



**Technology and active ageing**  
**Regional ESU Conference**  
**Nicosia - 14 October 2017**

Dear Chairman,

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this Regional Conference in Nicosia. As president of the European Seniors' Union-ESU, I thank our friend, colleague and ESU vice-president Antonios Demetriades for taking the initiative to organise this event, for offering us the opportunity to be hosted in your marvellous country and to meet and exchange experiences with colleagues and friends from all over Europe.

The Conference theme is: '*Technology and active ageing*' and you gathered several distinguished speakers on the subject. This theme is very discussed and puts us in the centre of today and tomorrow's ever-changing societies.

I will start by sharing some introductory considerations concerning the subject: "*Technology and active ageing*". I will try to make the bridge between our daily experience on 'active ageing', using technology, and general societal developments. I start from the external circle of general developments.

- Demographic change is one of today's key challenges for the European Union, its member states and its citizens. The demographic developments – with increasing generations of older persons and a decreasing birth rate – were already noticed decades ago. Rather recently, however, they have become a subject for discussion and decision-making in many policy areas. Governments of all levels, stakeholders, civil society and every single family and person has to cope with the challenges of longevity and ageing societies.
- The concept of 'active ageing' was introduced in 2002 (2<sup>nd</sup> UN World Assembly on ageing).  
Active ageing is the process of:
  - optimising opportunities for health, participation and security
  - enhancing quality of life also when people age.Active ageing allows people
  - to realise their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course
  - to participate in society in relation to their needs, desires and capacities,Active ageing is providing seniors with adequate protection, security and care when they require assistance.

- Today there is a wide range of research, action plans and strategies at all levels of society. The Active Ageing Index (AAI) even provides a tool to measure, compare and to monitor overall progress in ‘active ageing’ in several areas of life . For seniors it is important to be part of the society and to be involved in decision-making.
- Our response to demographic change and the common - and different - challenges at EU-, national- and regional-level: ( See also: EPP position paper Malta Congress 2017, ESU resolution Leuven Congress 2016.) :
  - Active ageing, age-friendly societies... need an ‘integrated’ strategy: ageing policies needs to be a part of ‘all’ policy sectors (housing, health, employment, transport, communication...).
  - Ageing is a topic for people of all ages. A life-course approach can help the development of adequate policy responses. Core active ageing practices include lifelong learning, being able to work after the retirement age, retiring later and more gradually, being physically and mentally active after retirement and engaging in health sustaining activities. This represents a win-win strategy for people of all ages.
  - Only in a spirit of dialogue and partnership (with social partners, NGO’s, authorities at all levels...) we will cope with the challenges of demographic change, affecting all countries, but in a variety of different ways. ( See: ranking member states on the results of AAI, differences in life expectancies, participation men/women in labour market....)

#### Looking at

- Challenges of demographic change (for each person, for authorities, for research....)
- General multidimensional strategy on ‘active ageing’ in several policy sectors (health, economy...) we need to make a choice to analyse only some aspects.

In this conference you made the choice to highlight ‘technology and active ageing’. Highlighting this topic, we create a meeting point, a crossroad between the challenges of demographic change and the opportunities of changing technologies. This changing technology is affecting our method of policy making but also our economy, our workplace, our healthcare and our daily lifestyle. For the growing proportion of older population, who are healthy and active but not in the work field, new fields of needs and opportunities can be explored. Developing technologies are only one of the key drivers of what is called ‘Silver Economy’.

#### Silver economy

The 'silver economy' is a concept that has emerged in the last decade in response to ageing demographics.

- It is characterised by a focus on the opportunities arising from ageing, in terms of new and growing markets to meet the needs of the increasing number of older people;
- with direct benefits to older people themselves, for example improved opportunities and support to remain active, or the potential for goods and services better adapted to them;

- it brings together efforts to promote active and healthy ageing, targets to increase the employment rate of older (e.g. aged 55-64) workers, and employment opportunities;
- the Silver economy aims to answer the need for more elderly care, supportive environments...

Since almost more than 10 years the 'Silver economy' was promoted with reference to

- older people expecting new and innovative products and services for greater quality of life in their old age
- an appropriate innovative drive resulting in growth and new jobs,
- increasing competitiveness in a global context.

The 'Silver Economy Award' is a new initiative to reward ICT-based innovative solutions that improve the lives of European seniors and support the growth of the European Silver Economy. (Applications until 15 November 2017).

I hope that during this Conference day the different speakers will enlighten us about opportunities for older people.

Seniors are now representing a greater part of the population than ever before; this makes us an important co-player in society and in economy. We can expect better opportunities, for those who want to stay active in their work field, aided by better adapted workplaces, life-long learning and efforts to combat age discrimination.

New and emerging technologies, health monitoring, preventive healthcare and adapted vehicles for example could help older people to continue to live active and healthy lives.

Technology can also improve care for older people in later life via innovations as telecare , and even care robots. They make older people more empowered and independent in looking after their health and being able to continue to live and travel independently.

I hope that this Conference day will be an eye opener and an invitation to build multiple innovative bridges between both the challenges in the fields of active aging and the infinite technological capabilities that today offers. I am sure that if we find a way to bridge these two components, then we are on our way to 'more years and better lives' for today's generation and the future generations in the EU and worldwide.

Nicosia, 14 October 2017

Prof. dr. em. An Hermans  
President of the European Seniors' Union