

How to Measure Quality of Life in the Older Age?

Today two main tools are used to measure the quality of older age: Active Ageing Index and Global AgeWatch Index.



The Active Ageing Index (AAI) is an analytical tool developed to support a policy aimed at enhancing active and healthy ageing. It is aimed at demonstrating the extent to which older people's potential is used, and the extent to which older people are enabled and encouraged to participate in the economy and society and to live independently.

The Active Ageing Index was developed in 2012 by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The index includes 22 individual indicators that are grouped into four domains: employment; participation in society; independent, healthy and secure living; capacity and enabling environment for secure living.

The Active Ageing Index is constructed in such a way that scores can range from 0 to 100, yet, according to AAI formula, it will not get close to the minimum or maximum values. For instance, the average AAI score for the 28 European Union countries was 33,9 in 2014. For target setting, the theoretical maximum of 100 is of little practical value. Hence, other more realistic benchmarks are needed, showing what potentials of older people could be realistically mobilized over a reasonable time horizon. Every country can make further progress, even those that currently have the highest AAI scores.

Indicators included in the Active Ageing Index:

1. Employment

- 1.1 Employment rate for the age group 55-59 (EU-LFS)
- 1.2 Employment rate for the age group 60-64 (EU-LFS)
- 1.3 Employment rate for the age group 65-69 (EU-LFS)
- 1.4 Employment rate for the age group 70-74 (EU-LFS)

2. Participation in society

2.1 Voluntary activities: percentage of population aged 55+ providing unpaid voluntary work through the organizations (at least once a week)

2.2 Care to children and grandchildren: Percentage of population aged 55+ providing care to their children and/or grandchildren (at least once a week)

2.3 Care to older adults: Percentage of population aged 55+ providing care to elderly or disabled relatives (at least once a week)

2.4 Political participation: Percentage of population aged 55+ taking part in various activities or meetings of trade unions, political parties, political initiative groups or signing petitions, including through the Internet.



3. Independent, healthy and secure living

3.1 Physical exercise: Percentage of people aged 55 years and older undertaking physical exercise or sport almost every day

3.2 Access to health and dental care: percentage of population aged 55+ who report no unmet need for medical and dental examination

3.3 Independent living arrangements: percentage of persons aged 75 and older living in single or couple households (two adults without dependents)

3.4 Relative median income: ratio of the median equivalised disposable income of people aged 65+ to the median equivalised disposable income of those aged below 65

3.5 No poverty risk for older persons: percentage of people aged 65+ who are not at the risk of poverty using 50% of the national median equivalised disposable income as the poverty threshold

3.6 No severe material deprivation for older persons: percentage of people aged 65+ not severely materially deprived

3.7 Physical safety: percentage of people aged 55 years and older who are feeling safe to walk after dark in their local area

3.8 Lifelong learning: percentage of older persons aged 55-74 who received education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey



4. Capacity and enabling environment for active and healthy ageing

4.1 Remaining life expectancy at age 55

4.2 Share of healthy life years in the remaining life expectancy at age 55

4.3 Mental wellbeing of older population aged 55+

4.4 Use of information and communication technology by older persons aged 55-74 at least once a week

4.5 Social connectedness: Percentage of older population aged 55+ who meet friends, relatives or colleagues (informally, not at work) at least once a month

4.6 Educational attainment: Percentage of older persons aged 55-74 with upper secondary or higher education

"Active ageing enables people to remain in the labor market, carry out productive unpaid activities, such as caring for their family members and volunteering and maintain health, independence and security despite their older age" (ECE, 2016).

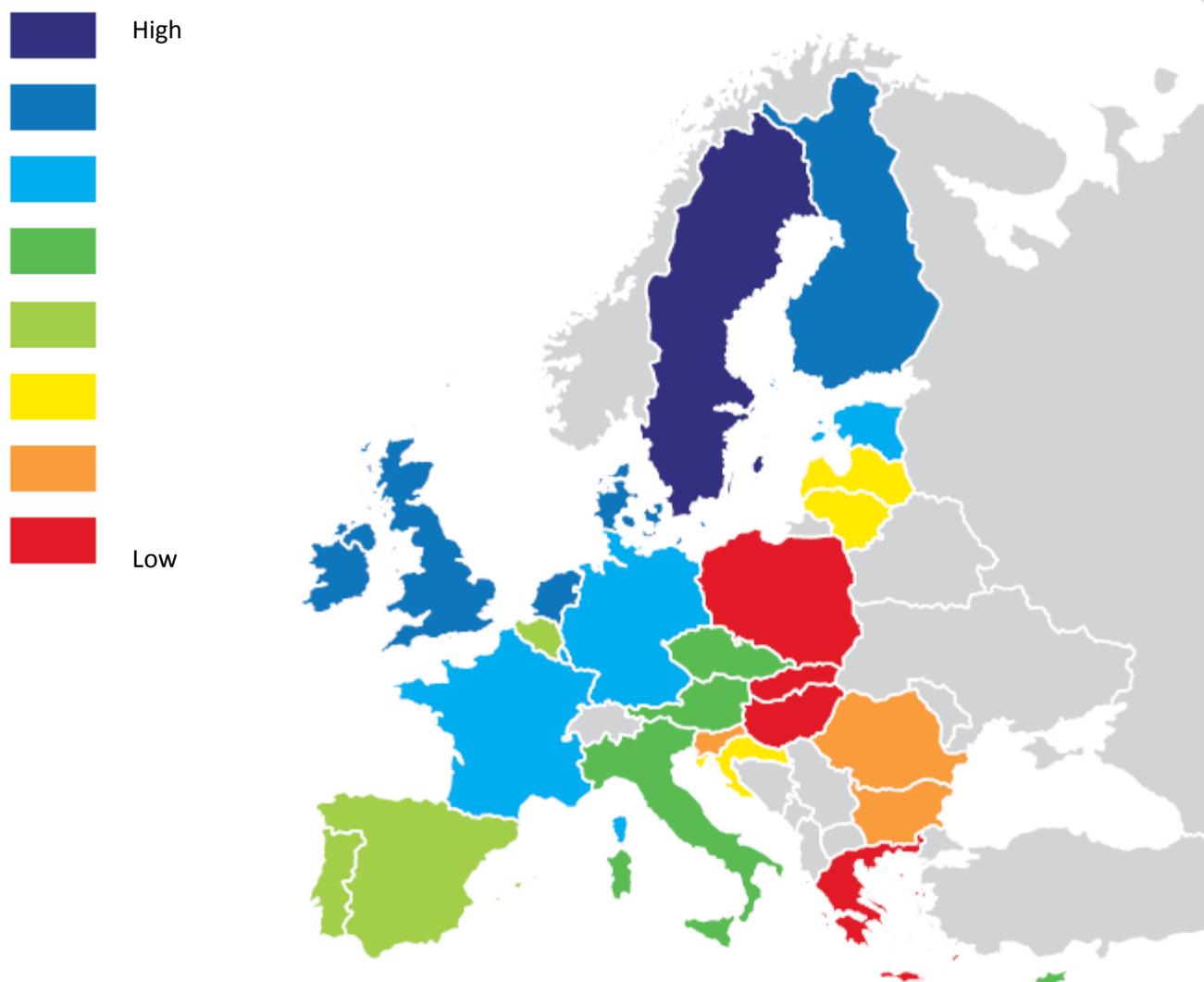
In 2014, the Active Ageing Index was calculated for the 28 European Union Member States. The ranking was topped by six countries: Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Finland and Ireland.

Table 1. The Active Ageing Index ranking of 28 EU Member States, 2014

Country	Active Ageing Index	AAI score
Sweden	44,9	High
Denmark	40,3	
Netherlands	40,0	
United Kingdom	39,7	
Finland	39,0	
Ireland	38,6	
France	35,8	Middle
Luxembourg	35,7	
Germany	35,4	
Estonia	34,6	
Czech Republic	34,4	
Cyprus	34,2	
Austria	34,1	
Italy	34,0	
28 European Union States average	33,9	
Belgium	33,7	
Portugal	33,5	Low
Spain	32,6	
Croatia	31,6	
Latvia	31,5	
Lithuania	31,5	
Malta	31,5	
Bulgaria	29,9	
Slovenia	29,8	
Romania	29,6	
Slovakia	28,5	
Hungary	28,3	
Poland	28,1	
Greece	27,6	

None of the countries showed uniformly good or bad results across all areas. For each country, both its strengths and potential areas for improvement were identified. For instance, Sweden, the leader of the rating, could improve older persons' relative median income and access to healthcare services. Denmark that ranks second can work on indicators of relative median income and care to children, grandchildren and the elderly. The Netherlands ranked third have relatively low indicators of employment among women and care to children and grandchildren, as well as, relative to the high performing Nordic countries, lower physical exercise, and political participation.

Figure 1. The Active Ageing Index ranking of 28 EU Member States, 2014



Among our neighbors that are members of the European Union, two States (Latvia and Lithuania) have a medium Active Aging Index score, the third one (Poland) is a low-score country.

The strengths of Latvia include high employment, especially among women, and excellent educational attainment. At the same time, there is potential for improvement in such spheres as social participation (especially among men), access to healthcare needs, financial status, and physical safety. Improvements are required in the Capacity and enabling environment for active and healthy ageing domain, in particular, life expectancy and mental wellbeing need to be addressed.

Lithuania has above average employment rates (especially among women), the country is also good at caring for children, grandchildren and elderly people; physical activity; access to healthcare services, independent living; educational attainment. There is potential for improvement in the following areas: voluntary activities, political participation, financial status, physical safety, lifelong learning, capability and an enabling environment for active aging, in particular, life expectancy, mental wellbeing and social connectedness.

Poland has good educational attainment and relative median income. But it needs to improve all other spheres, especially employment, lifelong learning and independent living.

A different mechanism is used to calculate the Global AgeWatch Index. Our next publication will be dedicated to that.

Swiss Red Cross

Sources:

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