

OECD FORUM 2007

Global Equity across the Generations

By AARP



The whole world is aging, a demographic phenomenon creating both challenges and opportunities. In the face of population aging, governments, businesses, and social partners must work together to develop constructive ways to tap into the experience, knowledge and consumer tastes of this growing population. So, too, societies will need to retool social systems, national economies, and business practices in ways that are equitable across generations.

AARP has always had a global view. A 38 million member non-governmental association, AARP is an international leader on issues related to the health and financial security of people age 50 and older, and society as a whole. The realities of aging have changed and so have the ways we work, contribute to, and enjoy our lives. Today, the 50+ population is viewed as a resource that is making major contributions to economies and societies around the world.

Through the Global Aging Program, we help people live longer, healthier, more financially secure and productive lives by identifying the best ideas and practices on key policy issues. We convene a range of experts from around the world, including policy makers, to share their knowledge on health and long-term care, livable communities, the aging workforce, and retirement income.

Sharing Solutions that Work in Health and Long-Term Care

Preventative health care, lifestyle changes, and innovations have given people across the globe the opportunity to live longer and healthier lives. However, making adequate and affordable health care available to the next generation is the next great challenge. Leaders must act now meet these challenges for all generations; waiting will only make changes more difficult. Health care costs will continue to increase as populations age and the Global Aging Program is working with academics, businesses, consumers, governments and non-governmental organizations to address this. For example:

- One way to achieve affordability and improve quality is through technology. In 2006, we sponsored a day-long conference, as well as original research on health information technology, the use of electronic health records, and how different countries around the world are implementing systems that promise to deliver quality care and reduce costs.
- Our 2006 meeting and paper on the parallel trade and importation of pharmaceuticals led to a more informed debate on Dorgan-Snowe, a key piece of legislation being considered by the US Congress that would drastically reduce the price of prescription drugs for seniors by allowing importation from Canada.
- The lessons learned from the 2006 European Leadership Study will shape AARP's efforts on health care domestically and key findings will be shared with US policymakers.

Our commitment to health care extends to long-term care where we are working to ensuring choice, dignity, affordability and access to quality services. We are looking abroad to learn from countries with model long-term care systems such as Australia, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands to find answers, including the design of long-term care finance systems, programs for the older population, and architectural design. We have also sponsored conferences and research on recruiting and retaining a quality caregiving workforce.

Ensuring Adequate Income in Older Age

Because people are living longer, healthier lives, it is time for all social partners to find common cause in strengthening public pensions, encouraging private savings and pensions, and providing opportunities for continued employment. We are working to do this by:

- Forthcoming release of an AARP/Towers Perrin G7 Aging Workforce Study at the International Older Workers Conference, which will gauge attitudes of employees and employers on the extension of working lives, and highlight best policies from model G7 companies;
- Convening leaders from across Asia for *Reinventing Retirement Asia – Enhancing the Opportunities of Aging* to share best policies on the changing nature of retirement;
- Hosting two symposia to inform the US Social Security debate – The British Pensions System: Lessons for the US Pension Debate and PPI Forum on Private accounts, featuring academic experts on the pension systems of Sweden, Chile, the UK, Australia, and Canada;
- Conducting a ground-breaking polls of opinion leaders across the G7 and Asia on their attitudes towards retirement issues. The studies found that most believe their nations are not prepared. Societies must give opportunities to people who want to or must work later in life, helping to sustain economies and produce a more productive and engaged workforce.
- Through the AARP Foundation, we are active in consulting the European Commission for Employment and Social Affairs and the AGE working group on age discrimination, which consists of several of the NGO groups. We have also held workshops for attorneys and government officials in the UK, Spain, and Germany, to name a few.

The Resource in Global Aging

Our relationships with a number of international governing bodies such as the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Economic Forum, the European Commission and the International Social Security Association, help bring together the widest range of voices in the world on global aging. These partnerships have been extended to media and business entities including the *Financial Times*, *Forbes*, *Nikkei*, Hakuodo and national aging organizations such as Age Concern (UK) and DaneAge (Denmark). Most notably, our relationship with the *Financial Times* led to a special edition on Reinventing Retirement that ran in the US, European, and Asian markets of this global newspaper.

Our goals are furthered by fact-finding missions taken by AARP Chief Executive Officer, Bill Novelli, to Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, the UK and Belgium where he has met with high-level opinion leaders to discuss issues relating to the aging population and foster global collaboration. Most recently, the AARP Board of Directors traveled to Europe to study health and long-term care systems, so they can be better informed about alternatives to the US system.

We continue our discussions through the monthly Idea Exchange series where executives meet with notable experts on a variety of aging related issues, as well as our annual Reinventing Retirement conference which seeks to find understanding and solutions for difficult issues in aging societies.

We communicate these achievements and developments through *The Global Report on Aging* and the content of our website (www.aarp.org/globalaging), which serves as a hub for the latest news and research on global aging, in addition to information on Global Aging Program events.

