The Hague, 23./24. of May 2002: Conference on "Active Ageing"

Jürgen Faik:

Panel, sketch of a speech:

Ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, I would like to apologize that I do not have any slides or Powerpoint presentations. The simple reason for this is that I had no time to prepare an elaborated presentation because I only know of my panel participation since about two weeks.

As Mr. Frey has already told you, I am a kind of a business man. More precisely, I am a representative of the Association of the predominant German pension system.

Please let me now say a few words about the public pension system in Germany. The pension system which I represent consists of nearly 50 million insurants, about 18 million pensioners and its annual financial budget amounts to approximately 200 billion €. So this system is a big player in the German economy. This is confirmed by the fact that the mentioned budget reflects 10 per cent of the German GDP. The mentioned system covers about 80 per cent of the German population.

With respect to this pension system my organization collects a lot of data concerning insurants, pensioners, rehabilitation measures, etc. These data pools do not give answers to active ageing in a direct way but they can serve as a framework for questions concerned with active ageing. So I can speak more about quantitative than about qualitative aspects in the context of ageing, i. e. against the background of our data I can tell you a few things about ageing but not about active ageing. But as I have already mentioned, in my eyes quantitative issues can serve as a basis for qualitative aspects in terms of active ageing.

At the moment our data are not available for the public but I am optimistically that in the near future our data pools will be available for researchers – as scientific or as public use files.

One new data pool is our so-called "AVID sample". The AVID sample deals with the issue how individuals provide economic resources for their retirement period in the context of the German pay-as-you-go pension system. The AVID data enable us e. g. to analyse patchwork biographies or to assess the consequences of social political measures (for instance measures which aim at families).

The AVID study contains cross-section data as well as longitudinal informations. The latter informations have been collected in terms of retrospective variables. The AVID sample is a register sample on the one hand and a questionnaire on the other hand. The register sample refers to informations contained in the accounts of insurants in the age bracket between 40 and 59 years. It informs about working biographies, about the level of the acquired pension payments which the considered insurants have already reached, etc. In the context of the questionnaire the considered insurants and their spouses have been interviewed (in 1996). The answers to the questions provide informations about additional topics which cannot be derived by investigating the accounts. For instance, the questions provide informations about private wealth. Moreover the AVID informations have been projected to the moment of the "normal retiring age" in Germany (i. e. up to the age of 65 years). The AVID sample size amounts to almost 15,000 persons. There are a lot of publications which reflect the richness of the AVID study. You can obtain more informations about the AVID study by my organization; when the occasion arises please contact us. The address of our website is http://www.vdr.de.

On balance, I would like to express my satisfaction with this conference. It has raised a number of intelligent questions which should be answered by further research. In order to do this we need more comprehensive and much more integrated data pools in the field of active ageing. On such a base we will be able to specify how old people act and how politics should react upon these actions.

The improvement or the collecting of data in the area of active ageing is also relevant because of the method of open-coordination. This method tries to compare the EU-15 countries by several indices. A little while ago the scope of the method of open-coordination – which originally was domiciled in the sphere of employment policy – was enlarged to the sphere of social security, among other things to the scope of ageing. In this context indicators are needed for non-biased comparisons (e. g. non-biased poverty rate definitions). It should be self-evident that the used data pools

should be non-biased too. In order to reach this target international standardizations are necessary.

Once more I would like to emphasize the relevance of data concerning the living conditions of the elderly. I hope that further progress will be made in this sphere.