

# Report on the Quick Scan of Policy and Research documents on empowerment and participation of older citizens in Germany

European Project: “From Isolation to Inclusion:  
Promoting Innovation in Re-Integrating Older Citizens into Community Life”

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## 1. Policy documents under review

The following policy documents were scrutinized according to their relevance for the objective of empowerment and participation of older citizens in Germany:

- Policy documents at federal level
  - Strategies to Enhance Social Integration – National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005, Update 2004, Germany's Contribution to the First European Social Protection and Social Inclusion Report.  
*See: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/news/2001/jun/nap\\_incl\\_0305\\_de\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/jun/nap_incl_0305_de_en.pdf)*
  - Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth): Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung zum Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission für den Vierten Altenbericht (Comments of the Federal Government on the Report of the Expert Commission for the Fourth Report on Seniors) in: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2002): Vierter Bericht zur Lage der älteren Generation in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Risiken, Lebensqualität und Versorgung Hochaltriger – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung demenzieller Erkrankungen, Berlin, p 17-42.
  - Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth): Richtlinien für den Bundesaltenplan (Directives for the Federal plan for older persons)  
*See: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung3/Pdf-Anlagen/PRM-24160-Richtlinien-des-Bundesaltenpla.property=pdf.pdf>*
  - Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth) Website "Ältere Menschen/Partizipation" ("older people/participation")  
*See: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/Politikbereiche/Aeltere-Menschen/partizipation.html>*
- Policy documents at Hessian level
  - Hessisches Sozialministerium (2003): Wie wir im Alter leben wollen – Seniorenpolitische Grundsätze und Leitlinien der Hessischen Landesregierung (How we want to live in old age – senior policy principles and guidelines of the Hessian State Government)  
*See: [http://www.sozialministerium.hessen.de/global/show\\_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaaaaaevs](http://www.sozialministerium.hessen.de/global/show_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaaaaaevs)*
- Policy documents by national associations
  - Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe (KDA) (Creatorship German Help for the Aged): Großjohann, Klaus / Scholl, Annette (2003): Gewährleistung der vollen Integration im späteren Leben, in: Pohlmann, Stefan (ed): Der demografische Imperativ – Von der internationalen Sozialpolitik zu einem nationalen Aktionsplan, Hannover, p 51-56.
  - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen (BAGSO) (Federal working committee of senior organisations): Verhülsdonk, Roswitha (2003): Integration und Partizipation älterer Menschen, in: Pohlmann, Stefan (ed): Der demografische Imperativ – Von der internationalen Sozialpolitik zu einem nationalen Aktionsplan, Hannover, p 45-50.

- Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen (BAGSO) (Federal working committee of senior organisations): BAGSO-Positionspapier: Politische Teilhabe älterer Menschen. See: [http://www.bagso.de/fileadmin/Aktuell/PositionspapierPolitischeTeilhabe\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.bagso.de/fileadmin/Aktuell/PositionspapierPolitischeTeilhabe__2_.pdf)

## 2. Research documents under review

The following bibliography is a selection of research documents on the political and social participation of older persons, published in Germany from 2000 to 2005<sup>1</sup>.

- BMFSFJ, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2002): Vierter Bericht zur Lage der älteren Generation in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Risiken, Lebensqualität und Versorgung Hochaltriger – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung demenzieller Erkrankungen, Berlin
- BMFSFJ, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend / tns infratest (2005): Kurzzusammenfassung 2. Freiwilligensurvey 2004, <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Arbeitsgruppen/Pdf-Anlagen/2.freiwilligensurvey-kurzzusammenfassung,property=pdf.pdf>
- Bukov, Aleksej (2000): Individuelle Ressourcen als Determinanten sozialer Beteiligung im Alter, in: Backes, Gertrud M. / Clemens, Wolfgang: Lebenslagen im Alter – gesellschaftliche Bedingungen und Grenzen, Opladen, p 186-214.
- Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen (eds.) (2003): Themenheft Ältere Migrantinnen und Migranten, In: Informationsdienst Altersfragen, 30, 1, Berlin.
- Gehrke, Barbara (2000): Das Internet als Chance zur Teilhabe an der Gesellschaft – Möglichkeiten zum sozialen Engagement von Senioren, in: Braun, Joachim / Wahlen, Gabriele (eds): Engagementförderung für Senioren in Deutschland und den Niederlanden, Bonn, p. 118-126.
- International Council on Social Welfare (ed)(2000): Voluntary engagement by and for very old persons – a European comparison. Documentation of a the conference of experts, <http://www.kda.de/files/icsw2000.pdf>
- Knesebeck, Olaf von dem / Höfken, Volker (2001): Soziale Ungleichheit, soziale Kontakte und soziale Partizipation im Alter, in: Backes, Gertrud M. / Clemens, Wolfgang / Schroeter, Klaus R. (eds): Zur Konstruktion sozialer Ordnungen des Alter(n)s, Opladen, p. 169-186.
- Kohli, Martin / Künemund, Harald / Motel, Andreas u.a. (2000): Grunddaten zur Lebenssituation der 40-85jährigen deutschen Bevölkerung. Ergebnisse des Alters-Survey, Berlin. 41pp
- Künemund, Harald (2001): Gesellschaftliche Partizipation und Engagement in der zweiten Lebenshälfte – empirische Befunde zu Tätigkeitsformen im Alter und Prognosen ihrer zukünftigen Entwicklung, Berlin.
- Maas, Ineke / Staudinger, Ursula M. (1996): Lebensverlauf und Altern: Kontinuität und Diskontinuität der gesellschaftlichen Beteiligung, des Lebensinvestments und ökonomischer Ressourcen, in: Baltes, P. / Mayer, K. (eds): Die Berliner Altersstudie, Berlin, p 543-572.

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<sup>1</sup> Compulsory bibliographical information is available in the Gero-Lit database of the German Centre for Gerontology (DZA), Berlin (<http://www.dza.de/gerolit/gerolit-online.html>).

- MAGS-BW, Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Sozialordnung Baden-Württemberg (ed)(1995): Seniorengenossenschaften als Beispiel bürgerschaftlichen Engagements, Stuttgart.
- Markus, Katrin / Stiehr, Karin / Lenz, Ramona (2004): Wirksame Interessenvertretung im Heim, Handbuch mit Praxisbeispielen für Heimbeiräte, Heimfürsprecher, Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner, ihre Angehörigen und sonstigen Vertrauenspersonen, Stuttgart/Marburg/Erfurt.
- Otto, Ulrich (ed) (2005): Partizipation und Inklusion im Alter – Aktuelle Herausforderungen, Jena.
- Reggentin, Heike (2000): Seniorenvertretungen – Verantwortung für das Gemeinwesen, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln.
- Rix, Sara E. (2002): Getting involved – A look at political and civic participation in old age or will the 60s generation re-storm the barricades? In: Pohlmann, Stefan (ed): Facing an Ageing World – Recommendations and Perspectives, Regensburg, p 127-133.
- Saup, Winfried (2001): Studienführer für Senioren, Bonn.
- Scharf, Thomas / Wenger, Clare / Thissen, Frans u.a. (2001): Soziale Integration und Partizipation älter Menschen in ländlichen Räumen Europas, in: Sozialer Fortschritt, Vol. 50 (9/10) p. 208-213.
- Scherger, Simone / Bauer, Kai / Künemund, Harald (2004): Partizipation und Engagement älterer Menschen – Elemente der Lebensführung im Stadt-Land-Vergleich, in: Backes, Gertrud M. / Clemens, Wolfgang / Künemund, Harald (eds): Lebensformen und Lebensführung im Alter, Wiesbaden, p 173-192.
- Schlag, Bernhard / Mengel, Katrin (eds)(2002): Mobilität und gesellschaftliche Partizipation im Alter, Stuttgart.
- Spindler, Mone (2004): Wissensbestände über die Lebenssituation von Frauen 50+ in Deutschland. <http://www.own-europe.org/meri/pdf/article-germany.pdf>
- Staudinger, Ursula M. / Schindler, Ines (2002): Produktivität und gesellschaftliche Partizipation im Alter, in: Schlag, Bernhard / Mengel, Katrin (eds): Mobilität und gesellschaftliche Partizipation im Alter, Stuttgart, p 64-86.
- Stiehr, Karin / Huth, Susanne (eds)(2001): Equal Opportunities for Older Women in Politics and Society, Stuttgart, Marburg, Erfurt.
- Vortmann, Marion (2001): Freiwilliges Engagement älterer Menschen als Instrument der gesellschaftlichen Partizipation – Handlungsbedarf und Förderstrategien, Münster.
- Wacker, Elisabeth (2004): Ist dabei sein alles? Dürfen alle dabei sein? Inklusion älterer Menschen mit Behinderung auf dem Prüfstand, in: Berghaus, Helmut C. / Bermond, Heike / Knipschild, Marella (eds): Aufeinander zugehen – miteinander umgehen – voneinander lernen, Köln, p 85-105.

### 3. Empowerment and participation of older citizens in policy documents

According to the German system, the competences for governmental senior policy are divided between the federal government, the governments of each federal state and the municipalities. Participation and empowerment are key issues in the reviewed policy documents from all governmental levels as well as from non-governmental actors.

Federal senior policy provides the political framework for senior policy by legislation (e.g. law on nursing care insurance, law on homes), reporting on the situation of the older population (e.g. Altenbericht) and by the Federal Plan for Older Persons (Bundesaltenplan) and model programmes aiming at the enhancements of the care infrastructure. In several key documents the enhancement of older persons' social inclusion is documented and demanded:

- The first of the many aims of the directives for the Federal Plan for older Persons (Richtlinien für den Bundesaltenplan) is the enhancement of the social participation of older persons. Social participation is seen in strong interrelation with bringing ones competences in society through voluntary engagement (pp. 6).
- On the web presence of the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth one of the four thematic areas on senior policy is participation. As in the directives for the Federal Plan for older Persons the enhancement of participation is understood as facilitating voluntary engagement of older persons on municipal level.
- In the German update of the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 many age-related topics are explicitly addressed. Major challenges with regard to older persons are the enhancement of their participation by reforms of the pension system and the defeat of poverty in old age. Many other topics are also discussed with regard to age, such as the improvement of medical provision, framework conditions for persons with disability and the improvement of the dialogue of key actors in society.
- In the federal government's statement on the fourth experts' report on seniors (Vierter Altenbericht) the improvement of social relations of very old persons is addressed among other political needs (p.21). Interestingly this topic is discussed solely with regard to the care needs of this population group. A new concept is planned to prevent violence and abuse in care situations in private households.

The main competences of the German federal states regarding senior policy lie in the execution of the federal legislation and in the supply of all parts of the federal state with social infrastructure. The two overall guidelines of the Hessian senior policy strongly aim at the social inclusion of older persons. They are:

- Providing all support by institutions and services, which is necessary for enabling older persons to preserve or to regain autonomous ways of life.
- Creating a new societal solidarity by making accessible the resource of mutual help in families, neighbourhoods, associations and municipalities.

Accordingly, the Hessian government considers it its primary task to enhance seniors' voluntary engagement, interest representation, education and communication. Their current and future activities in the field of voluntary engagement for and from seniors reach from the enhancement of traditional forms of volunteering to new models such as mutual help associations (Senioren-genossenschaften). They also fund agencies for the coordination of voluntary engagement (Freiwilligenagenturen, Seniorenbüros). Seniors' interest representation shall be improved by establishing municipal senior councils (Seniorenbeirat) with advisory competences in the municipal political process and a federal state wide umbrella organisation. (see: Hessisches Sozialministerium 2003)

The primary responsibility for the configuration of older persons' living environment is on the level of municipal governments. The analysis of political practices and discussions on municipal level however is much more difficult than for federal and regional policy because there are no standardized policy instruments such as guidelines and the states of discussion are very different across municipalities. Some of the Hessian municipalities compiled guidelines for their senior policy (Alten(hilfe)pläne). Traditionally these guidelines are focused on the organisation of care infrastructure. Recently a paradigm change has started which also brought up other not health related issues and the group of the "younger old". Against this backdrop the support of voluntary engagement is starting to play an important role also in senior policy at municipal level.

The reviewed policy documents from national senior organisations are strikingly in agreement with federal and regional policy programmes. Policy-makers and lobbyists agree that the positive aspects of old age and the production potentials of seniors are in the focus of actions to be taken. A major concern of the BAGSO, a federal umbrella organisation of senior organisations, as well as the KDA, a federal board for care for the elderly, is to promote a realistic, more positive image of old age in society (Verhülsdonk 2003, Großjohann 2003). They therefore aim at making older persons' productivity and the contribution to society visible. Voluntary engagement of active seniors plays a key role. Accordingly the BAGSO clearly sees its task mainly in the representation of "the interests of healthy, active older persons" (Verhülsdonk 2003:45). Their political aim is to enhance the creation of a political framework for equal participation in familial and other social networks and voluntary engagement.

In conclusion, the social integration of very old person tends to be reduced at policy-making level to the satisfaction of care needs.

#### 4. Empowerment and participation of older citizens in research documents

Social participation of older persons is a frequent topic in German research documents published in the last five years. Participation has become a key word in seniors policy as well as in ageing research. In these research documents the kinds and the levels of participation of older persons are described, whereas the definition of the issue "participation" and the selection of surveyed indicators vary: In many studies participation is defined as a combination of the inclusion in family and social networks (mainly measured by marital status, household structures, distance to children, frequency of contact with others) and the frequency of participatory activities such as

membership in clubs, associations and informal groups, volunteering, political participation, care work for dependent persons, informal support and transfer, participation in education and leisure activities.

A review of the methodologies applied in the research documents under scrutiny shows that most of the empiric studies are quantitative, cross sectional analyses, in which items such as the frequency of memberships in associations, of voluntary engagement or of social contacts are surveyed (e.g. Bukov 2000, Kohli et al. 2000, Knesebeck 2001, Künemund 2001, Rix 2002, Scharf et al. 2001, Scherger et al. 2004). Qualitative, longitudinal surveys including additional items are largely missing.

As regards contact with others, the risk of isolation and loneliness rises with old age (BMFSFJ 2002). Living alone and being single, the death of the life companion, childlessness, health status, mobility restrictions and living in a home for old persons are risk factors for evolving feelings of loneliness. Women who have a longer life expectancy, but spending the extra years at a worse health state, and who often marry older man, are at the highest risk of spending their last years in loneliness and isolation.

As regards participatory activities, the majority of the reviewed pieces of research conclude that older persons take less actively part in all forms and fields of participation than younger age groups. The following influencing factors are discussed in the reviewed research documents:

- **Class:** As regards the impact of social class for participation in old age the findings differ in details. Bukov (2000) shows that educational level, professional prestige, income and duration of gainful employment are of high relevance for the level of social participation in old age. Kohli et al. (2000) argue that the impact of class decreases in very old age. Knesebeck's (2001) data also suggest that the standard indicators for class – education, profession, income – have little impact whereas possessing one's own habitation and functional mobility are decisive.
- **Gender:** Several of the reviewed documents stress that at an average older men dispose of more resources for social participation than older women. This is mainly traced back to the fact that older women are significantly disadvantaged with regard to their educational, occupational as well as material situation, being an important resource for social participation (e.g. Stiehr 2001, Spindler 2004). As regards civic engagement older women, however, are more active as regards less reputable forms of volunteering such as care, house work or easy auxiliary activities (e.g. Bukov 2000). Kohli et al. (2000) conclude that older men's participation is higher than that of older women but that the gender difference, however, decreases with age.
- **Region:** Differences between the participation of older persons in rural and urban areas are studied in two research documents. Scharf et al. (2001) point at the strong influence of older persons' cultural living environment (e.g. the existence of institutions) which they regard to be of higher importance to participation than socio-demographic factors. Scherger et al. (2004) point out that differences in the educational status in rural and urban areas are so wide that the unique influence of region is hardly traceable. They show that the situation is much more complex than the stereotypical assumption that in rural areas the integration is better than

in urban areas. E.g. there is – other than frequently stated – hardly any differences between rural and urban areas as regards volunteering and membership in associations. But it seems that the participation of older persons in urban areas is more heterogeneous and the possibilities of participations are wider than in rural areas. Differences between Eastern and Western Germany seem to have changed since the reunification: Scharf et al. 2001 show with their data from 1989 to 1992 that in the German Democratic Republic older persons' rates of membership in secular institutions were very high whereas members were mostly passive. In the Federal Republic of Germany the membership rates were also quite high as well as the members' activity. Kohli et al. (2000) argue that older persons' membership in clubs and associations as well as voluntary engagement is higher in West Germany than in East Germany. Results from the Government's second survey on civic engagement however suggest that the deficits in the infrastructure for and the participation in civic engagement in the New Laender have aligned with the situation in the Old Laender (BMFSFJ/tns infratest 2005)

- Participation history: Staudinger (2002) points to the fact that social participation in old age highly depends on the degree of activity and participation in younger age, which however also depends on the socio-economic resources of the family and the individuals' intelligence and extraversion.
- Health status: Several studies stress the very high influence of health related variables on the social participation of older persons (Knesebeck 2001; Staudinger et al. 2002)
- Especially vulnerable groups: Civic participation is also a key concern in the newly raised debate on the living conditions of older persons with migration background. Their resources for participation are limited in cases of foreign citizenship (no right to vote), educational, occupational and material disadvantages and lack of language skills (see e.g. Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen 2003). Wacker (2004) describes the newly discussed situation of persons with disabilities in old age. Often their whole lifespan is characterized by reduced social participation and very little resources to overcome this situation. Wacker puts forward that a paradigm change is necessary in the work with persons with disabilities, focussing on their competences and empowerment instead of a "caring expropriation of competences". According to Wacker the improvement of their participation should start in the homes they usually live in. Increasingly older persons with disabilities ask for a stronger participation in the procedures of their homes.

Besides Rix (2002) points to the aspect that retirement affords older former employed persons more time but removes them from structures that encourage and facilitate political and civic engagement. Often also other activities such as care-giving responsibilities, ageist sentiments or even overt discrimination (e.g. in political organisations) keep older persons from social participation.

In the reviewed research documents the promotion of the social participation of older persons is regarded as highly important mainly for two reasons: Civic engagement is on the one hand considered a means to make the resources of the growing group of older persons available for society and to improve the negative societal image of older persons. This argumentation is traced back to the programmatic change in social policy from the "caring" welfare state to the "enabling" welfare state (aktivierender

Sozialstaat) and its senior policy version, the “active-ageing” programme. This is criticised by few scientists, among others because it suggests a solutions on individual level for societal problems (Otto 2005, Künemund 2001). On the other hand the promotion of civic engagement of older persons is regarded as a means to empower this population group. Against the backdrop of the demographic changes it is considered necessary to ensure that older persons are equally represented in all kinds of societal decision making. Important future policy tasks such as the reform of public pension systems democratic have to be worked out with the democratic participation of the growing group of older persons. Finally Scharf et al. (2001) give a reason for the promotion of participation at individual level: According to their survey the degree of participation is decisive for older persons’ contentedness with life.

The inclusion of very old persons in scientific reflections on participatory activities are rare, if it is not about being on the receiving side of help by others. Staudinger and Schindler (2002) put forward that concepts of participation should also consider the modes of civic engagement of very old persons, whose potentials for voluntary work and self-help activities are largely disregarded in the discussion on participation (International Council on Social Welfare 2000) due to its focus on the capacities of the generation of the “young old” (e.g. Vortmann 2001). Only in few empiric studies the civic engagement of very old persons is explicitly mentioned (e.g. Bukov 2000, Staudinger et al. 2002; Kohli et al. 2000), the there given evidence however is little or consist of the demand for more studies on this subject. In several studies high age groups are surveyed but detailed age specific analyses of the data are missing (e.g. Knesebeck 2001, Scharf et al. 2001, Scherger et al. 2004). Most studies only deal with the “young old” (Gehrke 2000, Vortmann 2001).

In conclusion, most research concepts ignore very old people in their potentials of participating in social life. Researchers are more than ready to focus on the “third agers” being the most potential group for social welfare production. Very old people, so the impression, are recognized to live in a severely disadvantaged situation, but are beneath notice as regards their potentials for improving it by either the increase of contacts or the strengthening of their activity potentials.

## 5. Examples of initiatives by and for older citizens

Many voluntary work initiatives for very old persons are found with a broad variety of activities, whereas only few initiatives by very old persons are existing. It seems that more initiatives focus on very old persons living in homes since they are easier accessible than very old persons living in private households. Many initiatives for older persons are aimed at special target groups such as patients of different illnesses, women<sup>2</sup>, or increasingly also migrants<sup>3</sup>. The following selection of initiatives aims at systematizing the variety of activities. It has to be kept in mind however, that much more examples could be given and that many initiatives have more than one of the listed activities.

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<sup>2</sup> A data base of initiatives for older women in Germany built up by ISIS and maintained by BAGSO, is available on the internet: [www.sophia-net.org](http://www.sophia-net.org).

<sup>3</sup> A data base of senior initiatives in Germany, built up by ISIS and maintained by BaS, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenbüros, is available on the internet: <http://www.senioren-initiativen.de>.

- Befriending: Volunteers are visiting very old, isolated persons for conversations, attention paying, short walks and little everyday support.
  - Senioren-Beratung und -Betreuung (Advice and care for seniors), Frankfurt am Main: Volunteers are weekly visiting single, isolated old persons living in private accommodations and additionally give little everyday support.
  - Tiere helfen Menschen e.V. (Animals help humans), Frankfurt am Main: Volunteers are visiting isolated persons with a dog and support them in keeping the own dog.
- Mobility services: Volunteers offer support to mobility and/or sense restricted persons as regards shopping, visits, consultations of physicians or administrations, banking, participating in media etc.
  - Partner-Besuchsdienst für alte Menschen (Partner visiting service), Hannover: Volunteers are e.g. reading out to visually impaired persons or are accompanying them to consultations of physicians and administrations.
  - Mobile Bücherei (Mobile library), Hameln: The public library visits older persons with mobility restrictions and lends books to them.
- Encountering offers: Activities are offered or institutions founded in order to bring together very old persons with their peer group or with other groups such as the younger generation.
  - Zentrum für Integration e.V. (Centre for integration), Leipzig: Volunteers organize encountering offers for old persons, persons with disabilities and single persons.
  - Brücke der Generationen (Bridge between generations), Alfeld: Teenager volunteers visit and support very old persons in homes and arrange encountering activities.
- Alternative housing projects: The target group of many alternative housing projects are persons in third age, but some projects also aim at improving and maintaining self-determined, socially integrated living of very old persons.
  - ambet e.V. Sheltered housing projects for older people, Braunschweig: Older persons are supported in sharing flats together.
  - Lia – Wohnen im Alter (Lia – Housing project for older people), Nümbrecht: Women of different ages are supported in sharing flats together.
  - Nachbarschaftlich leben für Frauen im Alter (Older Women living as Neighbours), München: Older women discuss and elaborate perspectives for their old age, especially as regards alternatives to old people's homes.
- Mutual help associations („Seniorengenossenschaften“): In order to ensure living in private households as long as possible seniors organize in mutual help associations. In younger age they can offer help to other members and when they get in need of support they are entitled to receive support in return.
  - Bürger-Aktive Dreieich - Die Uhus e.V. (Citizens activity Dreieich – the eagle owl): Members of the initiative give mutual support to each other based on a point system for given and received support.
- Activity offers: There is a variety of initiatives offering different kinds of activities for older persons for their activation and life long learning.

- Göttinger Zeitzeugenprojekt (Contemporary witness project), Göttingen: Life stories are reflected in activities such as story telling cafes or information events.
  - Café Gesundbrunnen (Café mineral spring), Hofgeismar: Older volunteers organise a café in order to give other older persons possibilities to meet.
  - Netzwerk ExtraNett (Network extra-kind), Düsseldorf: The network offers among many other things leisure activities such as painting, hiking, literature, video, making pottery, internet for older persons.
  - Nazar degmesin – Offener Treff für ältere Frauen aus der Türkei (Nazar degmesin – Open house for older women from Turkey), Darmstadt: This initiative offers education, leisure time activities, information and counselling to older women from Turkey.
  - Bewegungsangebote für Hochaltrige (Exercise offers for very old persons), Frankfurt am Main: Younger senior volunteers are trained to give exercise classes to very old persons in homes or private households.
  - Beratung, Bildung, Bewegung und Begegnung im Alter (Advice, education, exercise and encountering in old age), Mühlhausen (Thüringen): This initiative offers among other things memory training courses.
  - Die Wagemutigen (The venturouse), Wilhelmshaven: This initiative is a theatre group for older persons living in homes.
  - Radio Vincenz Rundfunk für Betagte (Broadcast for older persons), Oberhausen: Radio Vincenz produces radio and television broadcasts in homes for older persons for their inhabitants.
- Counselling services: Several initiatives offer advice to older persons e.g. on legal, care, health or security related issues.
    - Bundesinteressenvertretung der Altenheimbewohner (BIVA) (Federal interest representation of older persons in homes), Swisttal: This initiative gives legal advice, information for inhabitants of homes, their relatives and members of advisory committees of homes and represents their interest on political level.
    - Sicherheitsberatung für Senioren (Security advice for seniors), Frankfurt am Main: This counselling service offers advice concerning violence, criminality and accidents for older persons living in homes.
    - HerbstRose (autumn rose), Hannover: This initiative gives advice for the optimal management of care needs.
    - Helferkreis für pflegende Angehörige von demenzkranken Menschen (Support for care giving relatives of persons with dementia), Hamburg: Care giving relatives find advice on the treatment and management of dementia. (Similar institutions exist for Parkinson, depression, strokes, diabetes etc.)
- Support for emergency case management: Several initiatives offer services to support older persons living alone in emergency cases.
    - Hausnotruf-Dienst der Senioren-Akademie (Emergency call service), Alfeld: Older, fragile persons without a support network are connected to a communication system so that they can call older volunteers for help if necessary.
    - Beratung, Bildung, Bewegung und Begegnung im Alter (Advice, education, exercise and encountering in old age), Mühlhausen (Thüringen): This initiative among other things offers a telephone tree for emergency cases.
    - “Elly paß auf!” Sketch zur Verkehrssicherheit (Elly, watch out! Sketch about road safety), Darmstadt: This initiative by a policeman performs a sketch in

which older persons are sensitized for traffic dangers such as accidents, falls, attacks, bag snatching etc.

- Self-assertion training: Few initiatives are to be found which aim at empowering older persons in their self-esteem, self-defence and appearance.
  - Selbstbehauptung und Selbstverteidigung für Frauen ab 60 (Self-assertion and self-defence for women over 60), Darmstadt: This initiative aims at helping older women to re-discover their own strength by teaching self-defence techniques.
  - Du mußt Deinen Platz behaupten! (You must assert yourself!), Hanau: This is a course designed to strengthen older women's self-confidence in everyday situations.
- Palliative home care / hospice care: Due to the recently strengthening hospice movement in Germany in many municipalities hospice care or palliative home care associations were and are being founded. Their activities include psycho-social and spiritual support for the deceasing as well as for the bereaved.
  - da sein – Lebensbegleitung bis zum Tode (being present – life accompaniment until death), Frankfurt am Main: Older volunteers give hospice care in homes for older persons

## 6. Innovative ideas to promote empowerment and participation of older citizens

A couple of recommendations for measures to meet the new demands for participation and empowerment are given in the reviewed policy and research documents. Most of them are aim at creating social infrastructures for new forms of activity:

- Volunteering: In research documents volunteering is the most frequently addressed instrument for the improvement of the social participation of older persons (e.g. Vortmann 2001), being proposed as an opposed model to retirement in the sense of withdrawal. The extent and the fields of older persons' current civic engagement are surveyed and discussed and measures for a further activation are proposed. The discussion on volunteering is focussed on the group of younger seniors. Very old persons are almost exclusively addressed as recipients of voluntary (care-)work.
- Senior councils (Seniorenbeiräte): In more than 1000 German municipalities senior councils were founded which perform an advisory function in the decision making process on municipal level (Reggentin 2000).
- Advisory committees in homes for older persons (Heimbeiräte): All homes for older persons in Germany are obliged to have an advisory committee composed of inhabitants, their relatives or external experts (Markus/Stiehr/Lenz 2004).
- Mutual help associations (Seniorenengenossenschaften): In several places associations were founded in which older persons mutually support each other according to the individual knowledge and possibilities. Giving support entitles the members to receive support when needed. In doing so older persons can "save" entitlements to support for times when they might get in need of care (MAGS-BW 1995).

- Third Age Universities: In 2001, 42 German universities offered older persons the possibility to study in special programmes for seniors (Saup 2001).

Other measures aim at the provision of technical infrastructure which can help to compensate mobility restrictions:

- Internet: The role of the Internet in creating new possibilities of participation is addressed in several research documents (see e.g. Gehrke 2000, Rix 2002). Gehrke (2000) concedes that the Internet does not automatically increase participation; but by enhancing the ITC literacy and by providing the infrastructure on the Internet, it could help to create new possibilities of participation. Especially persons with limited mobility (i.e. due to illness or disability) can benefit from this new medium.
- Traffic mobility: The improvement of older persons' car mobility and public transport systems have become an issue as regards the preservation of their extramural mobility. The improvement of the transportation system, life long learning for drivers and recommendations for the car industry are being discussed (e.g. Schlag et al. 2002)

The inventory of the promoted measures shows that they mainly aim at the group of younger old. Only few measures deal with the improvement of the social participation of very old persons. Besides "First-aid measures", structural recommendations would have also to be taken serious in a preventive sense:

- Participation in younger age: Since civic engagement in younger age is a decisive factor for participation in old age, it is put forward that measures are necessary to strengthen the civic engagement already in younger age groups (e.g. Staudinger 2002).
- Reconsideration of work and the life course: E.g. Staudinger (2002) calls for a reconsideration of inflexible age differentiations in the life course. Instead of the succession of phases of education, work, retirement she suggests an age integrated model: There educational, occupational and private tasks are organised in parallel throughout the life course.

## 7. Conclusions: The situation of empowerment and participation of older citizens in Germany

In Germany 'empowerment' and 'civic participation' are key issues in all levels of governmental and non-governmental senior policy as well as in ageing research. Policy-makers, lobby groups and social researchers neglect issues of the social participation of very old citizens and thus a major part in quality of life. Although all actors talk about "participation", the voluntary work of younger seniors is in the focus of the debate.

Senior policy aims at establishing infrastructures for new forms of voluntary engagement for and by seniors in order to make their contributions to society visible and accessible. Many studies of ageing research deal with the preparation as well as evaluation of this new political approach. Thus policy-makers and researchers mutually legitimise their approaches to reduce the circumstances of very old people to financial and health aspects.

Kohli et al. (2000) however point to the fact that these new forms of seniors' engagement are in the focus of science and social policy and have a high symbolic and exemplary meaning. But empirically, traditional forms and institutions (e.g. seniors' day care centres, clubs and religious associations) are characteristic for old persons' social participation. Neglecting the forms and needs of very old persons' social participation leads to the paradox, that political as well as scientific action towards the improvement of seniors' civic participation focuses on the group of the already rather active and integrated seniors whereas the group with clear disadvantages in social participation is disregarded.