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DEMOGRAPHICAL CHANGES VERSUS (AGE) DISCRIMINATION – MEASUREMENT

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Abstract: Taking into account the data of 31 European countries, the number of population between 55 and 64 years has increased by 20% between 2004 and 2012. The 65+ age group has increased by 14% on average. Based on the tendency, the number of population of the age group 55-64 could increase to 214% compared to 2004, while the 65+ age group's to 175%. In the meantime, the number of population of the 15-24 age group in the very same countries has already decreased by 4% on average between 2004 and 2012. It could also decrease by 20% on average by 2050 compared to 2004. A major problem is revealed in Eastern European countries: a drastic decrease can be forecasted among the 15-24 year employable population. The objective of the study is to map the role of the elderly during history and today, to summarize the bibliography published on discrimination and age discrimination and to make recommendations on the measurement of ageism.

Keywords: age discrimination, demographical changes

1. INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the data of 31 European countries, the number of population between 55 and 64 years has increased by 20% between 2004 and 2012. The 65+ age group has increased by 14% on average. Figure 1 shows the anticipated consequences of the demographic change. It also shows that the process has started a long time ago and not recently, so authors would name this phenomenon a demographic tunnel rather than a scissor.

Based on the tendency, the number of population of the age group 55-64 could increase to 214% compared to 2004, while the 65+ age group's to 175%. In the meantime, the number of population of the 15-24 age group in the very same countries has already decreased by 4% on average between 2004 and 2012. It could also decrease by 20% on average by 2050 compared to 2004. (Table 1)

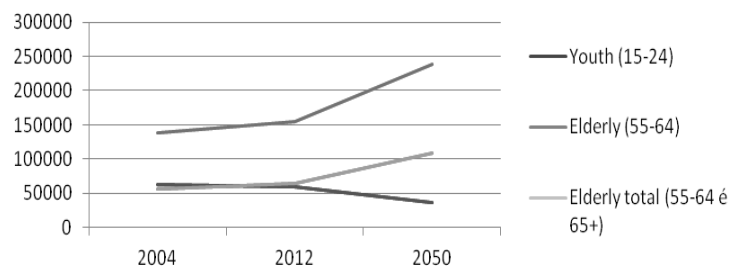


Figure 1. The change in the number of the elderly and the youth between 2004 and 2012 on the basis of the data of 31 European countries, forecast for 2050 (demographic scissor, demographic tunnel). Source: ILOSTAT Database, own calculations

Table 1. The average change of the population in 31 European countries by age group

From 31 EU countries age groups (year)	Average change of the number of population %	
	2004-2012	2004-2050 / forecast
65+	114 (s=13%)	175 (s=81%)
55-64	120 (s=19%)	214 (s=91%)
15-24	96 (s=15%)	80 (s=85%)

Source: ILOSTAT Database, personal calculations with EXCEL forecast function

It must be noted that while the indices figures for the time range 2004-2012 deviated less from the average, the indices of the forecast show strong deviation. It can be deduced that there could be significant differences between the demographic data of European countries, unless the tendency between 2004-2012 shows significant change until 2050. Table 2. contains the countries in question.

A major problem is revealed in Eastern European countries: a drastic decrease can be forecasted among the 15-24 year employable population. The number of 55+ age group is increasing, so a bipolar region may develop in Europe: the Central European with an ageing population decreasing in number and a Northern European with a sustainable age diversification.

Table 2. Comparison of the average change of the number of population of 31 European countries by age group, regarding significant change, result of cluster analysis

Age groups of 31 EU countries (year)	Based on the 2004-2012 tendency for 2050	
	Possibility of significant decrease	Possibility of significant increase
65+ and 55-64	Latvia Sweden	Cyprus Czech Republic Denmark Finland The Netherlands Croatia Ireland Iceland Poland Luxembourg Malta Norway Switzerland Slovakia
15-24	Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia Greece Croatia Ireland Poland Latvia Lithuania Hungary Malta Germany Portugal Romania Spain Slovakia Slovenia	Cyprus Denmark Iceland Luxembourg Norway Sweden

Source: ILOSTAT Database, own calculations, SPSS cluster analysis, WARD's method

Considering the fact that the number of employable youth in Central Europe is decreasing, the Pay-as-You-Go pension system will most probably become unsustainable. The basic requirements of a sustainable pension system are the following:

- ✓ Providing long term sustainability and credibility for the future generation, which also means maintaining an adequate income source for the elderly and the handicapped.
- ✓ The pension system should meet the requirements of sustainability, considering the demographic changes.
- ✓ Reviewing pension age, the indexing of pensions and the amount of contributions, considering the financial limits.
- ✓ Expanding the coverage pension system and contribution payment within an effective legal framework. This way not only employee rights are protected but the financial background of social security is also created.
- ✓ Extending eligibility for the non-insured, the informal employees would increase contribution payment. Control of human resources and stricter action against corruption would also help.
- ✓ National pension reform must be based on social consensus. The rules and policies must be acceptable for the stakeholders.
- ✓ The three-sided social dialogue is indispensable during the process.
- ✓ The pension reform must be a long term, transparent process in order to avoid a situation where the employees face a drastic change before retirement.¹

An unfortunate example: In Hungary, only the review of the retirement age, indexing pensions, contribution payments and disability pensions and pre-retirement pensions concerning sustainability have been performed out of the recommendations of the International Labor Organization. These measures are very important but not adequate. Supposedly, there are employees

who have no insurance whatsoever and would not be qualified for treatment. authors wonder how many elderly would have to starve or freeze in their own home in a few years time.

The older generation will remain without support, which will present an enormous challenge for the European Union, with all its economic, social and health care aspects. Appropriate, transparent and complying laws are indispensable but results can not be achieved with rules simply. It is important to offer an attractive subsistence and cooperation based on a continuous dialogue among the generations.

Nowadays, we cannot intervene in a proactive way as we have only been touched by the wind of change. Active measures are needed. But before moving over to the necessary measures, The authors would like to review the role of the elderly during history, in order to highlight the reasons for their current situation. In the light of these, authors will make recommendations to solve the problem.

2. THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY DURING HISTORY AND TODAY

First, authors would go through the Jewish and Christian traditions, then authors would be studying our relation to the elderly in medieval times and today. In Hebrew culture, the elderly played a relatively important role. We may read in the Torah, the Old Testament of the Bible, that the elderly had a privileged position. In those days, the Christian world was based on the New Testament, in which the elderly did not play a significant role. (Minnois, G., 1989). In medieval times, the average life expectancy was low compared to the average life expectancy now. The elderly were respected but were also felt sorry for. This relative respect prevailed until the end of the 19th century, when old age became a taboo (Classen, A. (ed.), 2007).

¹ No. 102 Social Security Minimum Standard Agreement of ILO, which has been approved by several european state, contains directions for this topic

The attitude towards the senior population was influenced by the:

- ✓ cultural, social and physical-mental basis of the elderly,
- ✓ the climatic and geographical conditions of where they lived
- ✓ their eating habits,
- ✓ the relations of social classes,
- ✓ their religious and ethical values
- ✓ the region's scientific and technological background in a narrower sense, and
- ✓ the world's scientific and technological background in a broader sense.

For example, in France, the elderly were the equivalent of (boring) books, church and lengthy conversations, so they were paid little respect. In the Hebrew community, the elderly were in abundance. This could be attributed to the close-knit community, which included the care of the elderly, the special eating habits, the tradition of life-long learning and habits of religious origin. Studying the dominant world view of medieval times, it can be concluded that the attacks of the 16th century against the elderly evolved from the helpless rage of a generation worshipping and accepting only beauty. In Christian religion, sometimes the religious habits of the elderly were only directed towards the salvation of their soul. An elderly nun was in a relatively better position than an average woman due to her social, mental and health conditions. Women played a special role in medieval times: widowed queen (consorts) acted as mentors and counsellors and had great influence over politics. Others managed the networks based on family relations successfully. Numerous elderly ladies were respected, honoured and loved. An elderly man, who was attended to by his wife, was also in an advantageous position compared to his single counterparts. If an elderly man was able to prove his political, military and personal abilities, he earned unquestionable respect irrespective of his age, ageing body or white hair.

The Christian religious reformation process propagated change. Namely: protestants and calvinists favoured earthly life to afterlife. Personal autonomy was considered important and the notion that everybody was responsible for their own destiny was propagated. In the 17th century, with the development of chemistry and medicine, the possibilities of the elderly changed but the notion that their circumstances depended on the impact of their previous activities and results did not.

Before World War I, the elderly were withdrawn from the labor market because of their assumed or actual decline in their physical performance. This seems to be supported by the fact that in the USA in the 19th century, the 50+ men earned less than the 30 and 45 age group. The reason was the assumed physical decline of the older age group. Several incidents were recorded which resulted in loss of working hours. Thus they were in an endangered position unless they had economic support and/or wealth (Kertzer I. D.-Laslett, P. (ed) (1995).

In contrast to the practice of the 20th century, when this process manifested as a result of the pension system becoming universal. The fact that society did not need their labor meant not only that they were crowded out of the labor market but the fact that from a certain point of view, they ended up on the periphery of society. Soon after leaving active life and the labor market, the elderly men passed away. The research with 5000 patients carried out by Thomas Holmes és Richard Rahe in 1967 studied which of the 43 life incidents lead to illness most frequently. The first incident was the death of a spouse and the 10th was retirement (Holmes TH, Rahe RH (1967).

Summing it up, it can be determined that advanced age never produced automatic respect or contempt. The latter could have been the result of the distortion of the dominant world view (dominance of the worship of youth, dominance of prejudice evolving from generalization, e.g: decline of physical condition).

Nowadays, the increase of women's participation on the labor market (Figure 2) may forecast that they could more easily become the target of age discrimination and also that gender discrimination in employment can be strongly detected.

The fact that for e.g due to gender discrimination, the wage of women employed with the same professional background is lower than men's (EUROSTAT, PAY GAP STAT) could be a competition advantage against men on the labor market.

But in the long-run this could mean a significant overload risk, which could be found in time-balance surveys but this is not the subject of this study. In case it gets verified, the increase of stress caused by overload could make women prone to diseases that were typical of men in the past, for e.g vascular diseases. Family budgets could rely on women's wage, which could be destroyed by the youthcult put into practice. As women tend to go to the doctor rather than men, in their case the number of years spent on sick-leave may increase, which would impose extra costs both on the family and society.

Summing up the role of the elderly during history, it may be stated that the maintenance of health² (physical, mental and social) has always meant some kind of protection for man but this holds more for the older generation.

² According to WHO, health does not only mean the lack of illnesses, but complete physical, mental and social well-being

In order to ensure protection, one must possess at least two factors of health. The physical factor includes nutrition and physical exercise, while mental health includes non-organized but continuous learning. For e.g learning how to use the computer. Social health would mean providing the appropriate circumstances and also stable family relations, a network of friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, efforts and motivation to extend this network.

In the following part of the study, authors will be dealing with the interpretation and study of the distorted world view (which authors call discrimination), in order to stabilize the position of the growing number of elderly by mitigating or eliminating age discrimination.

3. AGE DISCRIMINATION AS A DISTORTED WORLD VIEW

Before discussing the bibliography of discrimination, authors would like to say a few words about anti-discrimination laws, whose mere existence proves the existence of discrimination but cannot solve it per se. It provides a very important frame for the people concerned and one must live with the opportunity. But the discussion of the antidiscrimination regulations is not the topic of this study. authors would like to reveal the theoretical review of discrimination, focusing on the characteristic of age discrimination.

According to Gordon (1954) discrimination is based on stereotypes and myths, which is the third level of prejudices:

- ✓ Antilocution
- ✓ Avoidance
- ✓ Discrimination
- ✓ Physical attack
- ✓ Extermination

Traxler (1980) outlines 4 factors that have contributed to its existence:

- ✓ The fear of death in Western society: it originates from the fact that death is mostly considered taboo by modern society, while tribal people consider it as an integral part of life. Old age is considered as the embodiment of fate and death (Butler, 1969) and it is trying to be kept at a distance. This also provides the basis for TMT (Terror Management Theory) (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). The young generation sees only one single way of overcoming their fear of death: accusing and irritating the elderly, who are identified with fate and death. As if this way, they would be confronting death itself and be able to avoid death and the notion of death.
- ✓ The second factor could be best compared to the youth culture of the 16th century. It is further enhanced by the modern media, where physical appearance, beauty and the sexuality linked to these two factors play an increasing role.
- ✓ The third factor could be linked to productivity and economic potential. Two age groups are considered economically inactive by society: children and the elderly: nevertheless, children are seen as the economic potential of the future, i.e, investment, while the elderly are treated as a future obligation.
- ✓ The fourth factor has been created for the service of the elderly. The research connected to the elderly were carried out in professions and insitutions where the elderly were found in abundance. These researches do not provide a complete picture of this age group as a smaller proportion of the elderly lived in these social institutions permanently.

Pincus (2000) illustrated the levels of discrimination, the personal, the institutional and the structural line by examples. The personal refers to the behaviour of the person directed against another person. The institutional refers to the behaviour of the individuals controlling that, who introduce and execute regulations like a dominant group, which have a harmful effect on the minority – the non-dominant group. The third is the structural level, where the institutions keep in mind the interests of the dominant group and cause harm to the minority by the introduced and executed regulations. The name 'dominant group' is important because majority can also be minority if its power is considered, while the numerically smaller group can also be dominant if possessing strong lobbying skills.

According to Nelson (2011), there are two basic factors contributing to age discrimination:

- ✓ one is the appearance of book-printing in the 15th century;
- ✓ the other is the social, economical and technical transformation process called the Industrial Revolution, which lasted between the 18-19th century.

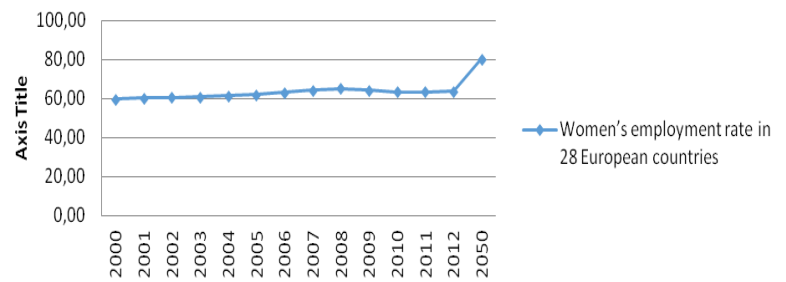


Figure 2. Women's employment rate in 28 European countries: 2000-2012, Forecast for 2050. Source: own calculations based on Eurostat data, EXCEL Forecast function

✓ During the Industrial Revolution several printing procedures were modernized, so more books could be printed by the steam machine in a shorter period of time.

The printing of books took away the role of information ‘gatherer and distributor’ from the elderly, while the industrial revolution perished the natural social network and the family. The factories and plants needed more and more workers so the able-bodied members of the family couldn’t stay with the elderly relatives anymore.

Age discrimination is a relatively new phenomenon. Since its first appearance in print, the social, economical and technical circumstances have changed many times. For this reason, authors have worked out a new approach, which is a survey, the matrix of age discrimination measurement. (Table 3.)

2 questions would be associated with each level, which should be composed according to the characteristic of the given institution and the features of the examined discrimination. Yes-No questions must be asked (disregarding a few). The ‘value’ of a Yes answer is stated in the given box. The maximum number of points is:

$$(208=0.5*2+1*2*2+1.5*2+2*2*2+2.5*2+3*2*2+3.5*2+4*2*2+4.5*2+5*2*2+5.5*2+6*2*2+6.5*2+7*2*2+7.5*2+8*2*2)$$

Demonstrating the highest level of discrimination, which is a criminal case. In Hungary, the number of crimes committed against the elderly increased by 20% between 2003 and 2008 (Crimestat.b-m.hu). This means that we would be dealing with very sensitive data. Based on this, it is advisable to omit the last level (Extermination, Step 13-16) in the first phase of the survey and to add it personally if necessary based on the results derived from the data of the previous levels. In such a case, the cooperation and support of the authorities is recommended. Action must be taken immediately, if the points -no matter how low – are from the first three levels. The demographic part preceding the questions aids us to identify the source of the problem more precisely.

Table 3. Matrix of age discrimination measurement

Level of discrimination		Avoidance	Discrimination	Physical attack	Extermination
Intellectual	informal ("we do not talk about it, but I know what others mean")	1. step 0.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	5. step 2.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	9. step 4.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	13. step 6.5 point per question in case of a positive answer
	formal ("system should be created") (double-weighting)	2. step 1 point per question in case of a positive answer	6. step 3 point per question in case of a positive answer	10. step 5 point per question in case of a positive answer	14. step 7 point per question in case of a positive answer
Physical	informal ("this is how we do it")	3. step 1.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	7. step 3.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	11. step 5.5 point per question in case of a positive answer	15. step 7.5 point per question in case of a positive answer
	formal ("structured system operating in a declared way") (double-weighting)	4. step 2 point per question in case of a positive answer	8. step 4 point per question in case of a positive answer	12. step 6 point per question in case of a positive answer	16. step 8 point per question in case of a positive answer

Source: own

The composition of the demographic part also depends on the features of the examined problem, institution and group. For example, in case of examining age discrimination, if it is carried out in higher education, the features would be the following:

- ✓ age;
- ✓ male of female;
- ✓ area of education;
- ✓ studies I am interested in;
- ✓ having student job experience or other 1-month long job experience;
- ✓ place of residence (county, type of settlement);
- ✓ religious orientation;
- ✓ volunteer work experience - what type of job?;
- ✓ living with my elderly relatives for more than 1 year;
- ✓ results at university, average;
- ✓ considering people over 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 old;
- ✓ preference of reading, sports, dancing, playing computer games, writing computer programmes, doing other activities in my free time, doing nothing in my freetime;
- ✓ having 1, 2, 3, 4 more friends;

- ✓ getting together often;
- ✓ preference of connecting on the Internet;
- ✓ having no friends.

To compose the questions in the appropriate way, a psychologist must be consulted. By this method – could be directly connected to factor, regression analysis - the link between the measured level of discrimination and one of the demographic features could be identified. The role of the affected group is also important, meaning that not only the dominant group's but also the minority group's role must be examined, as well, during a discrimination process discovered incidentally. Let me refer back to the statement that we are committed to meet two factors out of the three defined as health by WHO by our advanced age.

4. CONCLUSION

To handle and avoid discrimination, the attitude of both groups in question must change. The dominant group might not even be aware that its behaviour, thoughts cause damage to others. Attention must be drawn to this.

At the same time, the minority group should not be playing the role of a victim but must be pro-active to defend its interest and socially active. In case, proof was incidentally found for the the dominant group's distorted world view and solution must be sought, it is important that the two opposing groups get to know each other and communication is established between them. The measurement and remedy of age discrimination at the right place and time is extremely important for the future, as the retirement age must be increased for the growing number of the elderly. Otherwise, the states will not be able to finance retirement expenses or social care. Age discrimination is a proven and existing obstacle of employment on the labor market. It is an overall task and interest to maintain the health and working ability of the elderly and to enhance passing on the tacit knowledge they possess.

This is especially true for Eastern Europe, which is in an extremely endangered position concerning the demographic forecast. The demographic bomb has been ticking for a long time . . .

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