Active Ageing: Country Report Norway

DAG ARNE CHRISTENSEN

STEIN ROKKAN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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Foreword[1]

Demographic ageing is a key challenge European policy-makers will face in the coming decades. An ageing society will strain European labour markets, pension systems and health care systems. This publication comes out of the Active Age project, financed by the European Union, that aims at identifying and analysing the socio-institutional, economic, and political realities facing the implementation of active ageing policies in 10 European countries. This implies the following: 1. Chart and analyse the existing active ageing policy landscape in Europe, 2. Identify and outline barriers to and opportunities for implementing active ageing policies in Europe, 3. Highlight and explore means of overcoming barriers and seizing opportunities for active ageing policies in Europe.

[1] I thank Rune Ervik, Ingrid Helgøy and Stephen Nay for valuable comments.

Abstract

This paper systematically chart existing Norwegian active ageing policies. It identifies policy goals, policy instruments, and institutional mechanisms of the current active ageing policy agenda. It also maps the socio-institutional and political contexts in which Norwegian active ageing policies are embedded.

The study finds that although there is increased awareness of active ageing in Norwegian politics, the motives for policy reformulation is driven by a negative definition of ageing as such. Population ageing put pressures on the ability of the welfare state to meet the needs of future retirees. However, there are no coherent strategic shifts in policies. The government and the social partners have agreed on some measures to improve labour market prospects for older workers (inclusive workplaces, senior policies). The overall objective of the government is to keep up the high labour force participation rates. In addition the policy approach is characterised by a high degree of consensus building and avoidance of conflicts through corporatist integration of the major labour market organisations into the policy process.

Sammendrag

Utgangspunktet for dette EU finansierte prosjektet er de demografiske endringene med flere eldre og færre yrkesaktive i fremtiden, som en antar vil sette press på arbeidsmarkedet, pensjonspolitikken og helseområdet i de europeiske land. Målsettingen med prosjektet er å identifisere og analysere de institusjonelle, økonomiske og politiske realitetene som møter implementeringen av en aktiv aldringspolitikk i Europa.

I denne artikkelen kartlegges og analyseres det aktive aldringspolitiske landskapet i Norge. Studien finner at selv om det er en økende bevissthet knyttet til disse utfordringene i norsk politikk, så er motivene bak de initiativ som tas drevet av en negativ definisjon av aldring som sådan. Regjeringens politikk vektlegger at en aldrende befolkning setter press på økonomien, og blir slik sett på som et hinder for at velferdsstaten skal klare å imøtekomme behovene til fremtidens pensjonister. Likevel, kan vi ikke si at det har skjedd et strategisk skifte av politikk på dette feltet. Regjeringen og partene i arbeidslivet har blitt enige om enkelte initiativ for å bedre ivareta de eldre arbeidstakerne i arbeidslivet (inkluderende arbeidsliv, seniorpolitikk). Den overordende målsettingen til regjeringen ser ut til å være å opprettholde den høye deltakelsen i arbeidsmarkedet. Regjeringens tilnærmingen til dette politikkfeltet er konsensuspreget gjennom at partene i arbeidslivet i høy grad trekkes inn i den politiske prosessen.

Introduction

> «Looking back to my own childhood as a farm-girl in rural Norway I remember my grandmother's happy old age. She milked her cows, patted the horse that she loved, collected the eggs and picked flowers for her kitchen table. She did that to her days' end» (Minister of Social Affairs, Ingjerd Schou, Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid 8–12 April 2002).

Increased longevity and improved health among older populations is one of the major successes of the 20th century. More of us reach old age in good health, «fit for participation». Accordingly, the definition of what it means to be elderly has to be redefined. The Norwegian Minister of Social Affairs, Ingjerd Schou, obviously means that quality of life ought to be an essential part of such a definition. Patting horses and picking flowers, however, is not what strikes us first when looking into more productive oriented definitions of Active Ageing. Hence, ageing mean different things for different people, governments and organisations.

Turning to textbook definitions of Active Ageing the message is that old stereotypes of what it means to grow older has to be de-bunked. Ageing as a «dependent» stage of life needs to be substituted by a shift that emphasizes «Active Ageing». The World Health Organization defines Active Ageing as (WHO 2002:12): «*the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age*». The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) emphasises the productive dimension when it states that (OECD 2000:126): «*Active Ageing refers to the capacity of people, as they grow older, to lead productive lives in society and the economy*». Tellingly, Active Ageing raise a broad spectre of social and political issues: Active life expectancy, employment, pensions system reforms, health and long-term care need, caregiving and volunteerism and cost-effective investments in treating chronic disease (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1997). Active is the key word, and refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, and civic affairs, not just to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Taking this as a starting point age composition should be an important element for policy makers not only in Norway, but worldwide.

This report gives an overview on how Norwegian policy makers define Active Ageing. Which, if any, Active Ageing policies/programmes can be identified? How do we go about defining such programmes? Essentially we are looking for policies that help older people remain healthy and active in society on different levels.

The analysis of the Norwegian version of Active Ageing is divided into five parts. First, an analytic background for studying Active Ageing policies is outlined. Second, we map the demographic and social challenges within the Norwegian context. Third, we pinpoint the measures taken so far. Finally, we sum up, and discuss, our findings. In appendix B we give an overview of the key actors in the field.

Norwegian Active Ageing policies: The institutional setting

There seems to be an agreement that ageing populations face western democracies with common challenges. First, labour forces are ageing. Secondly, labour shortage can become a problem in some countries, and thirdly, increases in pension costs and loss of tax income due to early exit may put a pressure on the economy. Eventually, so we are told, these challenges may put the future funding of the welfare state into question (OECD 2000). Turning to the policy solutions chosen within the OECD area, however, the keyword is variation (OECD 2000). The first question we need to ask is why governments act differently? The follow up is which framework can be used to explain differences among countries when it comes to active ageing policies?

Peter Baldwin (1990: 290), in a study of the class bases of the European Welfare state, writes that «once made, choices in social policy exerted a determining influence on the course of events later possible». Obviously, one of the key questions in political science is how structures and rules affect behaviour. New institutional models have developed as a reaction to the neoclassical neglect of organisational considerations. New institutionalism focuses on «the glue holding the atoms together» (Shepsle 1989: 134). The message is that the real world of politics is one of constraints. Policy alternatives are vetoed because governments and institutions apply certain rules and procedures for their own conduct. In addition context matters, it both provides structure of opportunities to policy actors, but can also create robustness against certain policy goals.

According to Willensky (2002: chapter 2) what we need to look for is types of political economies, or types of national bargaining arrangements among major interest groups and government. We have to capture the variations in the structure and interplay of government, labour, professions, employer and trade associations. Policy making within an Norwegian context is labelled democratic corporatism, and we are, in Willensky«s terminology, dealing with a consensus-making machine. We should expect such a political system to have: a) formal channels for bargaining and a structure for consensus, b) a blurring of old distinctions between the public and the private, c) trade-offs among bargaining parties on a wide range of national issues, and d) that social policy is absorbed into general economic policy (i.e. solutions to social policy problems are solved within the national bargaining system itself).

Tellingly, Norwegian Active Ageing policies have to be viewed both in light of the nature of the political system, and type of welfare state regime. Of course, there are a number of factors beyond this formal decisions making structure that can account for lack of political debate and actual policies. One such important exogenous variable is actual financial pressures caused by an ageing population, i.e. state finances. Lets take a quick review on the three explanatory factors.

The Decision making system

Norway is a highly centralised political system, the parliament (*Storting*) has the supreme law-making power, party discipline is strong, and government bills is rarely changed by the standing committees in parliament. The prevailing decision-making mode in Norway is one of consensus-building, broad participation, pragmatism and incrementalism. Major changes in public policy are normally implemented in co-operation with employee organisations and other affected interests. The reform style is that of compromise. Whilst wages and work life conditions is settled within the framework of this tripartite co-operation, local governments provide most of the core welfare services like education, health care and social services. In the latter case decision-making processes also include policy actors at local level.[2]

Accordingly, important parts of Norwegian Active Ageing policies are being decided within a highly formal decision making framework. The welfare contract emphasises the historical deal between the state and the main sector interests, especially the traditional class co-operation between employers and workers. Issues concerning regulations to achieve a balanced working life and the protection of workers rights and safety are generally tackled in two ways; a) through the well developed permanent contact network between the government and the major labour market organisations, and b) through the appointment of single issue oriented committees and commissions. In the first case the so-called Contact Committee (*Kontaktutvalget*) is the most important body of co-operation. Here the Government and the main labour market organisations exchange views on the current economic situation and bring up issues they consider important to discuss. The overall approach to policy making then is extremely consensual.

The Welfare state

According to Arter (1999) the Norwegian, and the Nordic welfare system, constitute a specific type of welfare system and that is a de luxe, top-of-the-range model. One important characteristic of the Scandinavian model is the practice of an idiosyncratic welfare system, distinct from the continental and liberal ones, which combines (Arter 1999: 194) «social rights based on citizenship; the public sector as the provider of basic services; comprehensive social policy provision; a public monopoly of social policy provision with services financed through taxation; a strong element of income distribution; and equality as an explicit policy objective». Accordingly, the public sector in Norway is large (as proportion of GDP) and subjected to centralized regulation and financial control. Full employment policy, irrespective of type of government, is a fundamental element of the Norwegian welfare state. The existence of a fairly generous and universal welfare state has been based on the premise of high level of activity in terms of labour market participation. So far, this has secured the financing of the welfare state and contributed in keeping expenditure on social security under control

2 Despite a highly centralised political system, local government represent a long-standing tradition of local democracy and self-rule. Municipal authorities are formally independent institutions governed by democratic elected councils who provide basic health care services. Currently, the local level compromises two levels of democratic governance, including 434 municipalities and 19 counties. The average size of the Norwegian municipality is about 9 000 inhabitants, but half of all municipalities have less than 5000 inhabitants. Hence, local authorities are an integral part of the welfare state.

State finances

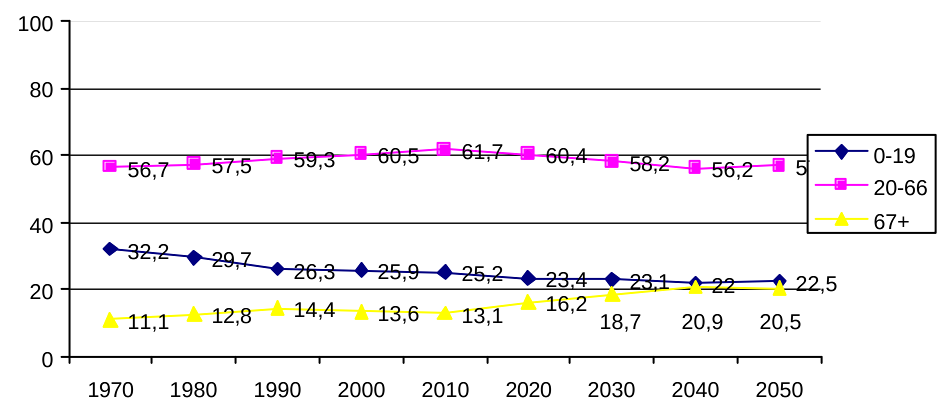
Whilst budget deficits have triggered Active Ageing reforms in countries like Finland and Sweden, Norway definitely is an exception to this rule. A World Bank survey in 1997 placed Norway as the world's fourth richest country in terms of per capita income (Arter 1999:188). Norway has a surplus that is expected to grow for several years to come. In 1999–2000 the value of oil and gas production increased by 78,6 per cent, reaching NOK 340 billion. Over the next year the Fiscal Budget will most likely show sizeable surpluses on account of high petroleum revenues, which partly are to be transferred to the Government Petroleum Fund. This gives the government a freedom of action that few other countries enjoy and affects the relationship between the public and the private sectors. However, it may also lead policy actors to sweep certain policy solutions under the rug, for instance restrictions in the pension systems.

The analysis presented in this report is based on three types of data; 1) secondary literature and commission reports has been trawled in order to get an overview of what is actually happening in the field of Active Ageing policies. 2) Key policy actors in the field have been interviewed (se appendix A), and 3) we draw upon the Norwegian governments responds to an OECD questionnaire concerning current policies aimed to improve labour market opportunities for older workers.

Demographic and social challenges: The Problem definition

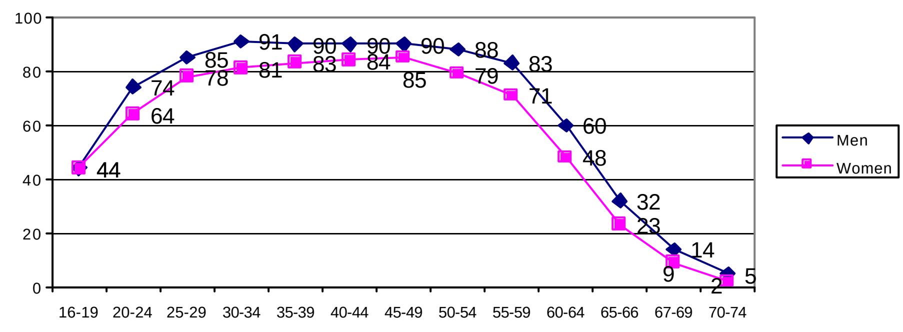
According to standard definitions population aging refers to a decline in the proportion of children and young people and an increase in the proportion of people age 60 and over. In Norway, life expectancy at birth was 71 years for men and 76 years for women in 1960. By 2030 this is projected to grow to 79 and 85 years respectively (OECD 2000: 191). The critical numbers is found in figure 1 and show that the percentage of the population that is aged 67 and over is projected to grow from 11 per cent in 1970 to about 19 per cent in 2020. However, the increase for people aged 80 and over is much sharper, from around 2% in 1960 to 6.5 per cent in 2030 (OECD 2000). Currently, there are about 3.5 employees for every old person, by 2030 the number will be less than 2.5 employees (if the trends continue). Hence, the dependency rate for Norway is somewhat lower than the OECD average (Ibid).

Fgure 1. Population projections among different age groups 1970-250
(Per cent, source NOU 2000:27, p.34).



Despite the fact that the Norwegian population is «greying», labour market participation is high. In figure 2, employment rates are broken down on gender and age. Within a European context the numbers are well above OECD average (OECD 2000). In 2000 it was 77,8 per cent, and 60 per cent or more of the people aged 55–64 that participated in the labour force. Especially, the figures for women and elderly workers are high in Norway compared to most other countries.

Figur 2. Employment rates among different age groupps and gender
(Per cent 2000, Source Solem 2001:25)



The explanation is twofold; first of all Norway, and the other Nordic countries, have, as mentioned, a long tradition of full employment policy. The old Labour Party slogan «*Hele folket i arbeidet*» (The whole people in work) is more a reality today than 40 years ago, particularly due to the mobilisation of women into the labour market. Secondly, employment legislation seems to work in favour of old employees. In times of economic downturn when enterprises are forced to reduce staff, the principle' «last-in-first-out» usually holds. This seems to favour older employees since they generally have been employed longer and thus are permitted to stay on.

That said, considerable changes are occurring in the nature of work and work exit also in Norway. Labour force participation has increased significantly the last decades. From 1972 to 2000 the overall participation rate has increased from 61 percent to 73 percent. For older workers, i.e. persons aged 50–74, the participation rate has increased from 45 percent in 1989 to 54 percent in 2000 (AAD 2003). However, for those aged 62 to 66 the participation rate has declined from 44 percent in 1989 to 39 percent in 2000. The expected age of retirement for those aged 60 and over was reduced with 9 ½ months, to 65 years, from 1995 to 2001. Of this, 8 ½ months is attributed to the early retirement scheme AFP (se below). According to the Ministry of Labour the growth rate of the inflow of younger persons to the labour force is negative, and the number of persons in the age groups above 50 years will increase in the coming five-year period (AAD 2001). Young people under the age of 25 have increased their participation in educations as their main activity.

Although state pension age in Norway is amongst the highest in Europe at 67, both for females and males, the average age of exit from the labour market is decreasing. Norwegians leave the labour force earlier, and enter later, and as a result the amount of time spent in employment declines. In the period from 1950–95 the average retirement age declined with 3.3 years, to 63,8 years for men, and with 8,8 for women to 62 (Dahl 2000). The inflow to disability pensions schemes, early retirement arrangements and absence due to sickness has increased throughout the second half of the 1990s. In 2000, the inflow to disability pensions was about 30 000 persons and 11 000 persons chose early retirement. At the end of 2000, 30 000 persons (1,3 per cent of the labour force) were on early retirement schemes, and 280 000 (12,1 per cent of the labour force) were on disability benefit (AAD 2001). The governments problem definition then can be formulations as follows: A tight labour market combined with a labour force that grows slower than previously, means that the challenge is the shortage of labour in several sectors of the economy. Hence, the future looks bright for all workers, included the elderly.

One positive side effect of Norwegian full employment policy is that more people have been able to save towards their retirement. The economic position of the elderly in Norway has been improved and stabilised in the post war period (OECD 2000). Poverty studies show that there is a high degree of social heterogeneity when it comes to the distribution of poverty in Norway (Fløtten 2003). The proportion of poor is highest for households below 45 years and lowest for those over 65. Not surprisingly, the poverty rate is highest among households with a weak link to the labour market and without rights to the public pension scheme Although the poverty rate as such has not changed in the 1979–2000 period, the demographic composition of the poor has (Andersen et.al 2003). The most striking finding is the sharp reduction in the poverty rate among the elderly (Ibid). Today many elderly enter old age as homeowners, and a majority have money in the bank and no debt. According to the Public Employment Service employees aged 50–59 years are also less vulnerable to unemployment compared to most other groups except employees in the 40s (AAD 2003). Again, the general policy to prevent poverty is to integrate and keep people in employment.

It has been discussed whether low exit rates can have a negative effect on the social integration for those falling outside the labour market. The argument is that people perceive their place of work as their most important source of social and political integration in society. In a low exit country like Norway, loosing the work place as a foothold for social activity, may lead to social and political marginalisation. Øverbye and

Blekesaune (2002) show that Norwegian retirees, compared to Danes and Fins, report a less satisfactory social development after retirement. The study stress that retiring in a low exit country seems to be more detrimental. However, early retirees in these countries constitute a selected group of less resource-rich individuals. In Norway those on disability pension report having larger problems in maintaining friendship, and a higher degree of boredom. Loss of attachment to the labour market can therefore lead to political and social indifference, but only among the less privileged retirees (i.e. those on a disability pension scheme). Resource rich retirees, on the other hand, seem to live happily ever after their detachment from the labour market (i.e. AFP pensioners). When it comes to the general activity level of the elderly studies report that participation in organisations decreases by age, especially for men (Birkeland et. al 1999). Activity in religious organisations is most common among pensioners, and particularly among women.

Norwegian Active Ageing Policies

Obviously, ensuring labour force participation of older people goes hand in hand with macro-economic performance. Low unemployment seems to be a pre-condition for creating sufficient job opportunities for older people. That said, the governments message is that declining oil revenues in the new millennium will coincide with an ageing population and increase the states pensions obligations. Increased exit from the labour market have caused alarm about the future supply of labour in Norway.

Can we then identify a new paradigm in Norwegian Active Ageing policies? So far Norwegian policy makers seem, as they usually do (Christensen and Lægreid 2002), to handle reforms in Active Ageing policies sector by sector. No coherent national strategic plan exists on how to handle the challenges. In addition, it is still an open question as to whether a shift in paradigm is seen at necessary. Existing policies, and past reforms, leans us to hypothesise that new reforms may not be needed or they will be more incremental in character.

However, in the last 2–3 years it is evident that Active Ageing policies has entered the Norwegian political agenda. Senior policy (*Seniorpolitikk*) has been put in the forefront under the general heading of an inclusive working life (*Inkluderende arbeidsliv*). As documented in table 1 a media search on the above two keywords reveals an obvious increase in focus during the last 2–3 years. The search on Atekst (http://www.atekst.mediaarkivet.no) includes major Norwegian newspapers as Aftenposten, Dagens Næringsliv, Dagbladet and Bergens Tidende. The search shows that in the last three years Norway have witnessed an increased focus on the two «newish» words *senior policy* and *inclusive working life*. The old key world work line has a more stable pattern of media attention across the time span.

Table 1: *Active ageing key words 1995–2002 (Atekst search, number of articles containing the key words).*

Year	Inclusive working-life	Senior Policy	Benefit to Work line
1995	0	3	15
1996	0	3	10
1997	0	2	9
1998	0	1	17
1999	0	5	9
2000	5	10	7
2001	32	31	18
2002	172	43	11

The Norwegian government is currently in the process of formulating policies to meet some of the challenges. The government defines population ageing as an economic problem, viewed as a threat to the well-being of coming generations. Labour force shortage, combined with increased public pension expenditures, seems to be the essential problem definition. Retirement incentives are one of the major challenges, along with increased sick leave absenteeism and extensive disability pensioning. Sick leave for instance, increased by almost 60 per cent between 1994 and 2001, and is now a major drain on the budget (Wallin 2002). In addition, from about 50 years, and particularly after the age of 60, employment rates are declining.

We have argued that unfolding the Norwegian version of Active Ageing policies means looking into public committee and commission reports. The first traces can be found in the White Paper on Welfare from 1995. Here the benefit to the work line (*arbeidslinja*) was stressed as the fundamental approach to welfare for all generations. Since then, several public committees/commissions has reported on aspects of the labour market and the pension system making compatible recommendations with the work line. A committee reported on flexible pensioning in 1997 (NOU 1998:19) – another, with the subtitle An including working-life, on sick leave and disability pensions in 1999 (NOU 2000:27). Finally a new Pension Commission was set up in 2001 with the mandate to formulate the future pension system in Norway.

How then, can we trace the challenges described above in the four policy fields covered by this report: pensions, labour market, life-long learning and health care? Before accounting for the development across these policy fields table 2 presents a chronological overview of the initiatives taken, their goals, and whether or not the initiatives have made it through parliament or not.

Table 2. *Key policy initiatives in Norwegian Active Ageing policy*

Commissions	Recommendations/Goals	Result
NOU 1994:2 «On work and Retirement»	Flexible pension age, restrictions on early retirement.	Vetoed
1997 White Paper «Action plan for Care of the Elderly»	Strengthen the scope and quality of the services. Ensure high-quality nursing and care services adapted to the needs of the individual.	Implemented
NOU 1998:19 «On flexible Retirement»	In line with NOU 1994 :2	Vetoed
NOU 2000:27 «An Including Working Life»	Reduce sick leave absenteeism	No majority proposal. Sparked off a national action plan for senior policy within working life.
2002 Competence Reform	Life-long learning	Being implemented
2003 Government proposal on disability pension	Strengthening the economic incentives to take up work	Being implemented
2001 Pension commission	Modernised pension system, strengthening the correlation between labour income and pension payments.	Commission report in progress
2002 Commission on labour law revision	In progress, but has followed up the EU Directive on age discrimination	Commission report in progress

Pensions system reforms

Flexibility in pension systems is seen as important in order to encourage employment of older workers (OECD 2000). The message is that systems should leave room for combining work and pensions. The question then is how the Norwegian pension system responds to ageing?

Exit pathways in Norway have been limited to old age pension from the age of 67, disability pension, having jobs with lower pension age (police, military, nurse etc), unemployment or social assistance (Solem, Mykletun and Mykletun 2001). Hence, Norway operates two main exit schemes: a) disability pensions (which can be granted already from age 18) and a voluntary early retirement Scheme (AFP), which can be sought from age 62.[3] The AFP was negotiated between the confederation of trade unions (LO) and employers (NHO) in 1988, and gradually the eligibility age within the agreement has been reduced from 66 years in 1989 to 62 years in 1998. AFP covers

[3] No other formal early exit options exists, although it is in principle possible to go on unemployment benefits from age 60.5 till one reaches retirement age at 67 (Øverbye and Blekesaune (2002).

about 50 percent of employees in private sector and the whole public sector (Ibid). The financial burdens of the AFP-scheme are born 40 percent by the state and 60 percent by employers for private sector workers for the age groups 64–66. The government bear the full cost for government employees 62–66 years of age while the municipalities pay the full amount for municipal workers in the same age group (AAD 2003).

Apparently, it is important to distinguish between different types of pensioners. Whilst the typical pensioner on early retirement (AFP) is characterised by high education, good health, high income and employment in the public sector, the typical disability pensioner is characterised by low education, bad health, private sector employment and low income (Dahl 2000). The majority of the early retired in Norway are on disability pension, but recently the Negotiated Early Retirement Scheme (AFP) has replaced disability pensions as the most common exit path among the 62–66 years old. Emergence of new norms on time for retirement is more or less openly expressed. Currently, the government aims at reducing the transition of persons from the labour force to pensions schemes, and to develop positive measures to avoid ageing workers from withdrawing from the labour force. Efforts have also been laid down in order to pinpoint the causes of declining labour market participation, and the various factors causing early retirement are grouped into three categories; push mechanisms (work related causes), pull mechanisms (favourable pension arrangement), and jump mechanisms (individual choices making work less attractive than different leisure activities) (Solem and Øverbye 2002, Solem 2001). Research show that early exit seem to result from personal choice, norms and government policies (Ibid). Push factors are prominent among disability pensioners, while jump factors dominate for AFP pensioners.

The pressure on the pension system is a key part of the problem definition in Norwegian Active Ageing policies. The challenges are obvious: During the next 15 years the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund assumes an increase in the number of pensioners from approximately 175 000 to approximately 300 000. The increase is twice as large as the increase during the last 15 years, and not only caused by the demographic changes. The expansion of the public sector also plays an important role. Projections show that the public pension expenditures indicate a sharp rise during the next decades. In table 3 the projections are based on population projections from Statistics Norway from 1999. The message in is that public expenditures on old age in Norway is projected to increase fast towards 2050, and more than in most other countries. The reason being that the new pensioners entering the National Insurance system will have a higher pension than the average.

Table 3. *National insurance system expenditures on old-age and disability pensions (percentage of GDP 2000–2050).*

	2000	2010	2030	2050
Old-Age pension	4.5	5.7	11.4	13.5
Disability pension	2.3	3.5	4.4	4.3
Total	6.8	9.2	15.8	17.8

Within the current pension system the incentives to keep working after the age of 67 is low. If a person has other income the retirement benefits is reduced by 40 percent of the income that exceed two times the basic amount (currently NOK 54 170). However, from the age of 70, the retirement benefit paid out is independent of other income. In addition there are no possibilities for voluntary retirement, either full or part time, before the age of 67. The general rule is that it is not possible to receive a full occupational pension and still work full time. There is one exception however; you can receive a full occupational pension and work full time, if the occupational pension is from a government or municipal system and the work income comes from an employer in the private sector.

Throughout the 1990s there has been an ongoing debate whether the National Insurance old age pension should be more flexible, both when it comes to retirement age and the degree of retirement. Several government committees have discussed the issue, and the objective has been to encourage later exit. In 1994 a committee «On work and Retirement» (NOU 1994:2) recommended improved flexibility before and after the age of 67, and to restrict early exit, including AFP (Solem and Øverbye 2002). Another, «On flexible Retirement» (NOU 1998:19) recycled the proposals when recommending that a flexible system within the National Insurance old age pension should be further discussed. Although the different committee proposals have been vetoed they illustrate the character of Norwegian decision-making. The commissions all include representatives of unions and employers alongside government officials and experts. As soon as their proposals have been vetoed, they usually rejoin to look for compromise solutions. The different committee reports have, as we shall se, among other things sparked off efforts to improve Norwegian working life.

Yet another pension commission is underway with its report discussing the issues covered in the other two. The 2001 appointed pension commission published a preliminary report in 2002, with a final recommendation due to be ready in 2003. In its preliminary report the commission presents two models for a possible future pension system: a) a common tax financed state based pension for all, and b) a modernised pension system where the relationship between income from labour and pension payments are strengthened. The latter model is presented as the most relevant. The basic principle of this reform is that the size of the income-related pension will depend on how much each individual contributes to the system during his/her work life. In a potential reformed system it will be possible to draw a pension from the age of 62 and the retirement age will be flexible with 70 years as the upper age limit. The commission itself writes that if their proposal is carried through the winners will be the high – and medium income groups (Pedersen 2002). Judging from the ongoing debate the commission's proposal does not seem to create much enthusiasm. Unions representing female workers in the public sector, often working part-time, have campaigned heavily against the proposal. According to the leader of the commission, Sigbjørn Johnsen, issues concerning wage equality between the sexes and part-time work, should be solved outside the pension system (Interview May 2003).

When it comes to disability pensions the government has tried to strengthen the work incentives in several ways. Among others things the government has launched a target-oriented project called «Back to work» aimed at reducing the number of persons on disability pensions. In order to reach the goals the government proposed, in December 2002, a new model on organizing the different welfare programmes. It aimed at getting a better coordination of the National Office For Social Insurance (*Trygdeetaten*), the Labour Market Administration (*Aetat*), and the social services in the municipalities. The idea was to merge the different institutions into a new state agency in order to promote simpler and better services for people in working age and with work ability. Parliament however, vetoed the proposal, and ordered the government to sketch out different organisational models for coordinating these services. A new Commission has been given the mandate to prepare, and present, different alternatives within the summer of 2004.

In June 2002 the government proposed yet another reform to reduce the inflow to disability pensions. The reform passed Parliament in July 2003 and is currently being implemented. The new scheme is divided into one temporary disability benefit (from one to four years) and one permanent disability pension. The objective is to hinder that not all long-term health related problems is assessed as permanently disabled. The temporary disability benefit is to be reassessed after a period of 1–4 years, to consider whether the person is capable of returning to work. Hence, the economic incentives to take up work are strengthened compared to the old disability pension scheme.

Labour market

Public policies that directly or indirectly encouraged earlier retirement were until recently not seen as a major problem. On the contrary, they were often viewed positively because of their alleged effects in reducing the pressure of unemployment. Current policies, however, aim at the opposite, to prolong working careers.

According to the Ministry of Administration and Work (AAD 2003), and our informants, the most pressing current problem is the all too early departures from the labour force. Obviously, there are two solutions available: one can either force people to work longer, or encourage them to do so. We have already seen that the first alternative has been tried without any success, so current policy is focused on encouragement. Note that Norway's labour force reserve is smaller than other countries, due to the high employment rate among women, and the elderly. Decreasing birth rates, combined with a limited influx of younger workers will most probably improve the labour market situation for all workers, including the older age groups. The future for those striving to prolong their working careers seems to look bright.

So, how does the government try do encourage the employment of older workers? In 2000 yet another commission, «An Including Working Life» (NOU 2000:27, presented its report. It was commissioned to prepare proposals to fight the increase in sick leave absence. Even if the commission members failed to agree on a common proposal, the report nevertheless led the social partners to agree on *«a national action plan for senior policies within working life»* (NHO, LO, HSH, KS, Akademikerne). Originally the action plan consisted of the following measures: a) the establishment of a national resource centre on senior policies, b) mobilising relevant organisations, c) education, training, and spreading of knowledge on senior policies, and d) supporting enterprises in need of guidance, e) establishing projects within enterprises, and f) piloting of different models and measures. The action plan has sparked of two concrete measures: a) the *National Initiative for Senior Workers* in Norway, and b) the tripartite agreement on *more inclusive workplaces* (Solem and Øverbye 2002, AAD 2003).

The main focus, in both cases, is on the company level and on individual workers. A stronger financial effort is put into the Including Working Life agreement (about 27 million Euro for 2002), than into the Action plan for Senior Policy (0.65 million Euro) (Solem and Øverbye 2002). The main cost is related to the recruitment of 600 consultants in 2002 in 19 regional centres for including working life. Lets look at the background for the two initiatives, and how they are being set into practice.

The *National Initiative for Senior Workers* was launched in February 2001. The process behind the initiative was business as usual. First, the contact committee between the government and the social partners set up a reference group – and then the reference group proceeded to appoint a working group to formulate the concrete measures.[4] A new centre, the Centre for Senior Policy (CSP), was given the responsibility to coordinate the initiative. The overall goal set up in the initiative is to prevent the exclusion of older workers before retirement age. There is a strong focus on how to improve work environments and personnel policies in order to make it more attractive for workers and companies to prolong working careers. The emphasis is on information and campaigning, especially aimed at individual companies/workers. As a part of the efforts a series of conferences on senior policies is due to be arranged throughout Norway in June 2003. It is important to keep in mind that in Norway, 75 per cent of all employers in the private sector are employed in small and medium-sized companies.

In the initiative the social partners have committed themselves to: a) use their regional and local branches actively in informing about appropriate models, practical experience and research results in the area of senior policy, b) to take initiatives to network projects between work places, c) to arrange conferences and training for respective target groups, i.e. top and middle management, union delegates and senior

[4] The following organisations participated in the working group: The Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO), the Confederation of Trade Union (LO), the Ministry of Administration and Work (AAD), the Federation of Norwegian Professional Association (*Akademikerne*), the Federation of Norwegian Commercial and Service Enterprises (HSH – *Handels- og Servicenæringens Hovedorganisasjon*), the Norwegian Association of Local Authorities (KS – *Kommunenes Sentralforbund*), the Labour Market Administration (*Aetat*), the National Office For Social Insurance (*Rikstrygdeverket*), AF, and the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (*Arbeidstilsynet*).

workers, and d) to train union representatives in making good senior work environments. The agreement refers to the Centre for Senior Policy (CSP) as an important node in the network to combat early retirement among older workers. CSP formulates and initiate information campaigns, produce handbooks and other material on how companies should go about formulating a coherent senior policy. The most important part of the plan is to initiate concrete management projects in the work places, in order to change company management perceptions and to strengthen the older workers position in the work force (AAD 2003). According to the leader of the CSP, Åsmund Lunde, the challenge has to be met with measures on two arenas (Interview May 2003). First of all, old stereotypes still prevail in the companies when it comes to how they look at older employees. The challenge is to get the message through to the companies that they, for their own sake, need to reformulate their personnel policies directed towards older workers given the future lack of labour. In addition Lunde underlines that companies remain passive unless they have to act, and accordingly companies should have to pay in order to let older workers off. There are some signs that such policies may be underway. Previously employees being laid off because of downscaling of public entities have had a special unemployment benefit of long duration. Employees older than 55 years old could receive this benefit to pension age if no jobs were available. From 1 July 2002 this special benefit had to paid by the public share companies dismissing employees (AAD 2003). Lunde also argue that efforts should be concentrated on combating new individual norms for time of retirement. Hence, the information material produced by the CPS focuses on the work place as a social arena important for individual development and social involvement.

The other key initiative, the *tripartite agreement on more inclusive workplaces* (IA), was signed in October 2001. The original parties to the agreement were the Norwegian government represented by the Ministry of Labour and Government Administration (AAD) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (SD). The other signatories were, of course, the leaders of the principal employers and employee organisations. The agreement runs for 4 years, from 3 October 2001 until 31 December 2005 and three goals are set for the whole period: a) reduce sickness absence by 20 percent, b) increase labour market participation among disabled and handicapped people, and c) increase labour market participation among older workers (i.e. to increase the average real pension age). The social partners do have the main responsibility to reach the goals in the agreement, whereas the government, represented by the National Insurance Offices, plays a supportive role by providing (economic) incentives to those employers that make serious efforts to cope with the problems. The government have promised not to propose any changes in the sickness benefit in the period, but the agreement will be evaluated twice, first in 2003, and with a final evaluation at the end of the period. If the first evaluation report shows that it is clear that it is not possible to achieve the specific objectives for the period of the agreement, it will be terminated, unless the parties reach some other agreement (AAD 2003).

Since the kick-off an additional 20 organisations has entered the agreement. Currently, approximately 500 000 employees are employed in an inclusive working-life firm. The contract obliges the firms to follow up closely employees on sick leave and to adapt the work environment for senior members and employees with reduced work ability. In return the companies that join the agreement gets their own personal consultant from the National Office For Social Insurance, and a 4 per cent reduction in work tax for employees over the age of 62. Additional economic incentives are also introduced in order to make it profitable for firms to introduce working conditions that hinder the outflow from the labour market.

The following special schemes and measures are included in the agreement; a) more use of purchasing health care services and rehabilitation services, b) wage subsidies to employers who hire disabled employees, c) a special scheme for sickness absence related to pregnancy, d) reduced employers contribution for employees over the age of 62, and e) special subsidy for adaptation of the work place for disabled people. In addition there are some special schemes for employers who makes their own arrangements with the National Insurance offices, and these include; a) easier access to activation during sickness leave, b) better guidance by the national insurance authorities, c) special reimbursement for occupational health care services, and d) extended possibilities for self reported sickness absence. The arrangement of purchasing private health care services may lead to conflicts between the goal of activating those temporary out of the labour market and the needs of those permanently outside the labour market, for instance groups with chronically diseases. For these groups treatment is needed in order to be active outside the labour market. Thus, within a broad definition of Active Ageing this opens for possible tensions between different aspects of Active Ageing (activity on the labour market versus activity in civil society). It may also be seen as problematic in light of the principles of universalism and the right to equal treatment.

Enterprises have also been given the opportunity to conclude a cooperation agreement with the National Insurance authorities at local/regional level, and those who enters into such a cooperation agreement must commit themselves to work systematically to reduce sickness absence. Enterprises who concludes such an agreement will be recognized by the authorities as an «inclusive workplace enterprise» (IW Enterprise), and the following measure are reserved for such IW Enterprises; a) right to us the active sick leave scheme without prior consent from the local security office, b) a regular appointed contact person at the security office to help them follow up employees on sick leave, and c) the health services in IW enterprises will be given a special refund rate from the National Health Service for efforts to bring employees on prolonged sick leave or disability benefits back to work.

The main objective in the agreement is, without doubt, to reduce the sick leave absenteeism by 20% within the end of 2005, as compared to the level in 2001. The other two objectives, the employment of persons with reduced functional ability and to increase real retirement age, seem to be given less priority. Our informants share this view, and according to Hilsen and Steinum (2002) firms also seem to have a reluctant attitude towards entering the inclusive working life agreement. One reason being that the three goals contradicts one another. Many employers feel that employing sick and elderly people necessarily will increase the number of individuals on sick leave. Studies also show that firms give priority to one of the goals, and that is to reduce the level of sick leave. However, others see the reform as an important part of the renewal of Norwegian working life. Falkum (2003) claims that the most important aspect of the agreement is that problems on each individual work place now has to solved on the spot (within each firm), and can no longer be transferred into the safety net of the welfare state.

It is important to note that the sickness benefits in Norway are very generous. The daily cash benefits for employers equal 100 percent of full wage, and the benefit is paid from the first day of sickness for a period of up to 260 days (52 weeks). The employer pays the cash benefit for the first 14 calendar days, and thereafter the National Insurance Scheme picks up the bill.

In addition to these two overall initiatives social security payments were reduced from 1 July 2002 for employees above 62 years of age. If the measure produces the desired effect, the government has stated that it will consider proposing a further reduction in employers' contribution for the group (AAD 2003). The reduction covers all workers above 62, not only those recently hired, and the costs, not surprisingly, is covered by the state.

Employment protections legislation

Norwegian employment protection legislation is strong. However, until no Norway has not had any age non-discriminating measures. Yet another committee was pointed in august 2001 to revise the Norwegian labour laws. In December 2002 the commission presented parts of its report. One of its proposals was to follow up the European Union Council Directive 2000/78/EC concerning age discrimination. The proposal, submitted to parliament this summer, does not define age as such, but simply states that age itself is not a good enough reason for differential treatment. Some would, for instance, argue that the age limit of 70 years for work in the public sector is discriminating. Obviously, there are examples of people that still want to contribute after passing 70 years of age.
All workers above 60 years old also have the right to an extra week holiday per year. This is an extra cost for employing older workers. As a result from the wage negotiations in the government sector in 2002 it has been agreed on a possibility to motivate employees to work longer than 62 years old through introducing economic stimulus. Actual measures are: a) one extra day off per month with full wage, and b) extra pay up to 10 percent of the gross wage after 62 years old if agreed on a later date of retirement. Note that it is the local employer who has to decide on using this measures according to the situation in the unit/agency.

Life-long learning

Norway has also implemented special reforms in the education system aimed at promoting adult education (VOX 2002). The so-called *Competence Reform* (*Kompetansereformen*) is both a workplace reform and an educational reform. The reform includes all adults, those in work and those out of work. The Competence reform where launched as a compromise between different social partners and ministries. The reform give adults the right to primary and lower secondary education and upper secondary education. In addition the right to admission to higher education on the basis of non-formal learning has also been introduced. From 1 January 2001 the parliament decided that persons who have been employed for at least three year, and who have been with the same employer for the last two years, have a right to full-time or part-time leave of absence for up to three years in order to participate in organised education and training. However, a request for study leave does not have to be granted if it will be a hindrance to the proper management of the enterprise in question.

It is now possible for applicant over 25 years of age and without upper secondary education to start at a university or regional college, if the institution approves their non-formal competencies as sufficient. The most important measures to stimulate lifelong learning can be summed up as follows (AAD 2003); a) legal rights for adults to primary and secondary education, b) legal right to higher education, c) legal rights for employees to three years study leave, d) fiscal advantages connected to student loans for adults, and e) the development of a system for documentation and assessment of non-formal competencies with regard to the requirements of qualifications in working life. In addition taxes on education paid by the employers were removed in 1999. According to CSP leader Åsmund Lunde, the competence building programmes plan to use the work-place as an arena for learning has up to now produced few results (Interview May 2003).

Health care

Given that the public sector is the key welfare provider in Norway, older people in Norway are more likely to dependent on the formal health care sector as they grow frail. Long-term health care have been organised in several ways in the past 30 years, and the services have been developed in the last 10–15 years (Birkeland et. al. 1999). Steps have been taken to increase and improve the long-term care need of elderly people (St meld nr. 50 1996–1997).

Norway is divided into five health regions, and since the 1970s, hospital services have been organised in such a way that each of the five regions has three types of hospitals, district, central and regional hospitals. From January 1. 2002, the government took over the responsibility for the specialist health services, and currently the services are organized under 5 regional health enterprises. Previously, the hospitals were run by the counties health administrations.

When it comes to health services and the social care of the elderly these services today account for about 45 percent of all expenditure in the health and social services sector. Most of the money is spent locally. In 1998 the government launched a «Action Plan for Care of the Elderly, Security-Respect-Quality». The plan was estimated to cost NOK 30 billion over the four-year period (NOK 10 billion on operations and about NOK 20 billion on investment). Among other things parliament decided to propose regulations to give all elderly people the right to a single-occupant room as from 2003. According to Statistics Norway the numbers of beds in old people's homes have been halved since 1996, dropping just below 4400 in 2002 (se http://www.ssb.no). At the same time there has been some increase in the number of beds in nursing homes, totally there were approximately 38 000 such beds in 2002, an increase of 2 percent from 2001. This fits well with the government's goal that the elderly should reside home as long as possible. Three out of four residents in institutions are 80 years or above, and half of those receiving home-based services are among the oldest. There has been a shift in resources from institutions to home-based services. Currently, close to 90 percent of the rooms are single-bed rooms (Ibid). Today, labour force shortage is defined as one of the key challenges in the health- and care sector

The municipalities are by law forced to offer those who need it care in their own homes. In the beginning of the 1990s 88 per cent of all municipalities did offer help at home all weekdays. Living at home into very old age is common in Norway. Home care and community services to assist informal caregivers are available in almost all municipalities. Programmes are also developed in order to prevent and delay disabilities and chronic diseases that are costly to individuals, families and the health care system. In addition to public services come different types of activities offered by voluntary organisations, and usually this includes running different types of old age centres. Statistics Norway shows that 8900 persons volunteered their labour at such centres in 1999, most of them over age 67 (ibid). Norway has approximately 340 old age centres, and the capital, Oslo, has the highest registration of centres with 44. More than 117 500 were users of these centres in 1999.

Norway: a reluctant reformer?

We started out with three questions: How do policy makers in Norway define active ageing? Does the government have any overall framework underlying its approach to population ageing? Who sets the political agenda?

First of all: There is increased awareness of Active Ageing in Norwegian politics, and the motives for policy reformulation seems to be driven by a negative definition of ageing as such. Population ageing put pressures on the ability of the welfare state to meet the needs of future retirees. Secondly, there are no coherent strategic shifts in policies. The government and the social partners have agreed on some measures to improve labour market prospects for older workers (inclusive workplaces, senior policies). The overall objective of the government is to keep up the high labour force participation rates, one example being the measure taken to prevent further growth in the number of people on disability pensions. Thirdly, the policy approach is characterised by a high degree of consensus building and avoidance of conflicts through corporatist integration of the major labour market organisations into the policy process. Currently, a pension commission and a labour law commission, is underway with their reports.

Hence, Active Ageing policies in Norway have a strong focus on labour market policy and pensions. Current labour market policy focuses on the need to increase the labour force, and proposals to restrict early retirement have effectively been vetoed by the social partners. Training, skill development and other forms of learning are also in focus. The measures taken are based on voluntary agreements with the social partners, and information campaigns. The message going out is that seniors represent an important working resource upon which society will strongly depend on in the future. In other words, the traditional work line is strengthened. Health care issues, and especially policies aimed at the voluntary sector, are less prominent.

How do we place Norway in the field of Active Ageing policies? Is the country a leader or a laggard? The answer is both. Norway is a leader in the sense that the

Norwegian welfare state is characterised, and even dependent upon, high employment rates. Norway then illustrates that one of the most important preconditions for high labour force participation of older people is sound macro-economic performance. Active labour market policies have a long tradition in Norway. The current strategy is to keep older workers in work through changing working conditions, attitudes towards older workers, prevent workers being worn out, and to combat individual norm towards time of retirement (the so-called jump factors).

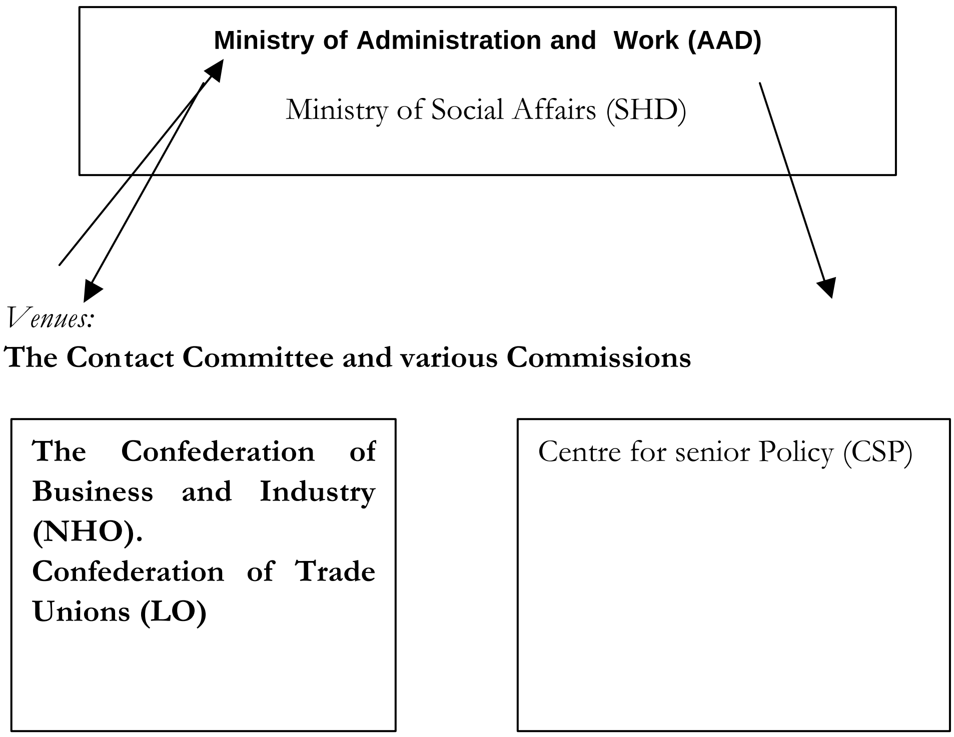
Although, our informants are united in the view that there is a huge potential in Norway when it comes to formulating future Active Ageing policies, the analysis show that the result is meagre so far. However, the informants also stress that the awareness concerning the consequences of an ageing population is low, and that there seems to be no debate whatsoever about the issue. Previous finance minister, and no leader of the pension commission, Sigbjørn Johnsen, underlines that the tripartite cooperation between the government and the social partners should be able to tackle the challenges, but that state finances can function as a barrier (Interview May 2003). Compared to Finland and Sweden, were economic crises in the early 1990s forced the countries to take actions to restrict early retirement, Norway's oil revenues makes it harder to get the message through to the social partners that it is necessary to take action. However, our informants also stress that sooner or later Norwegians would be forced to prolong their working careers. If nothing is done they see a potential for future conflicts between the generations, in which the older age groups will have a strong political power base. For instance, studies show the average age of party members have risen in the last decades (Heidar and Saglie 2002) At company level, Åsmund Lunde, claims that such conflicts are already a reality, especially in companies that have to downscale their activities (Interview May 2003).

Active Ageing policies call for coordination between different actors in the labour market as well as coordination between different policy fields. It is important to note that Norwegian working-life is highly organised with a comparatively high level of union membership and membership of firms in employer associations. There is a long tradition of corporatist bargaining between these parties and the government. Our informants also stress that this tripartite cooperation has been vital for the development of the Norwegian welfare state, and that the system eventually will be able to handle the challenges.

At the same time, however, economic life in Norway is very fragmented, with a large share of small and medium sized firms. Within industry there is a low degree of cross-delivery within branches and across sectors. This fragmentation combined with the presence of small firms can represent a barrier towards implementing Active Ageing policies at company level. That may also be the reasons why the initiatives taken so far have a clear focus on the enterprises themselves. Åsmund Lunde, argues that initiatives on company level is essential to reduce early retirement (Interview May 2003). In order to secure the inflow of qualified labour firms will have to put senior policy on the agenda. Therefore it would be of special interests to study the possible gap between small and large firms in terms of senor- and inclusive working life policies.

Figure 3 tries to sum up the network and venues in which authoritative decisions are made in Active Ageing policies (see also appendix B). When accounting for policy reforms issue redefinition and venue change are often interrelated factor, and both can trigger policy changes. In Norway Active Ageing policies is well placed within the existing and traditional policy paradigm, the national bargaining system. The venues are the same, and Active Ageing as such has not redefined actual policy. The changes in policy are minor and incremental in character. The most important actor in Norwegian Active Ageing policies is the Ministry of Administration and Work (AAD). It embraces a broad range and highly formal organisations in the field, includes other government institutions, all the major labour market organisations and key research institutions (NOVA, AFI, STAMI). The Centre for Senior policy is funded by AAD and plays an important role in promoting senior policies at firm level. However, Active Ageing policies also seem to have attracted actors outside this formal paradigm. Several individual firms have put senior policy high on their internal agenda in order to compete effectively for labour.

Figure 3. *Norwegian Active Ageing: Key actors and Venues (Key actors and important venues in bold).*



The cornerstone of Norwegian labour policies is low unemployment, combined with high (but declining) employment rates for older workers. In addition more diverse and flexible working arrangements seem to get more important. Media also gives more attention to senior policy as such. However, we need more research to grasp how individual companies handles the issue. Asmund Lunde (CSP) claims to see an increased awareness in the companies when it comes to formulating a coherent personnel policy for all age groups (Interview May 2003). Dahl (2000) points out that there is not much knowledge about how Norwegian firms strategically adapt to an ageing labour force. Solem (2001) also stress that studies on company level are important to get a better understanding of the dynamics of attitudes, personnel policy, and company culture in treatment of older workers.

Which companies then are the most interesting study objects? Norway is no exception to the rule when in comes to introducing market-oriented measures in most sectors of the economy. This has led to a debate over the negative consequences of modern capitalism. Previously public owned industries like the postal services and the railways have all been forced to reduce their staff in the 1990s. In would be interesting to look at how/and if the strong and general focus on senior policy/seniors have affected these staff reduction processes. Can we, for instance, document generational conflicts at firm level?

Appendix A:
Informants

The following people have been interviewed:

- Åsmund Lune, leader of the Centre for senior policy.
- Randi Bjørgen, leader of the Confederation of Vocational
- Signbjørn Johnsen, previous finance minister and current leader of the pension commission.
- Erik Herlowsen, Head of personnel Storebrand (Insurance company active in the field of senior policy – IW Enterprise)
- Øystein Haram, Minstry of Government and Administration (AAD).
- Vigdis Andersen, Project Coordinator National Initiative for Senior Workers.

Appendix B:
Key Actors and policy networks

Norwegian Active Ageing policies tell us several things about policy making in Norway. First of all we have seen that different commission reports have delivered a number of proposals during the 1990s on changing the incentive structure of the pension system. They have all been effectively vetoed with strong opposition from the unions. Secondly, the centralised bargaining system that surrounds the policy areas covered here, especially labour market policies and pensions, play a crucial role in promoting Active Ageing policies.

In this appendix we identify key actors and the relationship between them.

The Ministry of Administration and Work (AAD) embrace a broad and highly formal network of organisations with interests in the field of Active Ageing policies. This includes other government institutions such as the Directorate of Labour, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, and all the major labour market organisations and research institutions such as NOVA, AFI, SINTEF and STAMI. The organisations represent a broad range of issues related to active ageing. A glance at the list of participants at the first overall inclusive working life meeting in 2002 give us an overview of the formal institutions and actors that make up the Norwegian policy network on Active Ageing. Apart from the prime minister, the ministers from Administration and Work (AAD), and Social Affairs (SD) attended. From the labour market both the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), and the Confederation of Business and Industry (NHO), participated.

The policy network is broad and covers the government ministries, especially AAD and SD, as well as other government institutions. The key players in the field are:

The Labour Market Administration (*aetat*) is primarily concerned with job matching. The unemployment rate among the age group 55 + is low in Norway, but higher than for other groups. Dahl (2000) shows that firms give priority to the young, and that Aetat programmes are oriented towards the young and unemployed. Consequently the Labour Market Administration does not have programmes especially designed for older workers. In addition the introduction of New Public Management emphasizing efficiency, managerialism, and market orientation, has contributed to the Aetat focus on younger workers who are easiest to replace, and not the older unemployed (http://www.aetat.no).

The Norwegian Public Pension Fund (Statens Pensjonskasse), established 1917, is Norway's largest service pension fund in relation to the numbers of members. The organisation administrates the pension plan for government employees, teachers and greater parts of the research sector. Membership is mandatory for employees within these areas of activity. In 2001 the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund paid out pensions amounting to approximately NOK 10 billion (see http://www.spk.no).

The National Institute of Occupational Health (*Statens arbeidsmiljøinstitutt*) is a research institute that contribute to increase knowledge and practial applications of occupational health based on biomedical and neural sciences. It is an integrated part of the national system for protection of workers (http://www.stami.no).

The Work Research Institute (AFI) (*Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet)* is a publicly funded social science institute that for the last 30 years have produced input to the process of modernisation in Norwegian working life. The organisation aims at producing systematic knowledge concerning management, organisation and the working environment. According to AFI it is especially concerned with forms of organisation and leadership which promote the collective ability to learn, co-operate and adapt, and thereby create a better working environment (se http://www.afi-wri.no).

Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) (*Norsk institutt for forskning om oppvekst, velferd og aldring (AGEING)*) is a research institute that focuses on issues of life-course events, living conditions and life-quality as well as on programmes and services provided by the welfare state. NOVA's board is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research (se http://www.isaf.no/NOVA).

Another, and more market oriented, research institute is SINTEF Industrial Management (IFIM). According to IFIM its objective is to establish new knowledge about areas of great importance to employees, business enterprises and society in general. One of its slogans is; «IFIM – a work research institute for a better working life». Presently, IFIM employs 16 researchers with their background in the social sciences (se http://www.indman.sintef.no/ifim).

The Centre for Senior Policy (CSP) (*Senter for Seniorpolitikk*) plays an important coordinating role in Norwegian Active Ageing policies, especially on issues concerning the labour market. The Centre, that previously helped people cope with their life as pensioners, was in 2001 given the task to coordinate the government's National Initiative for Senior Workers, i.e. to help people continue to work. The Centre's main task is to encourage employers in private and public sector to provide a better working environment for older workers and to introduce age-related Human Resource Management. The government gives annual financial support to CSP in the 2001–2005 period. Each year CSP presents an award to one company that has distinguished itself in the area of senior policy. The principle aims of CSP are to (National Initiative for Senior

Workers in Norway, go for a Senior): a) promote awareness of the potentials and resources older employees have, b) provide a better working environment for older workers, c) develop age-related Human Resource Management and personnel policies, and d) create more cooperation concerning senior policy amongst labour, employer, government organisations and authorities.

In April 2002 the government appointed the Senior Council (*Seniorrådet*), composed of previously top politicians/bureaucrats with the task to focus on old peoples living conditions, and their possibilities to participate in work life and society in general (http://www.statens.seniorraad.no). Astrid Nøkleby Heiberg, a previous conservative politician and professor in psychology, heads the council. The objective of the council is to be an advisory body for public authorities and national institutions. The organisation may freely and on its own initiative discuss matters concerning the living conditions of the elderly. The activities of the Council are based on «the UN Principles for the World's Elderly». The council shall, according to AAD (2003), form a critical and independent standpoint, focus on the needs of the elderly and their right to co-determination and participation, independence, self-expression, care and dignity. In particular, the Council shall be aware of aspects of care for the elderly and policies for the elderly that affect the elderly with special needs for intervention. Administratively the Council is subordinated the Minstry of Social Affairs, with its own secretary provided by the Ministry. The Council have 9 members, all appointed by the government. However, two of the members shall be appointed on a suggestion made by The Norwegian Association of Pensioners (Norsk Pensjonistforbund). Other members of the Council are to be recruited from pensioners' organisations, research environments, the health and social sector, employers' and employees' organisations, voluntary organisations and others with a particular attitude for, and interest in, the policies of the elderly. At the end of each calendar year, the Council shall send a report on its work to the ministries and different organisations.

The Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) represent employers in collective bargaining processes. NHO therefore, is an important player in the tripartite co-operation between the government and the social partners. It is the dominant business organisation in Norway, managing the interests of around 16 000 members (http://www.nho.no). In addition to the central organisation in Oslo, NHO members belong to one of 22 nation-wide sectoral federations and one of 15 regional associations. The Central Board, with 86 representatives, meets at least twice a year. A fourteen-member Executive Board chaired by the NHO president, makes decisions on policy issues. Naturally the organisations is primarily concerned with labour market policy. NHO argues that to many people in Norway are «parked» in long-term social security schemes. In its actions programme NHO is especially concerned with the issue on how to reduce early departures from the labour force and absence due to illness. Among other things, the organisation wants to make it cheaper for enterprises to retain elderly employees, for example through a reduced payroll tax. However, NHO also argues that several of the challenges in the labour market can be met by introducing a more inclusive work life. Training, skills development and life-long learning is important elements in the organisations action programme.

NHO's main opponent, is the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO). LO is normally consulted before the government adopts its approach in social and economic matters, and is represented in most officially appointed committees. In addition the organisation has maintained a close relationship with the Labour Party. LO's national unions are national organisations built up of local trade unions or departments. Each national union covers a specific trade, a branch of business, or a public service sector. Currently 25 national unions are affiliated to LO, and they vary in membership from less than thousand to well over 200 000.[5] Among the issues of most importance for LO are: the fight against unemployment, conditions of pay and work, social security, equal opportunities for all groups in society (especially women), and the working environment. In LO's programme of action for the 2001–2004 period several issues relevant for the Active Ageing agenda is highlighted. In addition to work for all, LO wants to introduce the favourable pension agreements of the wage – earners in the public sector for more workers. Secondly, LO argues that the skills of older workers must be maintained and further developed. The organisation even considers whether it, in the coming collective bargaining rounds, should include a demand that all companies must formulate their own senior policy guidelines. LO feel that this may help older workers who wish to continue working until reaching retirement age to do so. Overall, LO aims at introducing old-age policies that is based on a voluntary combination of work, social benefits and reduced hours. Obviously, to defend establish welfare rights are important for LO. For instance, they stress that full sick pay must continue to be a basic welfare offer. The work to reduce sick absence must, according to the organisation, be seen in connection with the increasing demands faced by workers. Finally, LO states that the right to paid leave while under training must constitute the fundament in life-long learning.

The Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS) has engaged itself in the field of senior policy. YS consists of 200 000 employees in service-providing jobs, from all areas of society. A majority of the members comes from the public sector, and 50 percent of the organisations members are women. The organisations was established in 1977, and consists of 21 unions grouped in five sectors (YS Kommune (local government), YS Stat (employees in government authorities and public companies), YS Navo (employed in hospitals and public transport), YS Privat (private sector employees) and YS Finans (finance sector)). (see http://www.ys.no).

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[5] The organisations affiliated to LO are: United Federation of Trade Unions (*Fellesforbundet*), Engineers and Managers Association (*Forbundet for Ledelse & Teknikk*), Union of General Workers (*Norsk Arbeidsmandsforbund*), The Electricians & IT Workers Union (*EL & IT Forbundet*), Union of Social Educators and Social Workers (*Fellesorganisasjonen*), The Prison and Probation Officers Union (*Fengsel- og friomsorgsforbundet*), Graphical Union (*Norsk Grafisk Forbund*), The Union of Employees in Commerce and Offices (*Handel og Kontor*), Union of Hotel and Restaurant Workers (*Hotell- og Restaurantarbeiderforbundet*), The Union of Railway Workers (*Norsk Jernbaneforbund*), Players Association (*Norsk Idrettsutøveres Sentralorganisasjon*), The Union of Chemical Industry Workers (*Kjemisk Industriarbeiderforbund*), The Union of Municipal Employees (*Norsk Kommuneforbund*), The Union of Locomotivemen (*Lokomotivmannsforbundet*), The Union of Musicians (*Musikernes Fellesorganisasjon*), The Union of Food and Allied Workers (*Nærings- og Nytelsesmiddelsarbeiderforbundet*), The Union of Military Officers (*Offisersforbundet*), The Oil and Peterochemical Union (*Olje- og Petrokjemisk Fagforbund*), The Postal Organisation (*Post- og Kommunikasjonsforbundet*), The Labour Press Union (*Arbeiderbevegelsens Presseforbund*), Seafarers' Union (*Sjømannsforbundet*), Union of School Employees (*Skolenes Landsforbund*), Civil Service Union (*Norsk Tjenestemannslag*), and The Transport Workers' Union (*Transportarbeiderforbundet*).

The Norwegian Pensioner Association (*Norsk Pensjonistforbund*) also plays an important role in the field of Active Ageing. The organisation was established in 1951, and currently have 1100 local organisations throughout Norway, and organises a membership of 85 000. The organisation provides consultancy, training, information services and arrange trips and cultural events. It is financed by membership fees and public subsidies as well as project funds and profit-earning activities. Most importantly, the Pensioner Association negotiates directly with the Government on two important issues: a) the regulation of the pensions in the yearly fiscal budget, and b) all other issues covered by the budget that concerns the elderly. Social security and general living conditions for the elderly is the prime area of concern for the Pensioners Association. According to Åsmund Lunde, leader of the CSP, the organisation is passive in the field of senior policy (Interview May 2003).

The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People (*Funksjonshemmedes Fellesorganisasjon FFO*) is the co-operative body of disabled people's organisations. FFP was founded in 1959, and co-ordinates the work and political activities of its member organisations. The organisations biannual congress is its highest authority, and the congress elects the 12 members of the Board of Directors from different member organisations. FFO is organised centrally with branch organisations/offices on both county and municipality levels. The government and FFO have established a Contact Committee, headed by the secretary of state of the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs. In the committee FFO gets to comment on the annual budget. Together with the Pensioner Association and the Trade Union (LO) FFO participate in the annual social security negotiations with the government. FFO is represented in boards, councils and committees, and participates in the State Council of Disability, The Norwegian Biotechnological Committee and the Board of the State Competence Centres for Special Pedagogy (see http://www.ffo.no).

VOX play an important role in Norwegian lifelong learning policies (se http://vox.no). VOX is a national institute for adult education with the purpose to initiate, co-ordinate and document research and development projects about different aspects of adult education. VOX includes three former institutions: NVI (Norwegian Institute of Adult Education), NFU (Norwegian State Institution for Distance Education) and SRV (Norwegian Centre for Adult Education). VOX is funded by the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, and is a central tool for the implementation of the Competence reform. According to VOC its activities is organised in three main fields: a) Knowledge Development, b) Knowledge Dissemination and c) projects and Networks (co-ordination of National Development programmes, initiation and of projects both at national and international level and creation and maintenance of national and international networks).

In the voluntary sector the Association of the Senior Issue (*Foreningen Seniorsaken*) was established in 2002. Here a number of Norwegian celebrities joined forces to ensure that senior citizens are respected as full citizens, especially in their occupational careers (http://www.seniorsaken.no – the web page is under development).

In addition to public services different types of activities on municipal level are offered by voluntary organisations, especially in the health care sector. This includes organisations like *Sanitetsforeningen* (female volunteer workers who provide nonprofessional care and services for the sick and convalescent), Lions and the Norwegian Women and Family Associations (*Norges Kvinne- og Familieforbund*). Many old age centres, for instance, is run by these private or voluntary organisations (however they are normally supported economically by the municipalities). Research indicates that informal care matters more than previously. The amount of persons that report that they have given care and help to elderly, or sick people, have increased from 8 per cent in 1980 to 17 per cent in 1995 (Birkeland et. al. 1999).

In addition we should also note the presence of private market actors. The firm, Senioragency (www.senioragency.no), is a consultancy firm specialised in communication with generations plus as they call it, helping clients to understand better this segment of the market, including advising firms on policies for keeping older persons in their labour stock. Some large firms, such as the insurance company Storebrand has its own senior policy as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (Storebrand 2002, EU 2002). Both are also partners in international networks and cooperation.

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