluntary career guidance has been introduced, the *Conseil en Évolution Professionnelle* (Career Development Counselling – CEP), available to employed and self-employed. The CEP is a service that is available for any employee who wants to upskill or reskill or get a career development advice. The counsellor may advice using the CPF or other sources of funding. Employed and self-employed can contact a website to take an appointment with a career guidance counsellor in his local area or region.²⁸ Career counselling is implemented by various actors who applied to carry out the scheme. Actors may include Chamber of Arts, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs and other institutions. Activities include career guidance on career development and change of career, type of available trainings and advice in how to finance the training, and advice on how to use the CPF and other financial resources. Guidance and follow-up is usually provided for a period of six months, with up to 6 meetings. It will be seen whether the new service will help to increase participation in training of those groups of workers who are anyway participating less in training (mainly the low-skilled ones).

The 2018 Law has also given a new definition of the role of professional branches regarding guidance and training policies for the employed. The new *Opérateurs de Compétences* (OPCOs) have been given competences regarding the management of apprenticeship, the support provided to companies, especially SMEs (with less than 50 employees), to define and finance upskilling measures. 11 OPCOs have been created by the 2018 Law; they group together one or several professional branches and help the companies that belong to those branches in defining and financing their strategies for developing workers' skills. They help them to define and finance their Plans for developing Competences (Plans de développement des compétences PDC)²⁹. The OPCOs also play a role in providing information and assistance to companies for accessing to measures for professional transitions and occupational mobility.

The employer is obliged by law to conduct a career development interview with his or her employee. During this interview he can give advice on how to use the CPF and explore additional ways of financing. The employer may also contact the CEP.³⁰ As the CPF is linked to an individual right, the choice for training will be made by the employee. Unemployed get access to advice through the French PES and people with disabilities out of work get access to vocational and career guidance through the specialised institutions Cap Emploi.

²⁶ <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/partenariat-un-gage-de-qualite-pour-les-auto-entrepreneurs>, accessed 2 September 2022

²⁷ OECD (2019), "Individual Learning Accounts: Design is key for success", Policy Brief on the Future of Work, OECD, Paris, <https://www.oecd.org/employment/individual-learning-accounts.pdf>.

²⁸ <https://mon-cep.org/>

²⁹ In English : Plans for developing competences

³⁰ <https://www.cci-paris-idf.fr/fr/entreprises/developpement/employeurs-compte-personnel-de-formation-cpf>, accessed 2 September 2022.

Previous to the reform only the unemployed received vocational guidance through Pôle Emploi, the French PES. Pôle emploi is maintaining its vocational and career guidance activities for the unemployed. For jobseekers, no approval for training is required from Pôle Emploi provided that there are enough hours of credit in the CPF. However, if Pôle emploi is financially supporting the training of unemployed than a discussion with the Pôle Emploi adviser is required. According to the information from the *Cour des Comptes* (the French Audit Court), the rate of access to employment in the six months following the end of training is slightly higher for CPF beneficiaries (53.6%) – normally associated with a voluntary choice – than for individuals who did not use it (50.7%). This may be attributable to a stronger commitment to training under the CPF on the part of jobseekers. For jobseekers who have a less strong commitment and motivation to engage in training, it may be crucial to systematically provide advice. Further studies will be needed to assess the effect of the CPF to enrol in training and access employment of other groups of workers. According to the qualitative evaluation of the scheme, among the 49 jobseekers questioned, there are three main reasons for using the CPF: (i) vocational retraining following layoff or difficulty in finding a regular job in the original branch of activity (21 cases); here, training is most frequently long and leads to a qualification; (ii) upskilling with a view to improving one's qualifications (17 cases); this corresponds to generally short training programmes in languages, IT skills, accreditations, etc., (iii) setting up a business (11 cases) (Perez, Vourc'h 2020).³¹

A change in implementing the CPF was introduced in November 2021 by offering users the possibility to directly buy the training. Training financed by the CPF can since then be chosen and bought directly from a specific web portal, proposing 227 844 different training offers by 16 324 training institutions, 3196 certifications (for 173 957 training courses). The average price of training is 2 123 Euros.³² Certified training according to the national registries are offered by 10 184 training institutions. The average duration of certified training is 67 hours and the average cost 2 366 Euro. 23% of the training sessions were provided remotely.³³ In addition there are also specific registries for certified training. Since the introduction of the possibility to buy directly the training, the share of women, young people and 30 and people aged 60³⁴ and above has increased (Dares 2020).³⁵ Monitoring data of the Ministry of employment show that take up of training by using CPF has nearly doubled between 2019 and 2020 (984 000 trainings in 2020, Dares). The possibility to directly buy the training, introduced in November 2019, has contributed to the increase.³⁶

As many women than men used the CPF.³⁷ Despite improvements in the take up, older people remain underrepresented: those aged 50 and above represented 18% of CPF users, while they made up 32% of the workforce (according to monitoring data of Dares from 2021³⁸).

³¹ Perez, C. and A, Vourc'h (2020), "Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account – CPF)", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 245, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en>

³² <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/les-chiffres-cles-de-mon-compte-formation-1>, accessed 18 August 2022.

³³ https://opendata.caissedesdepots.fr/pages/moncompteformation_offre0/ation_offre0/, accessed 18 August 2022.

³⁴ The number of those aged 60 and above tripled.

³⁵ https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/73f4ad7a502801600d1d2f258aff2212/Dares%20Resultats_compte%20personnel%20de%20formation_%202020.pdf

³⁶ <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/publication/le-compte-personnel-de-formation-en-2020>

³⁷ <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/les-chiffres-cles-de-mon-compte-formation-1>, accessed 18 August 2022.

³⁸ Dares (2021), « Le compte personnel de formation en 2020. Une hausse sans précédent des entrées en formation », octobre 2021.

Financial incentives provided by PES for employers to train workers 45+ in Germany

In Germany, firms hiring older workers can obtain a wage subsidy that can reach up to 50 percent of the gross wage costs and can last for up to two years. In parallel to this scheme to reduce the cost of older workers, policies promoting a specific focus on training have been designed.

From 2007 to 2019, the German PES *Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)* ran a training programme called **WEGEBAU**³⁹. The objective was to promote training within companies for the low-skilled and for workers aged 45 years and over. The programme subsidised training costs for employed workers aged 45 and above, as well as parts of the wage costs for the low-skilled. Only trainings leading to a certified qualification were eligible, and those could be chosen through the training voucher system run by the BA.

The rationale for this programme was to incentivize SMEs to train low-skilled and older workers, who are less likely to take-up training. This would also help overcoming labour shortages and increase the workers' employability.

Evaluations of the programme found that take-up was very low, pointing to the difficulty to outreach to and motivate both SMEs and low-skilled workers to invest in training (Dauth and Toomet, 2016⁴⁰). Notwithstanding low take-up, the programme was positively assessed by companies who used it. The effect on workers were positive: they were approximately 2.5 percentage points more likely to remain in paid employment two years after. The effect was even higher for part-time and older workers. The main driver for this effect is postponing early retirement. Further, they found that the programme had a positive effect on job satisfaction. WEGEBAU as a specific programme was terminated in 2018, however, in practice it is continued under new names: the **Qualifications Opportunity Act** in 2019 and the **Work for Tomorrow Act** in 2020⁴¹.

These two new laws expand the scope of the Federal Employment Agency to promote training. The agency can cover everyone (employees and unemployed), regardless of qualifications, age or firm size. Four other major changes were implemented. First, individuals have now a legal entitlement to a financial support in case of catching up on a vocational qualification. Second, the required duration of the training has been reduced from 160 to 120 hours. Third, the ceiling for subsidies were increased for all the components (training costs, as well as subsidies for wages). Fourth, a new procedure enables **collective applications** for the qualification of employees.

The subsidy is aimed at employees whose occupational activities are at risk of being replaced by technology or otherwise affected by structural change; the subsidy aims to help them adapt and develop their professional skills in order to better meet these challenges. Financial support can be granted for certified training lasting more than 120 hours (OECD 2021⁴²).

Subsidies are larger for small enterprises (100% of training costs) and for medium-sized enterprises (50%) than for larger enterprises (25%) or very large enterprises (15%); they are also larger for workers aged 45 and above. Wage subsidies during the training period are lower, but also linked to the company size

³⁹ WEGEBAU stands for Weiterbildung geringqualifizierter und beschäftigter älterer Arbeitnehmer im Unternehmen and is translated as "continuing training for low-skilled and employed older workers in companies".

⁴⁰ Dauth, C. and O. Tomett (2016), "On Government-Subsidized Training Programs for Older Workers", *Labour* 30(4).

⁴¹ The qualifications opportunity Act is called *Qualifizierungschancengesetz*. Work for Tomorrow Act of 2020 (*Arbeit von morgen Gesetz, 2020*. More info here: <https://www.iab-forum.de/nur-jeder-zehnte-betrieb-nutzt-die-weiterbildungsfoerderung-der-bundesagentur-fuer-arbeit/?pdf=21962>

⁴² OECD (2021), *Continuing Education and Training in Germany, Getting Skills Right*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1f552468-en>.

and worker age.⁴³ Employers can request the subsidy for each employee undergoing a specific training (minimum 120 hours certified training) or one request for several employees if they participate in the same training.

Table 1.1. Financial support for companies provided by the German PES, in 2022

	< 10 employees	10-250 employees	250-2490 employees	>2500 employees
Costs reimbursement for certified training	100%	50%	25%	15%
Support to wage costs during the training	75% (up to 100% for low-skilled)	50% (up to 100% for low-skilled)	25% (up to 100% for low-skilled)	25% (up to 100% for low-skilled)
Additional subsidies	+ 5% in case continuing training is fixed in a collective agreement of social partners + 10% in case of enhanced continuing training need in the company + 15% in of enhanced continuing training need in the company and a signed collective agreement on continuing training			

Source: Federal Employment Agency (BA), <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/unternehmen/finanziell/foerderung-von-weiterbildung>, accessed 17 August 2022

Employers have the right to get counselling by the PES on developing a concept for continuing training, as part of the PES employer services.⁴⁴ This consists of:⁴⁵

- The analysis of the current staff structure, and recommendations for human resources planning.
- Identification of development potential of employees and further training needs.
- Planning of training and their implementation.
- Applying for funding from PES.

A survey conducted in November 2020 indicates that take up is still low, because companies are not aware of funding possibilities. The same survey found a positive impact of counselling services provided to employers. Companies that used training advice from a local PES were familiar with the funding opportunity, which led to a significantly higher take up. The survey also shows that larger firms are more likely to know and use the financial support. Among companies that know but did not use financial support from the PES, half stated no appropriated training course was available, and a third did not want to get funding through the PES and assumed administrative costs were too high. 30% indicated that staff would not be interested in receiving training. A fourth of companies indicated the required minimum of 120 days of training were too long (Kruppe et al., 2021⁴⁶). The number of workers participating in PES financed continuing training increased from 15 000 to 30 000 between 2016 and 2019. Roughly two-thirds of participants were low-skilled and this has not changed much over this period (Klaus et al. 2020⁴⁷).

The Federal Government also plans to introduce a nationwide system of certification for informally acquired competences and an expansion of low threshold digital skills courses.

⁴³ <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Schwerpunkte/Nationale-Weiterbildungsstrategie/qualifizierungsoffensive.html>

⁴⁴ Advice on continuing training provided by the PES was first introduced in through a pilot in 2013, The programme supports employers with a tool for demographic staff analysis, assessment of training needs, selection of training providers and appropriate learning methods, and tracking outcomes from training, OECD 2021

⁴⁵ <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/unternehmen/finanziell/foerderung-von-weiterbildung>

⁴⁶ Kruppe, T., J. Lang and U. Leber (2021), „Nur jeder zehnte Betrieb nutzt die Weiterbildungsförderung der Bundesagentur für Arbeit“, IAB Forum 17. Mai 2021

⁴⁷ Klaus, A., T. Kruppe, J. Lang and K. Roesler (2020), „Geförderte Weiterbildung Beschäftigter Trotz erweiterter Möglichkeiten noch ausbaufähig“, IAB Kurzbericht 24/2020.

Developing integrated career guidance and learning: Skills Development Scotland

Scotland developed a comprehensive system of career guidance, through Skills Development Scotland (SDS), a public institution that delivers career information, advice and guidance (CIAG). SDS delivers CIAG universally: it is free to anyone at the point of need.

Citizens receive support either face-to-face, over telephone, or through a website: *My World of Work*. Trained career practitioners are equipped with recent available labour market intelligence: including labour demand on an occupational, industry and regional basis. They also have up-to-date information on the full range of routes and pathways that can be taken into these careers, including options for work-based learning. It is recognised that some customers require more support than others to make a successful transition to work or further learning. To increase equality of opportunity for all, SDS CIAG services target resources at those customers who require the most support.

A “needs matrix” is used to suggest the level of support need for each customer and the corresponding service offer they might receive. This need is then validated to confirm the service offer entitlement. Scotland recognises that “career guidance is a distinct, defined and specialist profession which demands a unique set of core skills and expects all career guidance practitioners to be professionally qualified” and fulfil a minimum of 21 CPD hours annually.

1.3.2. Supporting older unemployed and inactive back to the labour market

Providing effective targeted support to older jobseekers with low esteem and motivation to look for a job: IMPULS Programme of PES in Switzerland

The Public Employment Services in Switzerland (called *Office régional de placement ORP* in French and *Regionale Arbeitsvermittlung RAV* in German) have been implementing specific counselling approaches for jobseekers in different cantons for more than a decade. These include age-specific intensive counselling and coaching, mentoring and interdisciplinary or inter-agency cooperation, notably on health.

Public Employment Services have a great deal of autonomy at cantonal level (Switzerland is divided in 26 cantons). Each canton develops its own approaches and runs own programmes in addition to programmes designed and financed by the State Secretary of the Economy (SECO). SECO also exerts a coordination and benchmarking function for PES activities.

For more than a decade, several cantons have introduced own programmes, measures and activities targeted at older jobseekers (OECD 2014⁴⁸). Examples include the following:

Canton of Aargau

In the canton of Aargau, a pilot project “Avoiding Long-term Unemployment” was implemented, which included two new measures:

- i) Intensified counselling, which took place every 15 days during the first four months of unemployment. The counsellor devoted more time with the jobseeker and asked in return intensified job search activities of the participant.
- ii) A “45+” coaching/training seminar was implemented in small groups of 10 to 15 participants and lasted 20 days (it could go up to 54 days). On average, participants go to the coaching seminar after 50 days of unemployment (with a lot of variation but with a concentration around 30 to 80 days). The coaching was focused on assessing employability and detection of own competences,

⁴⁸ OCDE (2014), *Vieillesse et politiques de l'emploi : Suisse 2014 : Mieux travailler avec l'âge*, Éditions OCDE. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264222823-fr>.

fostering self-esteem, self-marketing, identifying and developing key competences in job search, and revision of initial job-search strategy of the jobseekers and profile of potential jobs.

The participants were between 45 and 63 years old and did not have access to early retirement. In order to participate in the programme, job seekers must be assessed to have a “medium” to “difficult” employability and have sufficient language skills to follow the coaching. In addition, only those can participate who have no prospect of participating in an in-work benefit measure, the “intermediate earnings”⁴⁹.

An experimental evaluation of this pilot programme was carried out by Arni (2012). The study revealed overall a positive impact of the pilot project. The method was based on the random assignment of the 327 participants to a treatment or control group depending on whether or not they benefited from the new measures. The evaluation related to the population of job seekers who became unemployed between December 2007 and December 2008. The significantly positive effect of the intensive counseling and coaching programme on the exit rate from unemployment to employment (+15%) was highlighted for the sub-population of people aged 45-54, but not for those aged 55 and over. The programme had no effect on the duration of unemployment, which would be a positive result according to the author because it shows that the lock-in effect is weak, at least for 45-54 years old. However, the study also showed that jobseekers reduced the intensity of their job search while waiting to participate in the coaching seminar. The long-term unemployment rate was reduced only slightly, and not significantly, although programme participants found employment more often. Another result is that job stability increased after unemployment, which avoided on average 20 days of future unemployment. One success factor of the coaching consisted in “disillusioning” jobseekers about their re-employment probabilities. It helped jobseekers to lower down their expectations on salaries. Initially, both jobseekers and counsellors tended to overestimate the chances of finding a job. Arriving at a more realistic conclusion has a positive impact on job search, especially since the intensification of advice and participation in the seminar make participants more motivated. The increased motivation for job search lasted for 90 days, however, the increase in satisfaction with life in general was found more sustainable. Another positive factor consisted in widening the potential field of tasks the jobseeker could perform. Under the new programme to fight long-term unemployment, the Canton of Aargau and its PES is currently offering coaching to older unemployed aged 50+ through an external coach.

Since 2015, the Canton of Aargau has also been implementing and mentoring programme Tandem 50+ (which has been now extended to the age group 40-49). This is a voluntary programme, implemented by the organisation Benevol. Mentors are providing on a voluntary basis some counselling and share insights into their knowledge in specific sectors and may use their networks for the mentees with the objective to help them find an adequate job. Participation of the jobseeker is also on a voluntary basis. The role of the implementing organisation is to match mentors and mentees.⁵⁰ Similar programmes have existed in other cantons e.g. in the Canton of St Gallen. In the Canton of St. Gallen, a Tandem 50+ was set up by an organization in 2008. This programme was targeted at older unemployed with good employability, and thus no major health problem and who were highly motivated to participate in the mentorship programme. The results of this programme seemed promising according to an OECD field visit but a rigorous evaluation has not been conducted on its impact (OECD 2014).

Recently, based on positive feedback of these and similar approaches the Federal level has included in the measure 5 of the *Impulsprogramm* 2020-2024 the objective to support targeted counselling and career guidance for older jobseekers. The *Impulsprogramm* was initially decided in 2019 and has the

⁴⁹ Intermediate earnings are paid to supplement the loss of income if an unemployed person accepts a job with a salary lower than the unemployment benefit.

⁵⁰ <https://www.ag.ch/de/verwaltung/dvi/wirtschaft-arbeit/stellensuchende-arbeitslose/angebote-fuer-stellensuchende-50plus>

objective to promote the labour force supply within Switzerland, targeted at hard-to-place unemployed. The measures were initially planned for two years and have been extended to 2024 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵¹ As of February 2022, 31 measures implemented in different cantons have been approved. Most of them rely on having specialised coaches, labour market integration specialists for elderly. Some of the measures combine intensive counselling, coaching, vocational guidance and continuing training measures. Examples include:

- Experienced ICT specialists with outdated ICT knowledge receive coaching and continuing training and workplace-based training to update their ICT engineering skills, implemented in the Canton of Zurich (Swiss ICT Booster 50+).
- In the canton Geneva older jobseeker may receive a combination of classroom training and internships to train their digital skills. A coach are following-up programme participants and provide counselling during programme participation.
- In several cantons specialised coaching teams at the PES are being built up (canton Zug). Job coaches may also act as PES counsellors. In three cantons, jobseeker 50+ receive coaching for job search. Some cantons offer job coaching to older jobseekers only after a certain period of unemployment (after 6 months in the canton Graubünden/Grison, 9 months in the canton of Solothurn, ...). One canton foresees a special job coach for people with mental health problems.
- In the canton Luzern intensive counselling by an external coach is offered to older jobseekers for a period of 4 months. The tasks of the job coach consists in establishing an analysis of potentials and competencies and placement,
- Job mentors are being introduced in the Canton of Tessin. Mentors have close relationships to the labour market.
- In several cantons interdisciplinary teams are being set up, or specialised integration counsellors support regular PES counsellors in case of multiple employment barriers, in particular health problems (and other barriers linked to the social situation, lack of skills, periods of long-term unemployment, etc) (Canton Vaud, Solothurn, Schaffhausen). In some of the cantons the approach includes also an inter-institutional cooperation with social services and services for the integration of people with disabilities.
- Training of PES counsellors to provide counselling services to older jobseekers in several cantons. The State Secretary has prepared online training material. PES counsellors are being trained in coaching (and other relevant services such as case management and supported employment)
- In the canton Solothurn, the measure includes also counselling to companies in which workers 50+ are at risk of redundancy. The worker would contact the local PES office. The PES counsellor would get in touch with the employer and explore possibilities to avoid unemployment.

Promoting labour participation of jobseekers aged 55-60 years in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the government and the social partners presented in 2016 a joint plan to improve the labour market outcomes of the citizens over 50. This action plan was a follow up to previous structural reforms and specific programmes that were already in place. The core of this approach was to support over-50s in finding a new job, to make workers more agile on the labour market and to make employers less hesitant to hire over-50s. Three different measures are of particular interest:

- a) The use of financial instruments to support the hiring of unemployed over-50s by employers

⁵¹ <https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/seco/nsb-news/medienmitteilungen-2020.msg-id-81318.html>, accessed 12 August 2022

- b) Public awareness campaigns to improve the images of the over 50s.
- c) The Talent 55+ programme

The first two measures are intended to increase the demand for older workers, while the third measure is designed to increase the supply and improve the human capital of older workers.

Financial incentives and reassurances to employers in the Netherlands:

To increase the demand for older workers, two financial instruments have been deployed in the context of the action plan: the wage cost advantage (until 2017 the mobility bonus) and the no-risk policy for older employees. Both instruments are intended to reduce the costs and the uncertainty of hiring older workers, to financially reassure employers to hire older job seekers.

- The wage cost benefit is a discount that employers can receive for three years when they hire a benefit recipient aged 56 or older.
- The no-risk policy compensates employers when older employees, whom they have taken on under the programme, become ill. An age limit of 62 years applied here, which has been lowered to 56 years for the years 2018 and 2019.

An evaluation⁵² shows that the familiarity with both instruments seems to have increased. However, a substantial increase in the use of the no-risk policy, despite the lowering of the age limit, has not materialised. For the wage cost advantage, a change in use is difficult to measure because the comparison must be made with the mobility bonus and there was a different implementation in previous years. Nevertheless, Regioplan cautiously concludes that the use of the scheme has not increased.

In-depth interviews show that one-fifth of the surveyed employers report that the instrument has made a reasonable or major contribution to the decision to employ the older person. However, the lion's share of employers indicate that the instruments have had no influence on the matching process. The picture that emerges from this evaluation is that the instruments generally do not make a major contribution to the recruitment of over-50s. Most employers mainly want a suitable candidate with few failure risks and see the instruments mainly as a pleasant extra.

Some further findings indicate three main results. First, the no-risk policy is relevant for small employers who find it difficult to bear the risk of absenteeism due to illness. Second, the no-risk policy is particularly interesting when there are doubts about a candidate's physical condition, for example due to previous absence due to illness or known injuries or complaints. Finally, the wage cost advantage is particularly interesting when an employee still has to follow training or needs extra guidance in the beginning.

Talent 55+

Talent 55+ is a programme that aims to reach and activate older jobseekers. It has been in place since at least 2007 under different prior names. Talent 55+ resembles a club for older unemployed, in which they meet coaches and employers to share information and tips on how to find jobs. The core of the approach is to support the over-50s in finding a new job, to make employees more agile on the labour market and to make employers less reluctant to hire over-50s. To this end, the action plan consists of various components that are partly aimed at supporting the elderly target group and partly at encouraging employers to hire the elderly.

The project aims at the reintegration in the labour market of older unemployed individuals. In simplest terms, Talent 55+ consists of networking groups of 55+ jobseekers moderated by specially trained job

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https://www.eerstekamer.nl/nonav/behandeling/20200929/brief_regering_eindrapport/document3/f=/vlcofrx0w9u1.pdf

coaches, supported by representatives from employers. The aim is to strengthen job search skills and work focus and to give older jobseekers insight into employers' priorities in recruitment. Noteworthy outreach elements are its strong peer-to-peer element, a parallel media campaigns to improve the image of older workers, and outreach to employers with the involvement of the social partners.

The Talent 55+ measure relies expressly on a group approach that combines regular service offerings of the PES with additional resources and support in the 55+-group moderated by a specially trained work coach. The regular labour market services available to older jobseeker in which the Talent 55+ measure is embedded include, for example, drafting a job search plan and analysis, counselling and support, use of a Competence Test Centre.

All 55-plus jobseekers receive face-to-face contact with the job coach after three months and become automatically eligible for the intensive service package and can participate in the networking meetings. A network training group consists of 12 to 15 persons who meet for 10 sessions. The meetings are moderated by the job coaches who are specialized in supporting older workers in the labour market. When a new group starts, the initial meeting is used to identify the needs of the group and what the group's focus should be. The work coach or trainer is free to select how the specific topics are addressed. Groups can also invite external speakers. After six meetings, the aim, in principle, is for the group to organize a minimum of two and a maximum of four meetings itself. The group is also encouraged to continue their network outside the PES. In networking 55-plus groups, the participants exchange information, offer each other tips and advice, use each other's networks, learn presentation skills, prepare CVs, and practice job interviews as well as looking for suitable job vacancies. Special training for the dedicated work coaches for the 55+ project is provided by the PES Working Academy. They learn how to train and motivate 55+ jobseekers, what networking means and how to make effective use of the network. The number of work coaches has increased gradually as the programme was expanded. Some temporary employees with specific expertise in the field also participate in the project.

The strong focus on networking among participants also permits to reach out to other older inactive or unemployed people, using the personal contacts of participants. The programme is accompanied by a media-campaign with the goal to improve the overall image of working at older ages. An evaluation of the programme⁵³ finds that it had a significant positive impact on jobseekers' attitude, self-knowledge and self-confidence.

Career re-entry: personalized counselling for inactive women in Austria

Austria is one of the OECD countries with the longest and most generous maternity leave benefits in the OECD. Consequently, women in Austria are often out of the labour force for a few years in their childbearing years, and Austria has a relatively low prime-age female labour force participation rate.

To tackle this challenge, Austria has established a national level programme targeted at prime-age inactive women: *Beruflicher Wiedereinstieg* (BW). The objective being the promotion of labour market re-entry of women after maternity leave. The main instruments of this programme are personalized counselling, intensive training courses as well as child-care subsidies.

As a first step, the PES completes a profile of the person. Subsequently, competence diagnostics and personalized and career counselling are offered. To overcome the difficulties of combining work and family responsibilities, the PES also offers practical solutions and detailed information for the supply of childcare and other household related services in the region.

⁵³ An evaluation of the program has been released in Dutch, available at the following link. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2020/05/07/evaluatie-actieplan-perspectief-voor-vijftigplussers>
A Summary in Dutch is also available here. <https://www.regioplan.nl/project/evaluatie-actieplan-perspectief-voor-vijftigplussers/>

In practical terms, the PES offers a course called "re-entry with a future". This course is specially tailored to the needs of women who have had career breaks to start a family. Women receive advice on their professional and personal skills, as well as an offer of personalized further education, to support them in their job search.

The course lasts usually between 10 to 12 weeks, lasting an average of 20 hours per week. Participants are required to be registered with the PES, to be unemployed (that is, to be actively looking for a job), and to have previously received childcare allowance. Financial support is also available for women who need it for childcare.

The implementation strategy of BW is to use the regional network of PES. The approach is that the local PES branch reaches out to potential beneficiaries a year in advance of the moment of re-entry into the labour force. The main tool of outreach for BW is their webpage, detailing the support provided for labour market re-entry information page as a tool of outreach. No proper evaluation of the programme has been conducted to evaluate its effectiveness in bringing inactive women back into the labour market.

2. Good practices on the integration of social services for older people

2.1. Non-take-up is a serious issue in Lithuania

The note on key challenges and barriers preventing older people from active participation in social life in Lithuania (Output 1, Activity 1.3) exposes the low uptake of several types of assistance provided by Lithuanian municipalities. At the same time, the note reveals elevated levels of unmet needs, while municipalities usually grant assistance when older people apply for them. Taken together, these findings point at potentially substantial non-take-up of social services resulting from older people not applying.

In close consultation with the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the integration of social services for older people was selected as the focal point for the collection of good practices, with the aim of reducing non-take-up. This reduction would promote active ageing as it would facilitate older people to live longer in their own homes, contributing to independent living. Good practices in the area of integration of social services for older people were identified through a combination of desk-based research and a brief questionnaire sent to a selection of OECD countries. All the cases described below go beyond treating older people as passive service recipients and instead aim to deliver services that support them in developing and maintaining active social lives.

This note may indicate possible pathways for a reform trajectory for social services for older people in Lithuania by bringing in good practices from other countries in this area. Based on the good practices presented here and the feedback received from Lithuanian stakeholders in terms of political, financial and administrative feasibility, policy recommendations for active ageing in the area of social life (Activity 3.1) will be developed further.

2.2. The case for improved service coordination to promote active ageing

Improving service accessibility is an important motivation for integrating social services (OECD, 2015^[1]). Having to look for information in different places to get a complete picture of services available can be a difficult exercise in particular for older people. Moreover, having to make multiple applications for services in a fragmented delivery system can be tedious and demotivating for people seeking assistance – in addition to the supplementary administrative burden it places on service providers as well.

Service integration can range from linkage on the one hand, in which different types of services are essentially provided by separate entities, each with their own responsibilities, funding and rules, and full integration on the other where various services and the financial and organisational resources they require are placed within the same structure. Between these two extremes, three levels of service coordination exist, in which case structures are created across service providers. In its simplest form, service coordination takes the form of collocation, bringing various services under the same roof. This improves accessibility of services as they can all be found in one place, and can stimulate informal coordination

between services. Collaboration is a higher form of coordination, and consists of network development and information sharing across different entities involved in service delivery. Collaboration improves for instance the referral process as service providers are better able to make recommendations fitting the individual's needs. Finally, cooperation is the highest level of service coordination, in which various service providers work together to deliver services. Case management can be applied both in fully integrated services and coordinated service delivery systems (collaboration, cooperation). A case worker responsible for service provision for a specific individual across services can further improve accessibility as it provides a trusted source of information and advice, and relieves the need for composing and processing multiple applications. The case worker then acts as a 'one-stop shop' for services and coordinates services across providers through sharing information.

This note provides international examples of the integration of various types of services, or horizontal integration. Realising horizontal integration may also require a certain level of vertical integration, referring to integration across different levels of government (OECD, 2015^[1]): horizontal integration of services at the municipal level may for instance require the development of data-sharing policies at the national level as well as a redistribution of financial means between levels of government. Indeed, the fragmentation of service delivery across different levels of government may act as an obstacle to service integration as costs and financial gains of integration may be situated at different levels of government. Hence, service integration also requires a certain level of financial integration through cross-charging, inter-institutional transfers, aligned budgets or pooled funding. Recommendations for financial integration across levels of government in the area of long-term care are developed in the parallel project on long-term care in Lithuania funded by DG REFORM and executed by the OECD.

A study on the determinants of non-take-up of social services in the Netherlands shows that bureaucratic obstacles to accessing services, whether real or perceived, are the most important source of service needs remaining unmet (Reijnders, Schalk and Steen, 2018^[2]). The most important obstacles are: a lack of comprehensive and comprehensible information on the services available and on how to access them; complex rules and procedures to access services; and, fragmented services resulting in having to make multiple requests and providing the same information several times. These experiences both make it more difficult to access services and discourage people to seek them as they do not feel treated in a personal and respectful manner. These obstacles can be eliminated through adapting service design, as the examples presented in this note show.

A second major reason for non-take-up revealed in the study is that people felt that asking for support would undermine their independence, which leads to postponing seeking help until their problems became more severe. This issue could be tackled through communication efforts, presenting services as support for independent living, as well as through boosting rehabilitation services. Furthermore, support is often sought in the wake of an event triggering people who had previously decided not to seek help to do so anyway (Janssens and Van Mechelen, 2022^[3]). Trigger events are either related to a sharp increase in needs, or to the provision of information (e.g. receiving advice). Service design can include an information-related trigger event to promote the uptake of social services.

The three good practices presented in this note provide different approaches to integration of services in order to improve older people's access to services that help boost their capacity to continue living independently in their own homes. First, the Danish system of preventive home visits is a prime example of an outreach policy, offering all older people the option of a home visit to assess their needs. Second, the customer guidance system in Tampere (Finland) is designed to help older people find the right service providers, coordinate service delivery across providers and stimulate the development of a market in support services. And third, Eskilstuna (Sweden) aims to boost older people's capacity to continue living at home with little or no need for support services through a policy of intensive reablement. The Danish and Finnish good practices provide ways to overcome non-take-up due to bureaucratic obstacles to service access, whereas the Swedish one particularly provides an answer to non-take-up resulting from the idea that applying for assistance would mean giving up one's independence.

2.3. Hjørring, Denmark: preventive home visits

Denmark requires municipalities to offer regular preventive home visits to their older citizens to assess their needs. While municipalities have to offer visits, older people are not obliged to participate in them. The goal of these visits is to boost the older person's autonomy and independent living. During the visits, which typically last about one hour, older people can confidentially discuss their situation and potential needs for support with a municipal employee. These visits allow for early discovery of issues that reduce an older person's social participation and can cover a wide range of topics affecting individuals' everyday lives, security and well-being, including their financial situation, health, housing, social networks and difficult situations such as abuse. Through the visits, older people can receive advice on activities and support available to improve their situation, information on preventive measures available to avoid the deterioration of their situation, and guidance on self-care and making good use of their own resources to bolster autonomy.

Preventive home visits for older people were introduced in 1996, and their coverage has been extended since. Now, the Danish Act on Social Services (*Lov om social service*, § 79 a) specifies that all individuals should be offered a home visit in the year they turn 75 and again in the year they turn 80, and that inhabitants aged 82 and older should be offered a visit at least once per year. Potentially vulnerable people should be offered home visits as of earlier ages: people living alone should be offered a home visit in the year they turn 70, and people with an elevated risk of having reduced social, mental or physical functioning should be offered a visit already as of age 65 in case of need. Preventive home visits do not have to be offered to people receiving both personal care and practical help at home, as their situation is closely monitored already.

Municipalities have a large freedom in deciding how to fulfil this legal requirement. Municipal approaches differ in particular in four areas: which groups are defined as high risk of reduced functioning; procedure to identify high-risk people; which part of the municipality is responsible for executing home visits; and, the use of tools during the home visit (Højgaard et al., 2019^[4]). In terms of identifying high-risk people, for instance, a guide from the Danish Health Authority presents good practices from different identification methods used in different municipalities, including collaboration of different units within the municipal administration, collaboration with general practitioners, hospitals or pharmacists, collaboration with non-state organisations such as churches or NGOs, contact with other citizens and searches in administrative databases (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2017^[5]). A separate guide for municipalities provides more information about preventive home visits such as legal information about data use, possible contact methods and topics to discuss during the visit (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020^[6]).

Municipalities can offer collective events as a replacement for a home visit if the older persons agree with this. Collective events are particularly suitable to provide information to older people who experience little need for assistance at the moment. Events typically last around three hours and in particular focus on providing information on prevention of deterioration of health and on the types of support available in case needs would arise. They can also be used to provide further information that might be of interest to older people, such as the availability of social activities and opportunities for volunteering.

For instance, Copenhagen Municipality by default offers a collective event for people aged 75 and an individual home visit for people aged 80. People older than 80 are explicitly offered the choice between an individual home visit or participating in a collective event every year. In every district of Copenhagen, the municipality organises two collective events per year for people turning 75, as well as two thematic events, one on living with chronic illness and one on healthy living (movement, diet, alcohol and smoking). The municipality aims to organise these events such that they are attractive to groups that are otherwise less

likely to participate.⁵⁴ To that end, programmes aim to be entertaining and are set up in collaboration with organisations offering activities for older people. They can be complemented with exhibition stands where older people can for instance undergo some tests (e.g. balance and blood pressure) and have an opportunity to have a conversation with various help and assistance providers.

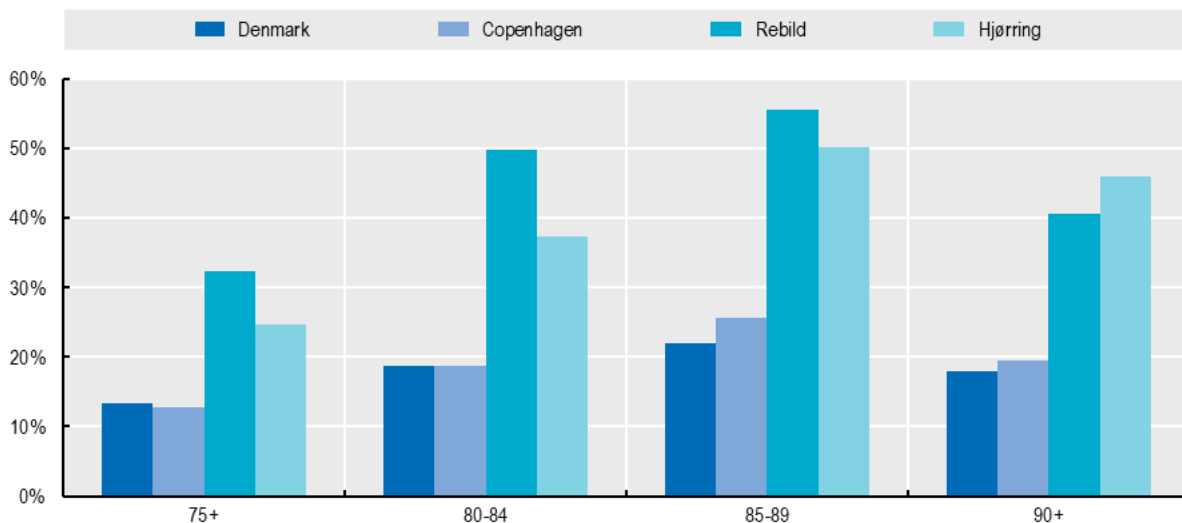
The law leaves it to municipalities to determine which groups of people have an 'elevated risk of having reduced social, mental or physical functioning' and would therefore particularly benefit from starting regular preventive home services earlier in life. Copenhagen Municipality identifies social groups as high-risk if they are more likely to lack a social network, be isolated or feel lonely, if they make use of municipal services markedly less than other social groups, and if they are in a situation that is likely to result in problems growing bigger without intervention. Based on these three criteria, the municipality identifies the following social groups as having an elevated risk of reduced functioning: widowers; people whose spouse moved to a nursing home; people who were born outside Denmark; people who recently moved to Copenhagen from another municipality or who recently moved to a different area of Copenhagen; people who received disability benefits or social assistance before retiring to an old-age pension; and, people about whom others have notified the municipality out of concern (typically family members, neighbours or home care workers). These social groups are selected as they are easily identifiable in the databases available to the municipality. Individuals in these groups can be offered either an individual home visit or participation in a collective event depending on their situation.

The share of older people effectively receiving a preventive home visit differs widely across Danish municipalities. On average, 13% of Denmark's inhabitants aged 75+ received at least one such visit in 2021, increasing to 22% for the age group 85-89, for whom a visit must be offered every year by law (Figure 1). Copenhagen Municipality scores close to the Danish average, with 13% and 26%, respectively. However, the municipalities with the highest uptake of home visits are Rebild and Hjørring Municipalities, both located in the North of Denmark, with one-third of inhabitants aged 75+ in Rebild Municipality and one-quarter of those in Hjørring Municipality participating in the programme. They are the only two municipalities where more than half of the population in the age group 85-89 received a home visit in 2021, corresponding to respectively 260 and 611 individuals visited in this age category.

⁵⁴ People with lower educational attainment and men are among those groups that are less likely to participate in the events.

Figure 1. Some Danish municipalities reach up to half of their older people through preventive home visits

Share older people having received at least one preventive home visit by age group, 2021



Note: The share for each municipality is calculated by dividing the number of people in the age group who received at least one preventive home visit in 2021 by the number of inhabitants in the age group on July 1st, 2021.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from Statistics Denmark (databases AED10A and FOLK1A)

The preventive home visit policies in Rebild and Hjørring Municipalities have some notable aspects that may contribute to their success, although deeper statistical analysis would be required to assess their effective impact on uptake of preventive home visits. Some aspects of the preventive home visit policies are alike in the two municipalities. In both municipalities, the home visits are executed by a nurse with specialisation in preventive health and health promotion, and both offer yearly home visits as of age 80 rather than 82 as required by the law. From then, people receive a letter every year with a date and time for an upcoming home visit, and the option to move or cancel the visit. This procedure makes uptake the default option, leaving people the option to opt out of a visit for this year (and the next in Rebild Municipality) if they so please.

In Rebild Municipality, inhabitants also receive a letter when they turn 65 and again when they turn 70 with the contact details to organise a home visit and information that can help them assess their health and living situation (opt in). When turning 75, people receive another letter describing what a preventive home visit entails and informing them they will receive a call from a nurse during which the need for a home visit is discussed. If a home visit is indeed deemed necessary, then during the visit itself a schedule for home visits until age 80 is agreed on. Rebild Municipality defines high-risk groups as people who have undergone many hospitalisations or hospitalisations for specific conditions, people who are in contact with other parts of the municipal administration revealing certain needs or risks, and people of whom the spouse lives in a nursing home. These people can be contacted in different ways, including by letter or through staff from other municipal departments. Moreover, people aged 65+ whose spouse or partner passes away are offered a visit within two months of the passing.

In Hjørring Municipality, the default option at age 75 is an invitation to a collective event. The invitation letter for the event also provides the option to receive a home visit instead (opt in). Of the approximately 700 inhabitants invited yearly, about 200 attend the event and some 15 choose to receive a home visit. The event consists of a plenary session followed by a market with different stands where people can get more information. In the plenary session, information is presented on the local health centre and preventive

home visits, a physiotherapist provides advice on how to build more activity into your daily life to preserve function, and some songs are sung together with a local choir. After a coffee break, the audience is split up in small groups of five people and guided from stand to stand. Different stands present what the municipality and its partners can offer for instance in terms of meal service and assistive devices, give information relevant for older people such as how to recognise early signs of dementia, and allow some local organisations such as the senior council to present themselves. Importantly, also the nurses executing the home visits are present at the event. Risk groups in Hjørring Municipality receive a letter following the opt-out procedure. This includes new refugees, people whose spouse passed away and people who recently received nursing care or completed a rehabilitation programme (e.g. for chronic illness, after hospitalisation or to quit unhealthy lifestyles such as alcohol or tobacco consumption). People typically receive the letter with the proposed home visit six to eight weeks after they lost their spouse or quitted a rehabilitation programme. The municipality also works closely with local stakeholders such as doctors and nurses who can indicate that a person may need a home visit.

Building trust is essential for older people to participate in the preventive home visits. In order to build trust, Hjørring Municipality aims to ensure that the home visits to a certain person are always done by the same person, who also signs the letter announcing the home visit. In addition, the invitation letter is designed to boost people's trust in the home visit process. It is addressed at the recipient, specifies why the person is offered a home visit, and stresses that the visit is confidential and voluntary. It lists a couple of questions people can use to decide whether a home visit would be of interest to them, a specified date and time for the visit, and contact details for more information. The message is written in the first person and signed by the person who will perform the home visit, in principle the same person who contacted them before. People receive a text message reminding them of the visit a day before or, in case the contact number is a landline, a call in the morning of the visit.

There is agreement across Danish municipalities that preventive home visits are an important but resource-intensive tool to identify older people with needs (Højgaard et al., 2019^[4]). This is a fortiori the case when an opt-out procedure is used, as in Rebild and Hjørring Municipalities. The opting-out procedure, in which people receive a letter with a date and time of a scheduled visit and the option to either move or cancel it, considerably improves uptake of preventive home visits. It does so particularly among lower-educated and vulnerable people who are less likely to opt in of a service offered, and therefore contributes to reducing inequality in uptake. On the flip side of the coin, the organisation of enrolment in home visits through an opt-out procedure is very demanding for municipal administrations (Højgaard et al., 2019^[4]).

One review of randomised control trials finds that, across the board, preventive home visits do not impact a wide range of outcomes of both the health and well-being of older people (Mayo-Wilson et al., 2014^[7]). This could be the consequence of the impact of home visits fading over time, which means that visits should happen more frequently in order to be effective in the longer term. One randomised control trial found that older people receiving a home visit did not experience the same decline in health-related quality of life over the following year as those who do not receive a visit, but caught up with the latter two years after the visit (Liimatta et al., 2019^[8]). Yet, the large variety of outcomes indicates that the effectiveness of home visits likely depends on programme characteristics (Meinck et al., 2004^[9]). For instance, programmes of home visits to older people starting at relatively younger ages as well as those including a clinical assessment would be more effective in producing better health outcomes (Huss et al., 2008^[10]).

As the effectiveness of preventive home visits is unclear, also their cost-effectiveness is subject to uncertainty. One review finds little evidence for cost-effectiveness of preventive home visits, although some included studies did show the programme was cost-effective whereas some others, particularly programmes with high administrative and management costs, resulted in higher expenditure than usual care (Looman, Huijsman and Fabbricotti, 2018^[11]). Another review, however, found that preventive home visits can have a positive impact on older people in terms of quality of life, functioning and mortality, without significantly impacting total costs, meaning that they are cost-effective (Liimatta et al., 2016^[12]). Expenditure may initially rise upon introduction as the cost of the visits themselves and of the

supplementary services offered in the wake of a visit are immediate, though savings are made later, for instance in the form of delayed admission to a nursing home.

Preventive health visits in Lithuania are likely to be more successful in terms of increasing take-up of services available and producing positive health outcomes than would be revealed from the reviews on their effectiveness elsewhere. As service use and health in old age generally are better in the countries where preventive home visits have been studied extensively – in particular Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (Højgaard et al., 2019^[4]; Huss et al., 2008^[10]) – the room for improvement through introducing these visits is more limited. As documented in the Note on key challenges and barriers preventing older people from active participation in social life in Lithuania (Activity 1.3), there is a high level of hidden needs that remain unmet among older Lithuanians. As preventive home visits are a great tool to reveal hidden needs, they are likely to be more effective in Lithuania than in the countries where they have primarily been studied.

2.4. Tampere, Finland: customer guidance

Customer guidance through a one-stop shop is at the core of Finland's system for delivery of services to older people. The underpinning principle is that it should not be left to the older person to find out which services are available and where to find them: a single contact point makes it easier for older people to access services and for service providers to streamline service delivery (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2020^[13]). Finnish law requires that a needs assessment is executed within seven days after the municipality receives a request for services or for a needs assessment, or if the situation of a person already receiving services has changed. If the assessment reveals a need for assistance, a personalised service plan should be compiled immediately after.

Finland-wide, the Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) is used to assess the needs of an older person living at home as well as the quality of care received. The primary focus of RAI as an instrument is on health, care and functional capacity, but it also contains information on participation in social activities, availability of social support networks, needs in terms of (instrumental) activities of daily life and accessibility of the person's home.⁵⁵ By using the same instrument nation-wide, it is possible not only to assess how the well-being of a person compares to that of the older population in general, but also to evaluate how specific municipal policies and service providers perform relative to others. The law further prescribes that a single employee is responsible for monitoring the older person's needs and the execution of the service plan, and for providing advice to the older person regarding the services and benefits available and linking them to service providers as needed. Guidance and counselling services should take a holistic approach and provide the older person with advice and guidance on a wide range of topics including home-based and digital services, housing, mobility, assistive devices, benefits and suitable hobbies or social activities.

The city of Tampere implemented its system of the 'home market' (Kotitori) in 2009. In this system, services are delivered by a variety of public and private providers. The service broker contracted by the city plays a central role as service integrator and coordinates the delivery of services across providers (Anttiroiko and Valkama, 2016^[14]). If an older person is in need of some support to continue living at home, the older person or someone else on her behalf can contact the broker – there are separate application procedures depending on whether the older person consented to the authorities being informed about their situation. The broker assigns a case manager who provides information and counselling on the types of assistance available to the older person, assesses their needs and develops a tailored service package and care plan

⁵⁵ An overview of other assessment scales used in long-term care in OECD countries is provided in the parallel OECD project on long-term care in Lithuania.

together with the older person. The services offered include home care services as well as services supporting older people to live independently, such as help with cleaning, cooking and shopping, and the provision of assistive devices such as walking frames or security bracelets allowing the older person to contact a helpdesk available 24/7. Furthermore, older people can contact their case manager with other needs connected to independent living (e.g. need for a hairdresser, for repairs in the home, for internet connection), in which case the case manager assists them in finding the required service. As it is the municipality that determines a person's eligibility to publicly funded long-term care, case managers from the service broker closely collaborate with case managers from the municipality to determine the extent to which the cost of the service package is paid out of pocket or covered by the municipality (Erlandsson et al., 2022_[15]). The service broker then has to organise the assistance through subcontracting care and service providers, and is responsible for quality control of the services delivered. In addition, older people can walk into 15 'local markets' across the municipality to seek information or guidance. The local markets also organise social activities and lectures.

The Kotitori system has been successful in developing quasi-markets for home-based services and assistive equipment. It differs from a standard private service provision system where it usually is the person needing assistance who directly purchases care from a provider. Instead, the service broker functions as a one-stop shop and ensures integration of services that may be provided by a variety of both public and private providers (Tynkkynen et al., 2012_[16]). Hence, the system largely relieves the older person or their family members from having to search providers and develop their own service provision networks, as case managers provide information on the available options and assist in choosing an appropriate provider. In principle, also larger organisations providing a wide range of services themselves could take up the role of case manager, although one of the reasons the Kotitori system was opted for was to avoid the development of an oligopoly in the market of support services for older people (Tynkkynen et al., 2012_[16]). The system has been particularly successful in nurturing a network of small- and medium-sized service providers compared to service providers being contracted directly by the municipality, as administration-led tendering procedures typically result in the exclusion of smaller players (Anttiroiko and Valkama, 2016_[14]).

The service broker is managed through bonuses and penalties depending on its performance on a set of outcome measures (Tynkkynen et al., 2012_[16]). For example, outcome targets to award a bonus include the number of transfers to sheltered housing and hospitalisations. Three years after its implementation, the municipality of Tampere estimated that the Kotitori system has been effective and even generated savings (Tynkkynen et al., 2012_[16]).

2.5. Eskilstuna, Sweden: reablement

Much like in Denmark and Finland, older people in Sweden needing assistance are entitled to a personal service plan and case manager (OECD, 2015_[11]), and municipalities have the primary responsibility to ensure that the necessary social services are provided. In Sweden, Eskilstuna municipality stands out for its alternative approach to helping older people: the municipality aims to boost independent living through reducing the need for home help services.⁵⁶

In Eskilstuna, a person needing help can contact the reception unit of the municipality's assistance office, which provides a single access point to all social services. The reception unit consists of administrators with expertise in services, housing adaptation and service pricing. It provides information and advice, and helps people with applying for assistance for themselves or submitting a notification of concern about someone else. After applying for assistance, a personal case worker is assigned who develops a service

⁵⁶ Reablement also exists in Denmark, where it was made mandatory in 2015. Eskilstuna's reablement policies were developed based on earlier experiences with reablement in Denmark.

package together with the older person. Alternatively, the applicant can also be assigned to reablement in the home, consisting of a period of rehabilitation with intensive support and retraining (see below). Currently people are in particular directed towards the reablement programme if the application for social services follows on a stay in hospital as the programme is still being rolled out since a successful pilot ended in 2018, but the aim is to ultimately have all people applying for assistance services undergo reablement (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, 2020_[17]). Reablement lasts for a period of three months, after which a person is transferred to regular home care services. As needs change over time, the older person can contact their personal case worker directly to modify the service package.

Reablement entails a short period of home-based rehabilitation supported by a multidisciplinary team targeting both medical and psycho-social needs, with the aim of strengthening or maintaining functional capacity and thus facilitating people to live their own lives (Gustafsson et al., 2020_[18]). Reablement focuses both on (re-)training people to independently execute (instrumental) activities of daily living as well as participate in daily activities that are important to the person. The focus on what the person finds important is vital both to boost motivation for rehabilitation and to ensure that the person can maintain their existing lives and social networks to the maximum extent possible. The multidisciplinary team consists of (assistant) nurses, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a psychologist and a support service assessor, who all underwent a four-week course on reablement. The older person can receive visits of members of the reablement team multiple times per day, and the assigned case manager spends double the amount of time with the recipient compared to when in the regular home care track. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary team has regular meetings to discuss the development of the older person and intermediary goals, and team members have their offices are close to each other to facilitate communication between them.

The project has been very cost-effective as the cost of the reablement programme is already covered by savings made in social services and housing adaptations within the first year of applying for assistance, whereas reablement still reduced service use and need for adaptations two years after applying for assistance (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, 2020_[17]). Eskilstuna indicates that, on average, people undergoing reablement require 11 hours of assistance in the home per month, compared to 34 hours among those who did not undergo reablement. Moreover 12% of people who entered the reablement programme had to move to special housing for assisted living within one year, compared to 31% in the group of people who did not receive reablement services. It is unclear to what extent these numbers are the consequence of undergoing reablement itself or of selection into the reablement programme.

2.6. Conclusion

The three good practices presented in this note provide alternative pathways for increasing older people's capacity to participate actively in society through reducing non-take-up of support services. Yet, all three good practices have some basic characteristics in common. They all employ the principle of a one-stop shop, which significantly reduces bureaucratic obstacles for older people to access social services. Moreover, they apply more proactive strategies to identify people who might need support, whether through outreaching policies, the option for a third person to express concern about someone or through actively assisting a person in filing an application for help. And in all three good practices, a case manager designs a service plan together with the older person and is responsible for monitoring the older person and the execution of the plan. A home visit is an essential part of assessing an older person's needs and designing a service plan, as it provides a more confidential setting to discuss the person's needs, desires and social network, and allows for a better assessment of the person's living environment.

Hence, whichever reform pathway Lithuania aims to take in this area, these are key ingredients of a reform. At the same time, the three good practices presented here have very different characteristics and seek to fulfil different although combinable objectives: preventive home visits are a good tool to identify older people with unmet needs and extend service coverage; the home market system can serve as an incubator

for small and medium-sized businesses providing support services; and, reablement can be an effective tool to reduce the need for support services of older people. For the development of recommendations and the subsequent reform roadmap, Lithuanian stakeholders will have to indicate which objectives they prioritise, and which aspects of these different good practices they deem desirable.

2.6.1. Key findings

The note aims to provide reform options for tackling non-take-up of social services in Lithuania through bringing in international experiences. Non-take-up of support services results in unmet needs and thus a reduced capacity to maintain an active life and continue living in the own home. It is in particular the result of bureaucratic barriers to information about and access to services, as well as of the idea that asking for assistance would mean to give up one's independence. The three good practices presented here provide alternative ways to design social services in a way that reduces non-take-up. The good practices from Denmark (Hjørring) and Finland (Tampere) reduce bureaucratic obstacles to service use, whereas the one from Sweden (Eskilstuna) primarily tackles the feeling that asking support would mean to give up one's independence.

- In all three good practices, there is a one-stop shop to apply for assistance. The contact point can provide information on the services available and can help assist in filing an application for assistance. All three municipalities also offer an option for others, like friends or neighbours, to express concern about a person, in which case the municipality takes the initiative to investigate whether indeed there is a need for assistance.
- In all three good practices, a case manager is assigned to the older person needing assistance. The case manager is knowledgeable about the types of support available in the locality and can link the older person to service providers as needed. In each of these examples, the case manager develops an integrated care plan together with the older person meeting the latter's needs, and is responsible for monitoring the evolution of the older person and the execution of the care plan.
- Proactively contacting older people at critical moments, such as after hospitalisation or loss of a spouse, can help older people receive any needed support earlier.
- Preventive home visits may be an effective strategy to reveal unmet needs and thus reduce non-take-up and extend coverage of the services provided.
- Contracting a private service broker to run the one-stop shop can boost the development of a local service market, as it leaves more room for smaller businesses than public procurement processes, which typically favour larger suppliers.
- Reablement, i.e. intensive rehabilitation and retraining of people applying for assistance, may be a successful strategy to boost people's capacity to live independently in their own homes and reduce the need for support services.

3. Strengthening the participation of older people in public and political life

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. The participation of older people in public and political life in the context of an ageing population

This note discusses policies to promote active ageing, which is defined as “helping people stay in charge of their own lives for as long as possible as they age and, where possible, to contribute to the economy and society” (European Commission, 2018^[1]). In particular, this note focuses on governance arrangements to promote the participation of older people in public and political life and strengthen the relationship between them and public institutions.

In the context of population ageing and its far-reaching impacts on social security and protection systems, labour market dynamics and family and intergenerational relations, the formulation and implementation of active ageing policies has become essential to the well-being and social inclusion of older people across OECD and EU member countries. Yet, evidence collected by UNECE across 56 countries shows that while many countries have introduced cross-sectoral ageing policies to improve the situation of older person, less emphasis has been put on ensuring policy coherence across policy areas and different levels of government (UNECE, 2021^[2]). In addition, older people often lack the tools, channels and opportunities to actively contribute to the decisions that affect them (UNECE, 2021^[2]). Strengthening the relationship between older people and public institutions and their association with democratic processes is therefore crucial to the effective implementation of active ageing policies.

In this context, the Government of Lithuania is seeking to increase the participation of older people in public and political life as part of its active ageing agenda. Based on the findings from the OECD assessment carried out between September 2021 and September 2022, this note identifies good practice examples in the following areas:

- **Participation of older people in political life⁵⁷ at national and local level:** including awareness raising activities to tackle ageism; intergenerational dialogue initiatives; activities to help older people exercise democratic rights by leveraging civic and citizenship literacy⁵⁸; and

⁵⁷ Participation of older people in public and political life includes their ability to meaningfully enjoy their political rights on an equal basis with other age groups. These rights include voting, being included in public consultations, taking part in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of their country, and forming organisations to represent the views of older people (UNECE, 2021^[2]).

⁵⁸ Civic literacy can be broadly defined as the knowledge that people create, use and preserve when they take part in civil society, including understanding their individual and collective rights. This is the first step towards understanding the impact on public policies and how to influence the policy-making process. Civic skills, which are part of civic literacy,

- **Relationship between older people and public institutions/municipalities:** quality and accessibility of public services (e.g. one-stop-shop service delivery for older people); coordinators/focal points for older people.

To draw good practices from a variety of approaches in these areas, the note identifies good practices from the following countries:

- **Finland**, where the National Programme on Ageing 2030 is being implemented to promote volunteering among older people, provide a one-stop-shop for public service delivery and establish elderly citizens' councils at local level;
- **Ireland**, where a National Positive Ageing Strategy was formulated with a focus on volunteering, civic engagement and combatting ageism and has set up a network of older people's councils at local level; and
- **Austria**, where a focal point in charge of older persons was established at sub-national level and designed a Federal Plan for Senior Citizens ("Ageing and Future") with commitments to foster intergenerational dialogue.

This note is structured as follows: it first outlines the context and the methodology, and then presents good practices respectively from Austria, Finland and Ireland. It provides concrete examples and insights relevant to the Lithuanian context.

3.1.2. Context and methodology

The OECD, together with the European Commission (DG REFORM), are providing technical support to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania to strengthen the participation of older people in public and political life as part of its active ageing agenda. This note delivers on Activity 2.1 of this project and provides a concise presentation of examples of government efforts in Austria, Finland and Ireland to promote active citizenship among older people.

This note is based on desk research, as well as a review and analysis of existing studies and materials. It also builds on targeted discussions and interviews with government representatives from Austria and Ireland. This note also draws on the findings of an international workshop with public officials from different ministries and municipalities as well as peers from EU countries held in Vilnius on 18 October 2022 and incorporates the feedback gathered during the workshop.

3.2. Austria

3.2.1. Policy context

Austria has been at the forefront of active ageing policy planning and implementation in the European Union (Mukasa and Schoenmaeckers, 2021^[3]). The Government's latest active ageing policies are outlined in the Federal Plan for Senior Citizens "Ageing and the Future", which has been in force since 2012. The Plan includes 14 areas of action, including social and political participation, social security and health, education, nursing and care, discrimination and violence, housing, intergenerational relations and infrastructure (BMASK, 2012^[4]). To institutionalise dialogue between policymakers and representatives of senior citizen organisations on age-related issues, the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection also formed the Federal Senior Citizens Advisory Board. The Board has informed strategic active ageing policies, including the Federal Plan for Senior Citizens, and serves to foster

include abilities related to organising, communicating, making decisions and thinking critically when engaging in public life (OECD, 2017^[59]).

intergenerational relations (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]). The scientific basis for an update of the “Ageing and the Future Plan” will be prepared by experts and available by 2025.

Box 3.1. Federal Senior Citizens Advisory Board

The Federal Senior Citizens Advisory Board was set up on the basis of the amendment of the Federal Senior Citizens’ Law in the year 2000. It falls under the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, and is in charge of making proposals for social, economic, health, culture and housing policy relevant to senior citizens. The Board holds an Annual Meeting to discuss ageing policies, under the chairmanship of the Minister for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. It includes representation from Senior Citizens Organizations, Federal Provinces, Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, Austrian Association of Municipalities, the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy, and members from the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

Further, it serves as a platform for institutionalised dialogue between policymakers and senior citizen organisations’ representatives on age-related issues in Austria, including the integration of older persons in social and political life, and intergenerational solidarity. Source: (Österreichischen Seniorenrat, 2021^[6]; UNECE, 2021^[2])

Fostering older people’s participation in public and political life in Austria is one of the driving goals of the “Ageing and the Future” Plan (BMASK, 2012^[4]). Austria has a long tradition of supporting elderly people through its welfare system. In fact, more than 70% of social expenditure was spent on old age and healthcare benefits in 2019 (Mukasa and Schoenmaeckers, 2021^[3]). To shift away from traditional conceptions of older people as solely being welfare recipients, the government has prioritised the introduction of active ageing policies to ensure elderly people continue to develop their potential and participate in public and political life as they age (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]). A range of psychosocial projects encouraging active engagement of senior citizens in public life and the appointment of elderly representatives to ensure older people’s needs are reflected in public decision-making (e.g., through the Senior Citizens Advisory Board) are some examples of such measures (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]).

Further, strengthening the relationship between older people and government institutions has been a strategic priority in Austria, both at a national and sub-national level. National-level reforms in service provision over the last decade, and particularly those related to the mobility of senior citizens, reintegration into the labour market and long-term care, have been informed by a number of studies and consultations targeting older people to ensure service quality and accessibility (Mukasa and Schoenmaeckers, 2021^[3]; Trukeschitz, Österle and Schneider, 2022^[7]; Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]). As a result, the ‘Ageing and Future Plan’ prioritises whole-of-government approaches to service delivery and enables the coordination of quality services to foster active ageing. This is done through the representation of all Ministries in the Federal Senior Citizens’ Advisory Board and the implementation of instruments to foster their policy dialogue about cross-sectoral challenges related to active ageing. While the central state is responsible for framework legislation, Austria’s federal system largely leaves the enactment of regulations and delivery of public services to each of the nine Laender (OECD, 2010^[8]; Trukeschitz, Österle and Schneider, 2022^[7]). This results in differences on how each Laender provides, monitors and evaluates services related to national-level statutes. This can result in Laender being more responsive to local needs, such as the provision of specialised social care initiatives in rural communities (UNECE, 2017^[9]).

3.2.2. Participation of older people in public and political life at national and local level

Awareness-raising initiatives to tackle ageism

In Austria, no specific legislation has been put in place to address ageism, but a number of legal instruments serve as a basis to prohibit discrimination more broadly. For instance, Article 7 of the Austrian Federal Constitution, the so-called equality principle, prohibits discrimination on the basis of characteristics including gender and disability. Further, the EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC⁵⁹ was implemented into Austrian law, leading to amendments in the Equal Treatment Act, the Austrian Federal Equal Treatment Act, and anti-discrimination and equal treatment laws of all Austrian provinces with a view to combat discrimination in employment and occupation based on age, among others (Ombud for Equal Treatment, Anti-Discrimination Office Styria and Hopf, 2021_[10]).⁶⁰

Beyond existing legal frameworks, the government has developed strategies to tackle age-related discrimination. For instance, the Austrian Federal Plan for Seniors devotes a chapter on tackling age discrimination. Addressing stereotypes, prejudices and social exclusion is also discussed across most sections of the Plan (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022_[5]). Further, efforts are being made to better understand the impact of ageism. In March 2021, a report was produced by the Austrian Ombud of Equal Treatment which shows that negative biases against older people can disrupt their access to employment, adequate healthcare, transport, personal finance services, loans, and insurance (Ombud for Equal Treatment, Anti-Discrimination Office Styria and Hopf, 2021_[10]). At a regional level, the Styrian government has produced yearly reports on discrimination across various demographic groups, including older people, to inform policymaking since 2018 (Anti-Discrimination Agency Styria, 2019_[11]).

Promoting accurate portrayals of older people and ageing in the media

Every year since 2009, the Austrian Senior Citizens Council and the Austrian Journalists' Club have awarded non-cash prizes to contributions in journalism and advertising that promote accurate portrayals of older people. Since 2022, the "a·g·e Award" is awarded in the categories Media, Working Environment and Society to create public awareness on the topic of old age.

Senior Citizen Guidelines

In alignment with the principles established in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the 'Ageing and Future Plan', the *State* of Burgenland has developed the "Senior Citizen Guidelines 2030" (Seniorinnenleitbild) to reduce ageism and prejudice against older people (Krajasits, 2019_[12]). These guidelines have the goal of strengthening intergenerational solidarity and reframing ageing from being a 'weakness' to instead offering an opportunity to acquire new perspectives.

⁵⁹ The EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC sets up a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, empowering it to combat discrimination based on religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation on the labour market. The Directive lays down general minimum rules on, conditions of access to employed or self-employed activities; vocational training; employment and working conditions; and membership of and involvement in an organisation of employers or workers or any other organisation whose members carry on a particular profession (European Commission, 2000_[51]).

⁶⁰ Viennese Anti-Discrimination Act, Wr LGBl 35/2004; Burgenlandian Anti-Discrimination Act, Bgl LGBl 84/2005; Lower Austrian Anti-Discrimination Act, N. LGBl 24/2017; Upper Austrian Anti-Discrimination Act, O. LGBl 50/2005; Salzburgian Equal Treatment Act, Slzb LGBl 31/2006; Styrian Equal Treatment Act, Stmk LGBl 66/2004; Carinthian Anti-Discrimination Act, Kntn LGBl 63/2004; Tyrolian Anti-Discrimination Act, T LGBl 25/2005; Vorarlbergian Anti-Discrimination Act, Vlbgl LGBl 17/2005.

Intergenerational dialogue initiatives

Fostering intergenerational dialogue and solidarity in Austria is one of the 14 areas of action of the Federal Plan for Senior Citizens “Ageing and the Future” and is a key aim of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]). Efforts have concentrated on funding projects that provide opportunities for different generations to engage in activities together through volunteering and participating in psycho-social initiatives to strengthen social cohesion.

Helping older people exercise their democratic rights

Citizens’ Councils, deliberative democracy at a subnational level

Austria has pioneered efforts to build civic literacy and foster democratic participation of constituents at a subnational level. Most prominently, the State of Vorarlberg amended the State Constitution in 2013 to develop and institutionalise Citizens’ Councils (or Bürgerrat in German) (Office for Future Issues, Vorarlberg State Gov., 2014^[13]). These serve as mechanisms to foster a deliberative approach to citizen participation in policymaking processes at a State level. Overseen by the Office of the Future Affairs, Citizens Councils follow a set of guidelines produced to empower constituents to initiate deliberative processes themselves. (OECD, 2020^[14]). Typically composed of between 12 and 16 randomly selected constituents, the Citizens’ Councils deliberate for 1.5 consecutive days on an issue of public interest. By gathering in small groups, participants exchange ideas about their needs, desires, suggestions and future prospects in relation to the topic issue. This exchange is guided by a trained facilitator, which encourages participants to speak on the subject without following a set agenda. The results of this deliberation are then summarised into a set of ideas that are prepared to inform recommendations to policymakers. Resulting ideas are discussed and enriched at a ‘Citizens’ Café’ debate open to the general public. Once the results of the debate have been incorporated, a set of recommendations is conformed and presented to public authorities, who have the legal obligation to consider them in their policymaking process (Office for Future Issues, Vorarlberg State Gov., 2014^[13]).

Beyond population-wide initiatives to build citizenship literacy and skills to exercise democratic engagement, Austria has the already mentioned Senior Citizens’ Advisory Board at the federal level, as well as several advisory councils at subnational level.

The task of representing the interests of senior citizens is also fulfilled by Austria’s Senior Citizens Council, the country’s established umbrella organisation of senior citizens’ organisations. It provides a non-partisan discussion forum for all matters affecting older people, and ensures older people are well represented in policymaking. The Council also provides comments to the government on relevant pieces of legislation and governance issues, and negotiates with the government on topics including annual pension adjustments (Österreichischen Seniorenrat, 2021^[6]).

State-level advisory boards have also been instrumental to fostering the involvement of senior citizens in government decisions at a local level. They exist in all of Austria’s Laender and in many municipalities. The State of Vorarlberg’s Senior Citizens’ Advisory Council, for instance, was instrumental to develop 12 local-level Senior Citizens’ Advisory Boards in Vorarlberg municipalities (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]). Similar arrangements have been put in place in the State of Carinthia to represent the interests of older people (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2022^[5]).

Civic and citizenship literacy and non-formal learning

The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection has developed a number of life-long learning initiatives to strengthen older people’s participation in public and political life. For example, Salzburg Adult Education was commissioned by the Federal Ministry to deliver courses under

the programme 'Active Ageing – Creating Together'. Courses are focused on providing innovative ways to strengthen social and public participation, lifelong learning, and volunteering skills (Aktiv im Alter, 2022^[15]).

3.2.3. Strengthening the relationship between older people and public institutions

Focal points in charge of older persons at subnational level

Austria's Federal system leaves the development of Acts and legislative frameworks to underpin governance arrangements to deliver for older people at a Laender level. As a result, most Laender in Austria have made their own administrative arrangements to support the development of focal points in charge of older persons "Senior:innenreferent:innen". While arrangements may vary in each federal state or municipality, most focal points cooperate with departments, institutions and organisations at a subnational level to increase access to, and availability of, services relevant to older people. Focal points also have an accountability role, as the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection counts on their support to report back on subnational efforts to deliver on the "Ageing and the Future" Plan.

Streamlining the provision of government services through a one-stop-shop

The Contact Visit Service of the City of Vienna (Kontaktbesuchsdienst der Stadt Wien) is an example of local government efforts to make active ageing services more accessible to older people. For more than 40 years, the Service has acted as a one-stop-shop for elderly people to access information on existing services and become engaged in local activities (Office of the Vienna Senior Citizens' Commissioner, 2020^[16]). In order to support old age self-determination, Vienna Social Services (Wiener Sozialdienste), the city's biggest provider of social services, engages elderly volunteers to provide support and information about opportunities to participate in social life to other elderly people. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a telephone service was set up in addition to home visits, which are provided for seniors over 75 years of age. After an initial phone interview on their lifestyle and the kind of support required, older people are either directed to appropriate services, or provided with relevant information by the volunteer. Elderly care and support are some of the most frequently discussed topics, but preventative care, leisure activities, volunteering, life-long training opportunities and improving digital skills are also frequent topics for which the Service provides support on.

In addition, Vienna's Social Services has developed the "60/80 Strategy", which focuses on the participation of older people in society by offering easily accessible digital and analogue information services. Further, the city has been holding a 'Senior Citizens Month' (Monat der Senior:innen) every October since 2011 (Office of Vienna's Senior Citizens' Commissioner, 2022^[17]). The purpose of this initiative is to encourage the social participation of retirement-age residents (60+) by offering a variety of activities in areas including dance, music, art, movement, health, information and more. The Month of Senior Citizens unites organisations, government institutions and other cooperation partners to coordinate the delivery of activities and activate the city during this month.

3.3. Finland

3.3.1. Policy context

Active ageing policies in Finland are nationally coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Ministry is also responsible for managing pension systems and social healthcare systems, and works in coordination with other Ministries to deliver for older people.

Until recently, municipalities were responsible for implementing ageing policies and arranging social and healthcare services for the elderly. To better prepare for the effects of an ageing population, however, the Government launched the 2020-2023 programme 'Inclusive and Competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society' outlining a set of reforms. Part of these included a shift of service delivery responsibilities from the local government level (Municipalities) to the regional government level (Counties) with the objective of ensuring a more homogenous availability of services across territories (Government of Finland, 2019^[18]).

In line with these efforts, the Finnish Government also prepared a horizontal programme on active ageing, 'National Programme on Ageing 2030', in collaboration with ministries, municipalities, third sector organisations and other relevant stakeholders (Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2020^[19]). One of the goals of the National Programme on Ageing is to ensure older people are involved and represented in the work of the government. To include the voices of older people in the implementation of the Programme, a multidisciplinary group composed of several sub-groups including older people, experts, a network of local authorities, a forum for organisations, a human resources group and a scientific council was conformed to provide inputs throughout the process.

3.3.2. Participation of older people in public and political life at national and local level

Tackling ageism

Legislative instruments

To strengthen the participation of older people in public life, the Finnish government has made legislative provisions to tackle discrimination and ageism. The revised Non-Discrimination Act,⁶¹ which entered into force in 2015, includes age as one of the prohibited discrimination grounds (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2014^[20]). In accordance with this Act, the obligation to promote equality applies to public authorities, education providers, and employers.

Another legal basis to ensure the equal treatment of older persons is the Act on Supporting the Functional Capacity of the Older Population and on Social and Health Care Services for Older Persons⁶². This Act seeks to ensure older people receive care and treatment based on their needs, on an equal basis throughout the country (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2012^[21]). Directly relating to the objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Act seeks to support the well-being, health, independent living and functional capacity of older persons. It also sets a statutory requirement for local authorities to consult the local council of older people in the planning, preparation and monitoring of any activities concerning older residents in the municipality (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2012^[22]).

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman is an independent and autonomous authority appointed by the government to a five-year term. The duties and rights of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman are outlined in the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2014^[20]; Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2014^[23]). Their main task is to promote equality and to prevent discrimination. Further, they work towards improving the rights, living conditions and status of groups at risk of discrimination, including senior citizens. In practice, the work of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman

⁶¹ Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014).

⁶² Act on Supporting the Functional Capacity of the Older Population and on Social and Health Care Services for Older Persons (980/2012).

consists of providing advice to government, investigating individual cases, promoting reconciliation between parties, training, collecting information, and influencing legislation and government practices. The Ombudsman also engages with other stakeholders to identify and intervene in discrimination cases, as well as promote positive perceptions of older people in society (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2014^[20]; Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2014^[23]).

Institutional frameworks to engage older people in decision-making

Enabling elderly people to inform decision-making

In Finland, older people may participate in political life at a national level through the Advisory Board for Ageing and Pensioners' Affairs, which works under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Members of the Advisory Board include representatives from ministries, government agencies, older persons' organisations and academia. Its role, as mandated by a Government Decree⁶³ is to act as a link between actors working on older persons' issues; promote intergenerational dialogue and appreciation of older people in society; monitor, evaluate and share information on the conditions of ageing and pensioner populations; and issue proposals and statements on ageing issues. The Advisory Board also follows up on relevant developments in the EU (OHCHR, 2015^[24]). At a municipal level, the Local Government Act (410/2015) requires that municipalities establish Elderly Councils to secure their participation and provide them with opportunities to influence local decision-making (Finnish Ministry of Finance, 2015^[25]; OHCHR, 2015^[24]). According to the Act, older people's councils must be given adequate resources to "influence the planning, preparation and monitoring of the activities of the municipality's different areas of responsibility in matters of importance to older people's well-being, health, inclusion, living environment, housing, mobility or coping with daily activities, or in terms of the services they need" (Finnish Ministry of Finance, 2015^[25]). Older peoples' councils are required to be consulted on the preparation of local plans that are relevant to elderly constituents, as well as in the evaluation of social services for older people. Further, and in accordance with the Elderly Services Act⁶⁴, municipal elderly councils must be involved in the preparation of plans for the well-being of the elderly population in accordance with statutory service provision requirements (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2012^[26]).

When setting up an Elderly Council, its composition and operating methods are at the discretion of each municipality. For instance, an Elderly Council may be set up across several municipalities and be 'shared' by these. Municipal Boards may approve a Code of Conduct for the Council, stating statutory duties in addition to ad-hoc requirements if relevant. The Code of Conduct may further include the number of members, parties represented by the members, frequency of meetings and term of office of the Council. An action plan may also be prepared to inform annual plans and reports. Municipalities are also responsible for designating a meeting room, paying for meeting costs, and providing secretarial support to the Elderly Council. To strengthen their capacity to become involved in decision-making processes, Elderly Councils may also receive training paid for by the municipality. The municipality may also, at their discretion, choose to reimburse members of the Elderly Council for costs associated to meetings. This may be determined separately to the allocation of budget for Elderly Council activities (Association of Finnish Local Authorities, 2022^[27]).

Ombudsperson for Older Persons

The Ombudsman for Older Persons is an independent authority appointed by the Government whose task is to promote the realisation of the rights of the elderly by bringing the perspectives of older people into public discourse, influencing attitudes towards older people, and helping others to understand issues

⁶³ Government Decree (867/2000)

⁶⁴ Elderly Services Act (980/2012).

relevant to older people. The duties of the Ombudsperson are laid out in the Act on the Ombudsman for Older Persons⁶⁵, adopted by the Finnish Parliament and enacted in 2021 (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2021^[28]). According to the Act, the Ombudsman for Older Persons:

- monitors and assesses the position of older people⁶⁶ and the realisation of their rights;
- monitors the legislation and decision-making in the society and assesses their effects on senior citizens;
- makes initiatives, states opinions and participates in social discussion;
- draws up and commissions surveys and commissions reports;
- provides and disseminates information on older people;
- and promotes cooperation between those who handle matters related to the older people and actors who represent them.

The role of the Ombudsperson is not limited to a set of laws of government decisions. Instead, they are tasked with cooperating with various authorities, organisations and relevant parties to promote the realisation of the best interest of older people. The Ombudsperson may, when relevant, obtain information from other authorities free of charge, in order to perform their duties. The government may also strengthen the role of the Ombudsperson by providing staff to support its activities. The Ombudsman for Older Persons does not have the competence to resolve complaints related to individual cases. Their tasks focus on monitoring, evaluation, and providing advice. They may not change government decisions once made (Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018^[29]). Their term may not exceed a maximum of five years at a time and, while appointed, the Ombudsperson is relieved from holding any other office for the duration of their term.

3.3.3. Strengthening the relationship between older people and public institutions

The Palvelutori 'one-stop-shop'

The Palvelutori, or Service Square, is a 'one-stop-shop', publically funded service centre that brings together existing services and counselling of older people in one place (SITRA, 2015^[30]). Aligned with the Elderly Services Act⁶⁷, this centre advises and supports older people and their relatives to access services. Information on volunteering opportunities, budgeting and financial aid may also be available. The Service Square is available in a number of cities including Lahti, Tampere, Turku, Pori and Rauma and, while it does not deliver services itself, it facilitates access to all services offered by the municipality, service entrepreneurs and the third sector in the city in which it operates. Help and advice is provided free of charge, and solutions are delivered in consultation with users to ensure their needs are met.

⁶⁵ Act on the Ombudsperson for Older Persons (753/2021).

⁶⁶ This refers to monitoring older people's entitlement to good treatment in elderly care, including the provision of sufficient information or advice on existing services available to older people, autonomous decision-making and the compliance of service providers with statutory requirements.

⁶⁷ Act on Supporting the Functioning Ability of the Elderly Population and Social and Health Services for the Elderly 980/2012.

Box 3.2. Palvelutori ‘one-stop-shop’ in Rauma, Finland

The City of Rauma provides elderly residents with a Service Square, or Palvelutori, to enable their access to information about services provided by the municipality, associations and companies. Staff provides guidance and advice, free of charge, on practical matters related to elderly people, including services to promote their well-being, autonomous living, financial benefits and social activities. The Square also serves as an information point to advertise local activities and events that may be of interest to older people, and provides guidance on volunteering opportunities, including volunteering to help others to attend events and activities. Staff members also organise communal activities together with volunteers and elderly people from Rauma to bring opportunities for connection between elderly residents. For the time being, the service is only accessible by phone or email. Elderly people may join an e-newsletter to receive information for pensioners and advice on active ageing

Source: (City of Rauma, 2022^[31])

Monitoring and streamlining services for older people

To continue improving the relationship between government and older people, and in accordance with the Act on the Care Services for Older Persons⁶⁸, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has performed a series of monitoring studies on service delivery at a municipal level. Since 2015, such monitoring has become obligatory, and became institutionalised through the formation of a Municipal Survey which monitors the implementation of the Act on the Care Services for Older Persons in municipalities (Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018^[29]). The survey collects information on matters including the provision of services for the elderly in home care, welfare and health promotion services, age-related housing, palliative and hospice care, and the quality and supervision of services for the elderly. The 2020 survey also included questions on the procurement and tendering of services. Survey results inform the functioning of services and whether renewals are needed, and shed light on the impacts of reforms affecting issues related to the Act on the Care Services for Older Persons, the National Programme on Ageing and the Future Social and Health Centre Programme (Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018^[29]).

3.4. Ireland

3.4.1. Policy context

A number of strategic documents have coordinated the delivery of government services to older people in Ireland. Following a review of these, and in light of findings from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) in 2013, the government concluded that, to respond to the needs of an ageing population, more coordination across departments was necessary. The National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS), published in 2013 by the Irish Government, is a cross-departmental framework that seeks to address a broad range of policies and service delivery related to active ageing. The Strategy is a high-level document, which outlines national goals and objectives promoting positive ageing, including reframing perceptions of older people, and recognising the diversity of their contributions to society. The Older Persons’ Strategy Unit, within the Irish Department of Health, is in charge of steering the NPAS agenda, both internally

⁶⁸ Act on the Care Services for Older Persons (980/2012).

(across the health and social care domain) and across government and civil society more broadly. The four goals of the NPAS are (Irish Department of Health, 2013^[32]):

- National Goal 1: ‘Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities.’
- National Goal 2: ‘Support people as they age to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing.’
- National Goal 3: ‘Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.’
- National Goal 4: ‘Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.’

The Strategy was developed by a now-dissolved Cross-Departmental Group (CDG) overseen by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. The CDG was comprised of representatives from the Departments of Social Protection; Health; Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation; Education and Skills; Environment, Community and Local Government; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Taoiseach; Transport, Tourism and Sport; Justice and Equality as well as the Central Statistics Office and An Garda Síochána (Irish Department of Health, 2013^[32]). Following a standard practice of engaging civil society in decision-making processes a now-dissolved NGO Liaison Group comprising 12 representatives from NGOs related to elderly people’s interests was also established by the government to inform the development of the NPAS⁶⁹. The NPAS also considered the views of Irish people through a public consultation process that received 190 written submissions, a series of public meetings, meetings between the Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health, and Older People⁷⁰ and groups representing older people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, among other engagement exercises.⁷¹

The implementation of the NPAS is framed within the implementation of Healthy Ireland, the national framework to improve the health and well-being of Irish people. These two strategic documents, produced by the Department of Health, share a multi-dimensional approach to active ageing and together provide a framework to guide all policies related to active ageing (Irish Department of Health, 2019^[33]). Both Government strategies also align with the WHO’s Active Ageing: A Policy Framework (2002^[34]), which recognises the broad range of factors that affect how people and populations age and conceives active ageing from a life-course perspective. Recognising the long-term socioeconomic effects of the pandemic, the housing crisis in Ireland, and other global challenges, the Department of Health is currently planning to update this Strategy to better address the challenges older people are facing.

Active ageing policy coordination between national and sub-national governments

Age Friendly Ireland is an appointed shared service of local government hosted by Meath County Council. Set up as part of the World Health Organisation’s global Age Friendly Framework in 2007, this service now

⁶⁹ The NGOs were: Age and Opportunity, The Carer’s Association, Age Action Ireland, The Disability Federation of Ireland, Society of Vincent de Paul, Third Age Foundation, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizen’s Parliament, Active Retirement Ireland, Older and Bolder, The Older Women’s Network.

⁷⁰ Renamed to Minister of Mental Health and Older People in 2016.

⁷¹ Regional consultation meetings were attended by over 1,100 people. The Minister of State with responsibility for older people also met with key stakeholder-organisations on a one-to-one basis.

acts in partnership with a cross-cutting National Advisory Group⁷² to support the coordination of local and national-level implementation of active ageing policies in alignment with the NPAS (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[35]). A strong focus of the Age Friendly Programme is to create walkable, attractive, and accessible communities and spaces through, for example, ‘walkability audits’, mystery shopper initiatives, and the creation of designated parking spaces for older people; the development of age-friendly housing models, the development of registers of isolated older people; and the development of guidelines (for example for age friendly towns, businesses, airports, hospitals, universities, and libraries). Age Friendly Ireland also has an advocacy role, making submissions to consultations on, for example, pensions’ reform and the EU Green Paper on Ageing. Age Friendly Ireland also supports policy coordination across local authorities, which includes collaboration with a broad spectrum of agencies and services, including personnel in local government, health services, transport, community and voluntary groups, national police, elected representatives, and others.

At national level, Age Friendly Ireland provides support to the implementation of ‘Age Friendly City and County Programmes’ which are local active ageing programmes aligned with the NPAS and the WHO Age Friendly Framework, through strengthening networks and communication channels, as well as providing advice and technical support. Further, it serves to support the scaling up and replication of local good practices across Ireland, as well as mainstreaming and embedding of age friendly principles across government sectors at local level (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36]).

Monitoring and evaluation of active ageing policies in Ireland

Both the NPAS and Healthy Ireland have committed to the development of indicators to monitor and evaluate progress on strategic goals and action related to active ageing. To assess the progress of the NPAS, the Department of Health has convened three stakeholder fora, in 2017, 2018 and 2019, on positive ageing. This engagement with older people and representative organisations has served to identify key priorities and to measure success of the NPAS. Conclusions are presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy through an Annual Report (Irish Department of Health, 2013^[32]). This forum has not reconvened since the pandemic, and it is envisaged that the Commission on Care will become the new vehicle for supporting and overseeing active ageing policies.

Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionately negative impact on older people in myriad ways, the *Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (2020)* commits to the establishment of a commission on care to ‘assess how we care for older people and examine alternatives to meet the diverse needs of our older citizens’. It is envisaged that the commission on care will support a whole-of-government examination of the policy-landscape in relation to older people and ageing, providing a vehicle to effectively address the gaps that currently exist. This will enable the mainstreaming of existing examples of good practice in relation to tackling ageism; the elimination of the digital divide between generations; and the harnessing of the talents, capabilities, and resources of all Irish citizens—young and old—throughout their lives. Stakeholder-engagement will be central to the commission on care.

Further, recognising the value of undertaking research to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of older people, the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE) Health and Wellbeing Division, the Atlantic Philanthropies and Age Friendly Ireland Department of Health partnered in 2014 to fund the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI). Envisioned as a three-year initiative ending in 2019, the role of HaPAI was defined in accordance with National Goal 4 of the NPAS. Its areas of work

⁷² Composed of five government departments including the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government, the Department of Health, the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. An Garda Síochána (the National Police), Chambers Ireland, the Health Service Executive and three local authority Chief Executives are also represented.

include establishing national indicators on positive ageing, performing research and data mining, delivering reports and strengthen data collection and usage at a subnational level (Age Friendly Ireland, 2020^[37]).

More broadly, the Department of Health collects indicators on the well-being of older people, including their well-being and physical and mental healthcare, through the Healthy Ireland Survey, an annual survey which is partially aligned with the NPAS and used to inform government policies and strategic documents – including those related to older people (Irish Department of Health, 2019^[33]). The Department of the Taoiseach also manages reporting on the Well-being Framework for Ireland which measures population-wide indicators in areas such as civic engagement and trust, community participation, mental and physical health, income and wealth, work, and job quality, among others (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022^[38]).

Finally, in 2021, Ireland has developed a Health System Performance Assessment Framework to guide the Department of Health to respond better to the needs of Ireland's ageing population and transform the health system by putting a stronger focus on prevention and primary care (Department of Health, 2021^[39]). The Framework is set to inform policy reform by delivering an assessment including outputs, outcomes, structures, and processes on relevant indicators. It was developed by the Department of Health in partnership with the Academic Medical Centre of the University of Amsterdam through a project funded by the EU through Structural Reform Support in 2021.

3.4.2. Participation of older people in political life at national and local level

Awareness raising activities to tackle ageism

The NPAS sets out a number of objectives related to tackling ageism. These include the promotion of activities to combat age discrimination and to dispel age-related stereotypes, developing awareness campaigns and encouraging the media to give an age-balanced image of society, and ensuring older people's needs are considered in policymaking. Other objectives outlined are focused on promoting an understanding of the importance of intergenerational solidarity and ensuring intergenerational considerations are included in policymaking processes, encouraging the development of intergenerational initiatives, and adopting more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to consultation (Irish Department of Health, 2013^[32]).

AgeWise workshops on tackling ageism in service delivery

AgeWise is a half-day workshop designed to reduce ageism in the workplace, both regarding elderly workers and for people delivering services to older people. Workshops are designed to be delivered for 'anyone whose work affects the lives of older people', including the private and public sectors. The service is part of the Age and Opportunity programme, a charity funded by the Irish Health Service, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and the Arts Council. Workshops are delivered via Zoom to groups of 10-15 people and delivered by a trained facilitator. AgeWise also looks at the prevalence and impact of ageism and how, often sub-consciously, negative portrayals of ageing and older people affect them, both personally and as a society. Workshops enable participants to (Age & Opportunity, 2022^[40]) :

- Understand the personal, cultural, and structural effects of ageism,
- Identify instances of discrimination against older people,
- Devise strategies to counter age discrimination in their workplace or community.

The course has been delivered to members of Older People's Councils (see more information on the Councils in relevant sub-section). Reported impacts of the course on older people include higher confidence and sense of cohesion, greater levels of civic participation and, ultimately, active citizenship among participants (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36]). The Age and Opportunity programme has also funded

community networking projects to encourage active citizenship and tackle ageism (see relevant sub-section below).

Leveraging civic and citizenship literacy to help older people exercise their democratic rights

Civic participation at a sub-national level: Older People's Councils

Older People's Councils were established in 2014 as a commitment to address the core vision of the NPAS, which states that Ireland is a society "in which equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people are pursued at all times" (Irish Department of Health, 2013^[32]). They are overseen by Age Friendly Ireland and are the principal vehicle through which the participation of older people in public and political life is enabled. They are also a key structure supporting the adoption and development of Age Friendly City and County Programmes. To date, there are Older People's Councils, each encompassing around 200 representatives of older people's groups, across all 31 administrative areas of local government in Ireland (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36]).

The role of Older People's Councils is to identify priority areas of need, raise issues of importance and inform and influence the decision-making process of the local Age Friendly Programme. They also serve as a 'bottom-up' system to monitor the implementation of the NPAS and enable older people to be more active in their communities. Topics on which they provide inputs include, for instance, transport, housing, independent living, and place-making. They also provide a service-user perspective in government strategies of relevance.

The structure of Older People's Councils is based on a two-tier system; the Executive Committee, elected by members every two years and comprised of around 20 people, and the Members. Members are all aged 50 and over and may include both individual older people and older people's groups. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that Older People's Councils represent the diversity of the local population in the city or county and that they support the participation of marginalised groups. Groups often represented in their membership include, for example, community and voluntary groups, Men's sheds⁷³, people with dementia, and retirement groups. Guidelines are also provided to local authorities on fostering engagement among marginalised groups, including approaching local representatives of LGBTQIA+ groups, Travellers⁷⁴, ethnic minority communities, different religious groups, people with disabilities, farmer groups, and so on.

⁷³ Men's sheds exist in several countries beyond Ireland, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They provide community spaces to reduce loneliness and isolation among men by enabling them to connect, converse and create.

⁷⁴ Irish Travellers are a self-defined ethno-cultural minority group living predominantly in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Travellers have a tradition of living nomadically and have been historically subject to discrimination from settled communities in Ireland.



Figure 2 Example of the composition of an Older People's Council Executive Committee

Older People's Councils are supported by their local Age Friendly Programme Manager, who facilitates the organisation of their Annual General Meeting and ongoing meetings of the Executive Committee by arranging a venue and refreshments. Programme Managers may also facilitate, for instance, remote access to meetings or consultations via teleconference, and organise transport for members to attend national or regional events as a group. For national events (see next section) the local Age Friendly Programme may pay for the overnight accommodation costs of members. Local authorities also support the Executive Committee to provide inputs in local programmes and take part in local Age Friendly initiatives. A national-level service provides support to Older People's Councils to perform communication activities in relation to their work.

Box 3.3. Older People's Council Guidelines

In 2016, Age Friendly Ireland published a document to guide local governments and older people in Ireland to establish and run Older People's Councils. Now followed by every local authority of Ireland, the Guide has been updated to incorporate examples across the 31 Older People's Councils and currently serves as a tool to share knowledge and standardise practices. The 2022 Guide provides information on:

- **Setting up and Older People's Council:** Guidelines include a step-by-step process to setting up an Older People's Council, including establishing a database of older people groups and voluntary groups providing services to older people, holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM), and ensuring a diverse membership. This section also includes information on structures that foster older people's public participation.
- **Running an Older People's Council:** Once the Older People's Council is established, the local authority assigns the Programme Manager in charge of supporting its activities. Older People's Councils are supported to elect an Executive Committee and establish an Annual Plan. This section also provides information on how Older People's Council may also draw on other local authority resources including venues, email and posting facilities. The Executive Committee may set regular meetings (e.g., every six to eight weeks), while the Older People's Council themselves may meet annually at their AGM. In the County of Cavan, for instance, the Council holds monthly meetings attended by members of the Gardai (Police), the Health Service Executive and voluntary groups providing services for older people to present to members. From then on, Members become involved in Age Friendly initiatives held in their County, including assessing the age friendliness of services, connecting with local government initiatives, and joining Committees and planning groups to strengthen their civic engagement. At the end of the year, the Older People's Council may host an AGM to update members on progress and provide an opportunity to raise issues to be addressed in subsequent Annual Plans.
- **Looking ahead:** This section provides information on ensuring the longevity of Older People's Councils, including ensuring that their purpose is preserved, members understand the role of the Older People's Council in collaborative leadership, the diversity and representativeness of members is preserved, and that members stay focused on co-decision making approaches with state and voluntary agencies that are part of Age Friendly Ireland.

Source: (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36])

Civic participation at a national level: National Network of Older People's Councils

Each of the 31 Older People's Councils nominates a representative to sit on the National Network of Older People's Councils, which convenes three times a year to discuss policy issues of national significance (e.g., housing, health, spatial planning, transport), and coordinate the formulation of solutions that cannot be addressed at a subnational level. The role of the National Network includes (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36]):

- Fostering the growth and development of Older People's Councils across Ireland;
- Providing a platform for skill sharing and the transfer of knowledge across Councils;
- Supporting the exchange of good active ageing practices to replicate regionally;

- Bringing attention and coordinate responses to national issues related to government policies going beyond regional boundaries; and
- Coordinating an annual Older People's Council Convention.

The National Network have consulted on a number of government programmes and policy areas, including national policy and local programmes on healthcare, long-term care, bus connectivity, palliative care, local development, and community policing.

Box 3.4. Case study: Coordinating the voices of older people across regions to inform national housing policies

Population ageing challenges including the implication on healthcare costs and availability of appropriate housing led the Government of Ireland to issue a policy statement to support older people to remain living independently in their own homes. The statement, published in 2019, was the result of a vertical and horizontal policy coordination effort, and included the participation of Age Friendly Ireland.

Junior Ministers from the Department of Health and the department of Housing (leading the policy statement) acknowledged the importance of including the voice of older people at the table, and requested that the National Network of Older People's Councils identify two nominees to contribute to the working group. Nominated representatives regularly attended the National Implementation Group appointed to oversee the drafting of this policy and informed discussions with their perspectives. This case was highlighted by government and Older People's Councils as being a good practice example regarding the recognition of older peoples' voices in government policy development and implementation. Reasons cited included older people feeling heard and taken into consideration, and policymakers gaining a better understanding of older people's issues.

Sources: (Age Friendly Ireland, 2022^[36]; Government of Ireland, 2019^[41])

The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament

The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament (ISCP) is a non-partisan representative organisation of older people in Ireland whose purpose is to promote the views of older people in policy development and decision-making (Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament, 2022^[42]). The Parliament is run by older volunteers elected annually at the Annual Parliament Meeting by delegates from affiliated organisations. The ISCP currently has 200 affiliated organisations whose memberships combine to a total of 50,000 individuals. The objectives of the Parliament are achieved through national-level lobbying to raise attention to the government on issues relevant to their membership. The objectives include:

- To be a strong voice representing older people and their needs at the international, national, and local level.
- To promote inter-generational solidarity.
- To work through the existing affiliated organisations to ensure better coordination of policies and activities whilst ensuring that the affiliated groups retain their own autonomy.
- To work for improvement in the quality of life of Older People.
- To develop solidarity with organisations working to improve the quality of life of Older People.
- To represent Older People's issues to Government.

‘Get Engaged’ courses on strengthening civic engagement skills

The Get Engaged initiative, which forms part of the Age and Opportunity programme, delivers courses across Ireland to develop the skills and knowledge of people over 50 who wish to play a part in helping make their communities more age-friendly (Age & Opportunity, 2022^[43]). Courses are free of charge and are delivered as eight half days over the course of eight weeks. Their purpose is to help participants make a difference in local communities and increase their civic engagement by learning skills including lobbying, research and working with the media.

Participant-led discussions throughout the course enable older people to identify issues related to ageing and civic engagement. Courses complement these discussions with content designed to develop their knowledge and skills to address the issues they identify. The programme also encourages civic engagement to improve local communities for future generations, supports newcomers to become more integrated, and aims to increase elderly people’s sense of belonging through their involvement in civic activities. The Get Engaged course is delivered for groups including Older People’s Councils, local NGOs, and forums for consultation. It works with the public and private sector to provide elderly people with opportunities to become more aware of how to bring about change.

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