

RESET – Pedagogy for Workforce Transition

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The ageing of the population is a demographic phenomenon in Europe characterised by a decrease in fertility, a decrease in mortality rate, and a higher life expectancy among European populations. In a report in 2006 the IMF projected that the ratio of retirees to workers in Europe will double to 0.54 by 2050 (from four workers per retiree to two workers per retiree). The size of the aged population is expected to grow not only in relative but also in absolute terms with the number of Europeans aged 80 and over expected to nearly triple, rising from 18 million in 2004 to approximately 51 million in 2051 (eurostat). In the context of this demographic change there is no doubt that our social security systems' capacity to maintain today's standard of living for future generations of older people will be severely challenged. For many individual Europeans the term retirement equates to living in poverty, with the risk of poverty of persons over the age of 65 increased by one third against national averages in most countries.

To achieve more sustainable economic and social development, the EU has set itself the target of increasing the employment rate of older people. For this to be successful, governments, social partners and organisations need to work together to develop the skills and employability of older people. Education, guidance, training and employment opportunities must be adapted to an age-diverse workforce. New pedagogic approaches are the key elements to facilitate extended workforce participation for older workers. In-service training for adult education providers to enable them design and deliver new educational content across a variety of learning platforms must be developed to support their continuous professional development. Transition programmes that enable older workers acquire new skills, and a re-conceptualization of employment both in terms of specific work areas and work practices are essential if future

economic growth, competitiveness, social inclusion and efficiency are to be achieved. Education must address today's issues and challenges with appropriate new learning partnerships and learning tools that are flexible, adaptable, and easily updated and upgraded. Too often, support agencies busy themselves addressing the needs of yesterday instead of the needs of tomorrow. There is consensus among EU Member States about the need for active labour market policies aimed at raising employment levels among older workers and at postponing retirement.

Although not working in such fixed patterns of employment as before, engaged in new roles and environments, Europe's older generations have a key and continuing role to play. Critical to this workforce transition is the acquisition of new, updated and marketable skills and competences that contain all the necessary attributes for a long and successful career. There are a wide range of potential areas where older workers could be re-deployed to work on a full-time or part-time basis.

To realise the potential of older workers in this context, the RESET project will develop a comprehensive suite of bespoke curricula and learning resources to develop the skills of older workers as social researchers and to support them in developing their new business models. In-service training to support the continuous professional development of adult educators is essential if they are to develop new and innovative approaches to attract older learners to lifelong learning. RESET will also develop and pilot an innovative in-service training programme for adult educators to support them in their role to provide learning opportunities for older learners to acquire the new skills required to extend their working life in our knowledge-based economy.

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