

G. Eizmendi. *Ageing economy: From social responsibility to new business opportunities (workshop)*. *Gerontechnology* 2008; 7(2):252. One of the main challenges the advanced societies are facing during the incoming years is the population ageing, which has a several consequences related to disability and care issues. It is out of doubt that ageing represents one of the hot topics in European policies; actually Europe is the most aged population in the world along with Japan. We are, therefore, in the need of finding and defining the right tools to face the challenges derived from this demographical revolution. However, we can turn this challenge into an opportunity. An opportunity for creating a new economic scenario that might be comparable to those related to other main sectors. In fact, this new economic scenario can be seen as the engine of the new society, taking advantage of the ageing of the so called baby-boomers. The early baby-boomers are already over 60 and will represent the most important social movement in advanced societies during next 20 years¹. In the United States alone, there are more than 108 million people over age 45 as of 2006; a group with more than \$2 trillion in annual spending power. The 78 million boomers born between 1946 and 1964 make up 28% of the U.S. population and own more than 77% of all financial assets, and the number of Americans age 65 and older is set to double by the year 2030². Additionally, there is a socio-cultural change behind this revolution; i.e. the new generation of elderly is much closer to the new technologies, has greater education and greater political influence. This is definitely an opportunity we can not afford to ignore. Looking to priorities of seniors, 'Health, Vitality & Wellness', 'Work, Money & Avocation', and 'Creativity & Learning' are the Top-3 and there is a sound basis to see technology playing a main role in products and services that maximize these three priorities. Technology state of the art is in the situation to improve drastically the quality of life of seniors. Thus, there is a great business opportunity for technology behind ageing population and not only public sector but private companies are convinced about it. In that sense, the private technology research initiative FIK, is an example of this conviction. FIK is a private scientific-technological research initiative aimed at ageing and disability. This initiative is promoted by a group of 20 companies, most of them SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), with the support of the Council of the Province. This group invested in 2007 in total 75 Million US\$ for a long term research (10 years) programme, creating a research engine of 60 full time researchers. Those companies do not have any link with the ageing/disability market but their motivation is to promote technology to benefit elderly and people with disabilities and, at the same time, also by getting benefits from this emerging market, the so called ageing economy. This is a well balanced compromise between social responsibility and business: it is in fact a novel view of Corporate Social Responsibility. The session explores the real business opportunities for technology in this so called ageing economy. In fact, Gerontechnology, Technology for Ageing, is in the front row to become one of the main engines of this new economy.

References

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