



Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend

A New Culture of Ageing

Images of Ageing in Society



**Findings and
recommendations
of the Sixth
German Govern-
ment Report on
the Elderly**



Ältere Menschen

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Why make images of ageing the theme of a Report on the Elderly?

At no other time in history did people live so long as they do today. Both the development and growth of the potentials of old age and addressing the borderline situations of old age are central tasks in a long life society. When there are fewer young people and more and more older people, the contributions made by the latter to a successful society gain in importance. Older people do have this capacity. The Fifth German Government Report on the Elderly entitled 'The Potentials of Old Age' told us that older people living today in Germany have on an average more financial resources, are better educated and healthier and have more time at their disposal than any generation of older people before them.

At the same time a long life society must give increasing attention to the limits of old age. The Fourth German Government Report on the Elderly ('Risks, Quality of Life and Service Provision for the Very Old – with a Special Focus on Dementia') revealed that as demographic change progresses, the number of those who are chronically ill, those in need of care and those suffering from dementia also grows. For each individual the likelihood has increased of experiencing one of life's borderline

situations or witnessing it in someone close to them. This makes it particularly important to create and maintain quality of life especially in borderline situations.

The way in which individuals and society face these responsibilities and challenges is to a large extent affected by images of ageing. Images of ageing have a great influence on both the realization of development potentials in old age and on dealing with the restrictions of old age. **The future of old age thus depends to a large degree on images of ageing.**

Yet the images of ageing that dominate our society often do not do justice to the diversity of old age. For this reason the Federal Government asked the Commission for the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly to examine images of ageing in different areas of society and show how they influence the participation of older people in social and cultural activities.



What are images of ageing?

Images of ageing are individual and social conceptions of old age (the state of being old), of ageing (the process of growing old) or of older people (as a social group). Images of ageing can also be expressed in concrete pictures, as in images in advertising.

Images of ageing are neither 'inevitable' nor 'natural' but are social constructs dependent in their form on historical and cultural framework conditions. Images of ageing differ widely according to the social context. The answers given to every conceivable question raised about ageing throughout the ages and the different cultures are extremely varied, often conflicting, and sometimes even downright contradictory. Old age always leaves room for different interpretations, evaluations and descriptions. Images of ageing grow in diversity in proportion to the degree of differentiation and variety in a society and the living patterns it practices. There is not just one image of ageing in a society, we are usually confronted with a variety of images competing with each other for dominance. Not even individuals have one single image of ageing in their minds, they have a whole repertoire. The dominant image of ageing is determined by a particular

situation or a particular life segment: in the area of long-term care, for instance, a different image of ageing prevails to that in the world of work. Someone who has just been watching the World Athletics Championship for seniors will have different 'old age' associations from someone just coming from their grandfather's funeral. Different images also differ in importance: there are 'large-scale' images of ageing that are culturally definitive and only change over a very long period of time and there are fleeting, 'small-scale' images that can be rapidly replaced and change form.



The Commission's guiding principles

The Commission for the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly based its work on two guiding principles:

■ **Enabling people to assume responsibility for themselves and others during their lives.**

According to the subsidiarity principle, problems should be solved at the point where they arise. Larger social units only assume responsibility for solving problems when smaller units are not able to solve the problem on their own. This leads to two obligations:

- Firstly, the onus on all individuals to develop potentials by leading a responsible life and to nurture and utilize these for their own benefit and that of others.
- Secondly, the obligation of the state to create the overall context in which people can develop and realize their potentials and lead a life in which responsibility both for themselves and others is assumed.

The Sixth Government Report on the Elderly thus examines images of ageing to identify to what extent they encourage or prevent people adopting responsibility for themselves and others during their lives.

■ **Respecting life's diversity.**

Ageing is a process that runs from birth to death. In the course of this development, the differences between people tend to grow rather than decrease. These differences are related to areas such as health, material situation, life style, interests and roles in society. It is not possible to conceive of an age-friendly society without a differentiation of images of ageing that reflects these differences.

This is why the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly does not describe and uphold one image; the focus is always on the plurality of images of ageing.



Analysing images of ageing in various areas of life

It is basically true to say that images of ageing are subject to change and can be shaped to a certain extent. The form and meaning of the various images differ according to their social context. The Sixth Government Report on the Elderly hence examines images of ageing in various areas of life, with different findings and requirements emerging according to the area of life involved.

Images of ageing in the world of work

Ongoing changes in the structural framework of the working environment are currently favourable to the labour market participation of older employees and will continue this way in the near future. These changes include the demographic ageing of the workforce, the impending entry of the baby boomer generation into retirement and in particular the lack of skilled labour already evident in some branches and regions. These changes mean that it is increasingly difficult to ignore the potential of older people in the working world. Yet negative images of ageing that dominate the working world stem from a time when older workers were removed from the workplace at the first opportunity, often through

early retirement. Many of these outdated ideas have been refuted by the experts; findings on the working capacity and employability of older people support the potential of older employees.

Companies need to apply specific personnel strategies to foster and maintain the health, qualifications and motivation if this potential is to be developed. Several government reforms aimed at longer term integration of older employees in the workforce point in the right direction. The valid goal of longer working lives requires adjustment on the part of all involved and this includes a re-assessment of outmoded images of ageing. Further effort is now required by the corporate sector and employers and employees in particular if realistic images of ageing are to be embedded in the working environment – there are already some examples of this worth following, in the wage agreement in the German chemical industry for instance.



■ Images of ageing and education

The attitudes and interests of older people in relation to education are as diverse and varied as their personal images of ageing. Personal images of ageing depend on various socio-structural factors, notably on the level of education: the higher a person's standard of education, the more positive their attitude towards age and ageing. There is at the same time a link between experience with education in early life and the standard of education reached in old age. Those with a high level of education and occupational training are later often disproportionately highly represented among those participating in adult education and occupational training and further training. It is therefore necessary to adjust educational inequalities early in life if educational imbalances in old age are to be reduced.

Research on education continues to show that educational processes for older people are more beneficial if they are not only available in a formalized form but also include informal learning opportunities. Civic engagement and volunteer activities in particular offer learning opportunities and opportunities to take part in education measures. Images of ageing also play a part when younger and older people learn with each other and from each other. A positive conception of the

other generation fosters the desire and readiness on the part of the different generations to learn together and to learn from each other.

■ Images of ageing in the media and advertising

The media obviously play an important role in images of ageing; much of what we know about old age, ageing and older people is learned from the mass media. On the whole old age in the media is today portrayed in a positive, differentiating way. Although older people are underrepresented in television films and advertising, they are not usually portrayed in a way that could awaken negative associations of old age in the viewers. There are also examples of advertising campaigns showing older people in a positive light. In the print media, too, there is a recognizable tendency towards benevolent reporting on older people. In addition to technology-based mass media, language and communication patterns are media for conveying images of ageing. Language communicating processes contribute to making images of ageing relevant, helping them to become established or to change them. Older people participate as actors in this process and can thus influence images of ageing. The new media in particular are very important for the social par-

ticipation of older people. Much information and many activity options are today conveyed via the new media. This makes access to the internet for instance a key prerequisite for social participation

– by older people in particular. There is a distinct call for action to improve the media competence of many older people.



■ Images of ageing in the health sector

Images of ageing influence health services for the elderly in many different ways and thus impact on quality of life in old age. The first decisive factor is the image of ageing underlying the professional self-perception of decision makers in the field of health policy, either explicitly or implicitly. The images of ageing these people have can determine the course of action taken in the area of health services, health promotion, disease prevention and social services. Secondly, the images of ageing of older people themselves have an influence on their health behaviour and on whether they avail themselves of options that maintain and promote their health. A positive attitude to ageing is, for instance, often linked to behaviour which is beneficial to health. Decisions on health measures to be adopted often involve relatives and their images of ageing and their knowledge will also play a part. Thirdly, satisfactory health care for the elderly calls for differentiated knowledge of physiological processes and the changes to which they are subject in old age on the part of the medical profession. Doctors need to understand the complex system of illnesses, comorbidity and the therapy options available and should know how to avoid or delay deterioration and the need for long-term care. Doctors also need sufficient knowledge of what prevention can offer and how

it can be put into effect, they need comprehensive knowledge of service providers in the areas of health promotion, prevention, rehabilitation and care plus how they interact with healing treatments.

■ Images of ageing and long-term care

In Germany, society's understanding of the need for long-term care is shaped by the definitions contained in long-term care insurance law (Social Code Book XI) and seen narrowly in relationship to a recipient's capacity to manage daily activities and chores. As a result, help with communication often required by those with dementia, the mentally disabled or the psychologically disturbed is largely ignored by long-term care regulations. In the fields of nursing science, geriatric science and social work studies as well as in social welfare and accident insurance law, there are different, broader concepts of dependency and the need for long-term care – so alternatives to the daily activities focus of long-term care law do exist. A definition of long-term care directed at social participation should not only emphasize the medical and care aspect of caring but also offer support in the area of social communication. Contrary to popular assumption, care does not usually take place in a care home but as a mixture

of various forms of support. The correct response to future challenges in the care sector lies in the interaction and combined effort of various types of professional assistance and support with family, neighbourhood and civil forms of care. In practice,

new concepts in homes and services point in the right direction: a growing number of care homes are supporting their residents by making use of the skills and resources available in the neighbourhood and among relatives and volunteers.



■ Images of ageing in the Church

The Christian churches have an ambivalent relationship towards older people. On the one hand, older people are very loyal to the church. On the other hand, it is quite often regarded as a deficit that many church activities rely on older people. Church work with older people is often marked by the outmoded idea that elderly people primarily need to be looked after and provided for. By their very definition, the various churches and religions look after those who require special support and attention. Theologically, old age is still mainly defined by its closeness to death. Not enough attention is paid to the fact that today there is 'more time to live'. Theological debate still takes too little account of the skills, capabilities and sense of responsibility of the elderly. Yet if they were more open to the diverse and highly differentiated expectations and life styles of older people, churches and religions would have the chance to grow with an ageing society. The so-called Third Age in particular offers the church scope for learning more about new ways of life.

■ Images of ageing in civil society

Civil society offers many possibilities for developing and experiencing new images of ageing. The plurality, complexity and combination of openness and ethical orientation of civil society structures fit well with the diversity and plurality of images of ageing, something that could be described as an 'elective affinity'. Civil society offers the space and scope to try out new roles and responsibilities in old age and so alter and shape the images. The numerous different ways of engaging can be an important contribution to social integration and to giving a meaning to life.

A special task of civil society is to safeguard the rights and dignity of older people in need of support and to do this in a setting where the prevailing image of ageing stresses and requires productivity and activity in old age. The message of civil society is that the culture of a long life society will have to prove itself by its respect for old age.



■ Images of ageing in politics and law

In the past the images of ageing given prominence in the political context varied greatly. Since the 1990s in particular, there has been a stronger reflection of the diversity of older people's lives – due in part to the influence of the Government Reports on the Elderly and other expert studies. Yet images of ageing with a one-sided slant – sometimes positive, sometimes negative – still persist in the political debate. Images of ageing play a key role in political debates focussed on the legal retirement age – as was the case during the political controversy about raising the pension eligibility age in the statutory pension insurances. Generally legal retirement ages are justified implicitly or explicitly by assuming that older people have a reduced work capacity or resilience, something that can lead to negative collective or individual images of ageing. The greater part of the German legal system is, however, not age-specific. This is a good thing because a legal system that is age-neutral protects people from being excluded on account of their age and prevents special treatment and the social polarization often associated with this.

Generally speaking it is problematic when simplifications and generalizations are used in political debates. They can lead to a situation where the

potentials and risks of old age are treated indiscriminately and necessary political decisions are not taken. There is, for instance, a danger in the public debate on 'old age as an economic force' for the magnitude of social inequality in old age to be underestimated. There is also a danger of overemphasizing the increasing vulnerability of old age, resulting in old age being associated across the board with the need for assistance and long-term care. Only when differentiated images of ageing shape the political debate can the diversity of old age find its place at the centre of political action and differentiated political concepts be developed.



The recommendations of the Commission for the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly¹

The mandate of the Commission for the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly was to examine the images of ageing that prevail in political debate and other key areas of society and ascertain whether these images foster or discourage a differentiated approach to the ageing issue. Bearing in mind the great diversity and dissimilarity in the living situations of older people, the Commission was guided in its work by the extent to which the images of ageing in the various areas of society examined (politics, law, education, the media, labour, civil society, the economy, health, long-term care, religion) reflect the heterogeneity of life styles in old age.

One-sided images of ageing make it more difficult to utilize the societal and individual potentials of old age and are not conducive to older people leading lives in which they take responsibility for themselves and others. Undifferentiated, one-sided images of ageing are not conducive to an approach to old age vulnerability that is ethically and professionally appropriate. If, for example,

old age is equated with sickness or if old age is linked to low potential for change, this can lead to highly-qualified medical and rehabilitative care and social support for the elderly in borderline situations not being forthcoming.

The Commission did not see its mandate as being to simply replace negative images of ageing with positive ones. The following recommendations are thus not a plea for certain kinds of images of ageing; their aim is more to create awareness for certain aspects of ageing and old age in various different contexts. Old age appears in a great variety of forms and calls for different answers to the questions about old age. Thinking deeply about images of ageing at the socio-cultural and individual level helps to bring about a less uniform perception of old age and a more differentiated public debate on the strengths and limitations of old age.

¹ The ten recommendations described here correspond to the wording of the recommendations in the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly.

1 Demographic change as a summons to plan and adapt.

In public debate, demographic change is often associated with negative attributes and depicted as a threat. This does not take into account that one key aspect of demographic change – a distinct rise in life expectancy – offers people many new perspectives. Revising one-sided, negative images of ageing is part of the process of confronting the social and political challenges posed by demographic change.

Shaping the developments triggered by demographic change and adapting social structures accordingly is a priority political task. In taking on this process of planning and adaptation, decision makers in society, political life and the economy should think critically about the images of ageing that influence them and compare these with the diversity of forms of old age (old age heterogeneity). Those responsible for political decision making should be aware of the implications of their images of ageing (including those conveyed publicly) for policy and legislative action. The utilization of one-sided images of ageing to promote specific political and economic ends should be avoided. In the political debate on the consequences of demographic development in particular, orchestrated images of ageing should be identified as such and the interest groups

behind them revealed. Images of inter-generational issues labelled ‘conflict of the generations’ or ‘battle of the generations’ make it more difficult to deal with demographic change. They should be used very judiciously as their effect in a long life society can be negative and lead to real conflicts developing.

A portrayal by the media showing old age in all its **diversity** and relationships between the generations in all their **diverse** aspects, on the other hand, contributes greatly to a responsible attitude towards the challenges of demographic change.

2 Developing a new culture of old age.

It's worth taking a new look at old age. The need for care and assistance still dominates our attitude to old age – even though this is often well-intentioned. An interpretation of old age that sees it solely as a time in life when we need special attention and protection does not do justice to the diversity of old age. To the caring aspect of old age must be added a perspective oriented towards the strengths of older people and the options open to them. The churches and religious communities, for instance, should not view older people as primarily being in need of support. Instead they should take into account the diverse life styles and expectations of the elderly and emphasise their skills and the development of their potential. Demographic change affects

not only older people but all sections of society and all age groups. Policies for older people must be seen as part of political measures directed at all generations. This could also be reflected in the name given to such policies or even in the organisation of government departments ('Ministry for the Generations' for example). This principle applies to all political institutions, associations and similar bodies with the word 'senior' in their name. Political parties should rethink whether senior party organisations are really reasonable. The generational aspect should be reinforced in government reports on the elderly, on families, children and young people.



3 Life course orientation and ageing as a call for individual and societal planning and adaptation.

In a long life society, the term 'old age' is too static and narrow to describe the diversity and dynamics of individual life situations and developments. In our society, 'old age' is still too strongly bound to the concept of a uniform, clearly defined period in life. The term 'old age' should be replaced by 'ageing'. The life course perspective must be more clearly emphasized. In developing and designing

products and in their advertising and marketing, the consumer industry should give greater attention to the development of individual needs over the entire life course. In designing technical products a 'universal design' (i.e. products conceived in such a way as to meet the needs of all age groups) is a sound basis for lifelong brand loyalty.



4 Education as a right and obligation for all age groups.

Education must become a matter of course for all age groups. The formation of skills enabling people to lead a life where they assume responsibility for themselves and others makes a major contribution to autonomy and shared responsibility. There is not only a right to education, but also an obligation to education that applies to the entire life course. This implies an obligation on all institutes offering general and vocational education to have educational and training opportunities for all age groups.

Participation in society and individual development is increasingly dependent on technical

opportunities and on individual abilities to use media technology. These opportunities and skills necessary to make use of new media technologies are unevenly distributed among the population. Together with the level of education, age is also one of the main factors influencing this uneven distribution. This is why it is important for education institutions to include older people in their programmes and enhance their media skills and the usage rate of new media by the elderly. Older people themselves are called upon to learn media skills and familiarize themselves with the opportunities offered by the digital world.



5 Avoid negative and positive discrimination of old age.

Unfair treatment solely on the grounds of someone's calendar age (negative discrimination) should be avoided, as should preferential treatment and privileges granted because of age (positive discrimination). The correct criteria should take a person's overall social situation into account. Regulations in various sectors should be routinely examined for any possible implicit negative or positive old age discrimination.

In German law age limits in the context of old age are often justified implicitly or explicitly with the need to protect the elderly or by reduced efficiency. Both of these can consolidate deficit-oriented images of ageing. Yet in specific instances the protection factor can be important. It should therefore be clarified on a case by case basis whether the justification is in fact valid.

6 Gaining a new perception of old age in the world of work.

All actors in the working environment are called upon to use the challenges of demographic change and the need for skilled labour as an opportunity to gain a new perception of old age in the workplace. In the long term, working longer hours will be inevitable.

Responsibility is located at four levels:

■ **Businesses** must overcome company age limits often based purely on calendar age with a staff policy oriented towards the life cycle (i.e. further training options or health-supporting measures).

■ **Employees** themselves are – where possible – also responsible for making use of further training options and health supporting measures and investing in their own ability to work and be employed.

■ **Management and labour** are called upon to design wage agreements in such a way that demographic developments are fully and consistently reflected.

■ **The legislator** must create reliable and consistent framework conditions.

7 Aligning health policy to a long life society.

Many illnesses are wrongly defined as old age phenomena. This prevents or complicates opportunities opening up in old age. Sickness and old age as terms need to be separated from each other, in their meaning and association.

Health service provision for the elderly should be oriented towards health needs and necessities. Unchallenged assumptions about old age should not be allowed to be the basis for health service provision. Those involved in health service provision for the elderly should be given and utilize the opportunity to develop a differentiated perception of old age and use this as a basis for (individualized) therapy and rehabilitation and palliative concepts. They should acquire the knowledge they need through training, further training and retraining measures. Health promotion and disease prevention concepts need to be developed and applied to maintain physical, mental and social health.

Older people must have the same access to health service provision as younger people. There should be no rationing of such services based on age considerations.

Death is part of life. Health policy must therefore include the palliative care of the dying as an integral part of its domain.

More information must be conveyed in schools and in adult education on physical and mental ageing processes and the options and limits to how these processes can be influenced.

Segmentation in health and care provision services should be surmounted. Health, care and social care services should be better coordinated.

8 Redefining long-term care.

In the German debate the term 'Pflegefall' is often used to refer to a person in need of support and care, meaning a 'case' for long-term care. Describing people in need of support as 'cases' for long-term care carries the risk of these people losing their individual identities. People dependent on support and care have the right not to have to define themselves in terms of their disablement and need for support. The expression 'Pflegefall' should therefore be scrupulously avoided in the legal and public communication context. In Germany, a revision of the prevailing concept of 'Pflegebedürftigkeit' (need of care) has long been planned. This revision should be pursued as

a matter of urgency. It should be aimed at correcting and widening the prevailing, one-sided definition of long-term care based on physical activities. Cognitive deficiencies should be given more weight, and central importance should be given to the fostering of resources and social participation. Excluding long-term care insurance from rehabilitation legislation (Social Code Book IX) encourages a 'special status' for those in need of care. Efforts to organise long-term care insurance in future should be guided by the participation concept (as codified in the Social Code Book IX). This will enhance prevention and rehabilitation in particular.



9 Promoting responsibility for oneself and others in civil society.

Solidarity must go beyond the confines of the family. Consequently it should be made easier for older people to find new ways of assuming responsibility for themselves and others in civil society. At the local district level in particular, the ability of civil society to provide support and the quality of this support needs to be improved. Older people are called upon to make use of the opportunities offered by civil society in planning their lives. Municipalities must invest in an infrastructure that enables civic engagement and thus create the framework for the development and growth

of differentiated images of aging. This includes education programmes that help to maintain the skills required for a life where older people can assume and exert responsibility for themselves and others. Education programmes should support the civic engagement of older people. Bodies responsible for education should be involved in qualifying older people for civic engagement. Older people should play an increasing role as imparters of knowledge and skills in education programmes.

10 Recognising and working with cultural differences.

Accepting the plurality of images of ageing means accepting cultural differences. Politicians and the relevant associations and organisations should take more account than hitherto in their communications, programmes and platforms of the culturally diverse backgrounds of older people. Self-help organisations of the various ethnic and religious groups should be willing to play a part in shaping the development of old age policies sensitive to different cultures and in practical welfare and care issues. Associations, municipal institutions and those responsible for home and

residential care should take greater account of the specific concerns of older migrants by means of staff language and cultural training. Residential care homes for the elderly should be sensitive to cultural issues and pay particular attention to the need to respect cultural, religious and gender sensitivities, eating customs and opportunities for prayer.



Members of the Commission for the Sixth German Government Report on the Elderly

Experts from various academic disciplines were members of the Commission for the Sixth Government Report on the Elderly:

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Bergsdorf, Political Science, Bonn

Prof. Dr. Peter Borscheid, Social and Economic History, Marburg

Prof. Dr. Andrea Gröppel-Klein, Consumer and Behaviour Research, Saarbrücken

Prof. Dr. Michael Hüther, Economic Science, Cologne

Prof. Dr. Thomas Klie, Law and Administrative Science, Freiburg

Prof. Dr. Andreas Kruse, Psychology and Gerontology, Heidelberg

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Naegele, Social Gerontology and Social Policy, Dortmund

Prof. Dr. Clemens Tesch-Römer, Psychology and Gerontology, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Caja Thimm, Communications and Media Science, Bonn

Prof. Dr. Rudolf Tippelt, Pedagogy and Education Research, Munich

Karin P. Vanis, Journalist, Bonn

Prof. Dr. Ulla Walter, Health Science and Public Health, Hanover

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Wegner, Theology and Social Science, Hanover

Prof. Dr. Harm-Peer Zimmermann, European Ethnology and Cultural Science, Marburg

Chair of the Commission: Prof. Dr. Andreas Kruse

Deputy Chair: Prof. Dr. Caja Thimm

German Government Reports on the Elderly

Differentiated, research-based policies for the elderly in the Federal Republic of Germany started to evolve in earnest in 1989. The then Minister for Youth, Family Affairs, Women and Health, Prof. Dr. Ursula Lehr, appointed a commission of experts with the task of producing for the first time a comprehensive report on the situation of the older generation in the Federal Republic of Germany. The report was published in 1993 as the First Government Report on the Elderly.

This report identified the need for socio-political action in relation to impending demographic changes. In the parliamentary debate on the First Government Report on the Elderly in February 1994, it was resolved to give greater prominence to policies on ageing and greater support to the social situation and social integration of older people. In winding up the debate, parliament ruled that a report on the situation of the older generation should be produced in every legislative period. Since then the Government Reports on the Elderly have been produced by independent commissions of experts from various disciplines and are published together with a statement by the Federal Government.

Today, after 20 years, the Government Reports on the Elderly are – together with topical research studies, other government reports at the national level (such as the reports of the Commission of Inquiry into Demographic Change, old age security reports, long-term care reports, etc.) and the reports on the elderly of the state governments, municipalities and associations – one of the most important points of reference for public debate on policy issues relating to the elderly and the generations. The Government Reports on the Elderly published so far have also contributed to the overall dissemination of knowledge on ageing processes, on the situation of older people and the mutual cooperation between the generations.

As well as the latest data, information and sound analyses of the issues involved, the Government Reports on the Elderly also contain recommendations for action aimed at actors and decision makers in the policy areas dealing with older people and intergenerational policies at the national, state and local levels. They also address in particular the media and older people themselves.

Main themes of the German Government Reports on the Elderly

The reports that have appeared to date differ mainly in the specificity of the topics they address. They are on the one hand overview reports focused on the overall situation of the older population

with analyses of aspects such as their financial or health situation. On the other hand, there have been reports on very specific topics such as housing in old age or the very old and dementia.

■ First Government Report on the Elderly: 'The Life Situation of Older People in Germany' (1993)

The First Government Report on the Elderly was tasked with compiling a detailed description of the demographic trends and the position of older people in a reunited Germany as regards their

health, mental attitudes and socio-economic situation and compare this with the situation in other European countries.

■ Second Government Report on the Elderly: 'The Housing and Living Environment in Old Age' (1998)

The Second Government Report presented to parliament supplied a differentiated analysis of the housing situation of older people in Germany and evolved perspectives for urban development

and housing policies. It points to the need for social structural policies relating to the generations that focus on age structures, the housing need and regional scope for action.

■ Third Government Report on the Elderly: 'Old Age and Society' (2001)

The Third Government Report once again focused on a broad analysis of the life situation of older people in the Federal Republic of Germany. It emphasises the importance of individual and societal resources for an autonomous, active and

productive life in old age and stimulates a debate on images of ageing, with the aim of promoting a more differentiated vision of ageing.

■ Fourth Government Report on the Elderly: 'Risks, Quality of Life and Service Provision for the Very Old – with a Special Focus on Dementia' (2002)

The Fourth Government Report on the Elderly dealt in depth with the special needs of the very old with the aim of supplying a realistic picture of this life phase and creating a basis for the planning and

decisions required for the future. One of the emphases was on providing suggestions on how to improve the services for those suffering from dementia.

■ Fifth Government Report on the Elderly: 'The Potentials of Old Age in the Economy and Society – Older People's Contribution to Generational Solidarity' (2006)

At the core of the report is the potential of older people in the areas of employment, education, the silver economy, family and private networks, engagement and participation, with the specific concerns and potential of older migrants being subject to thorough scrutiny. The report also contains information on income situations in

old age and their future development. It shows the important, active contribution made by older people to public life and how the barriers in the way of older people offering their skills and abilities to society on an even larger scale can be removed.

■ Sixth German Government Report on the Elderly: 'Images of Ageing in Society' (2010)

In the Sixth Government Report, central areas and structures in society are examined as to the images of ageing that underpin them. The report emphasizes the vital role of images of ageing in the realization of individual action and development potentials and in dealing with borderline situations in old age. It makes clear that images of ageing are

to a large extent responsible for the way society as a whole addresses and masters the challenges of demographic change. The Sixth Government Report on the Elderly explains why images of ageing, as a mainstream theme, are one of the key factors in a successful approach to demographic change and a long life society.



■ ■ ■ ■ Contact

If you have any questions or require further information on the Government Reports on the Elderly, please contact the Office of the German Government Reports on the Elderly:

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All Government Reports on the Elderly can be downloaded free of charge in German from www.dza.de or www.bmfsfj.de.



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