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EUROPEAN INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP on Active and Healthy Ageing

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Start training for retirement as early as 50, research urges

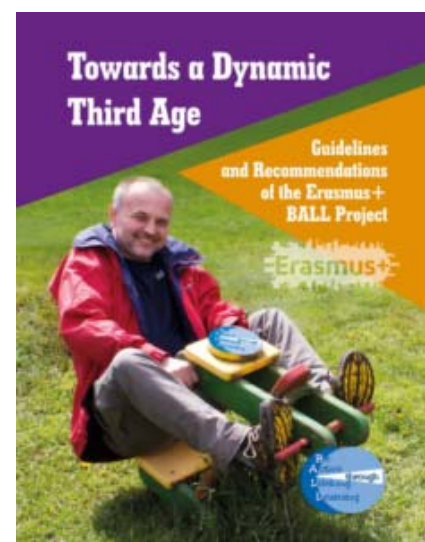
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The University of Alicante presents the results of a project to establish European guidelines for preparing the population for life after full-time employment. The results urge people to start planning as soon as 50.

'Start early' is the main message from project partners at the close of [BALL \(http://www.ball-project.eu/\)](http://www.ball-project.eu/), a two-year project led by the [Evrís Foundation \(http://www.evr.is/\)](http://www.evr.is/) in Iceland, in which [Reykjavík \(http://www.u3a.is/\)](http://www.u3a.is/) (Iceland) and [Lublin \(http://www.utw.lublin.pl/\)](http://www.utw.lublin.pl/) (Poland) Universities of the [Third Age \(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_the_Third_Age\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_the_Third_Age) and the Permanent University of the University of Alicante ([UPUA \(http://web.ua.es/en/upua\)](http://web.ua.es/en/upua)) also participated. The project addressed the urgent need to establish directives and best practices for preparing individuals early for retirement, stressing the importance of on-going learning, environment and cultural factors, and knowledge sharing.

In the final project meeting of this Erasmus+ initiative, the partners presented lessons learned and the main tangible results of the collaboration. These include a model awareness-raising campaign, the "Personal Development Academy" and the "Warehouse of Opportunities", all of which are outlined in the directives and recommendations document, "[Towards a Dynamic Third Age \(http://www.ball-project.eu/sites/default/files/BALL_PublKonc_Internet/Ball_en2_023_200.pdf\)](http://www.ball-project.eu/sites/default/files/BALL_PublKonc_Internet/Ball_en2_023_200.pdf)".

Specifically, the University of Alicante led the development of the awareness-raising campaign model with the intention of enabling any centre, institute or association to prepare the local population for retirement. Researchers Concepción Bru and Ronda and Nuria Ruiz of UPUA first made a European map of retirement and carried out surveys on the retirement situation (reports [here](#)



(<http://www.ball-project.eu/content/final-materials>)). They then used this data to design the awareness campaign.

So why is it important to prepare for retirement?

The figures indicate that in welfare societies a person aged 50-55 has between ten and fifteen years before retirement, and then twenty more years of a full and active life after that. It is essential, then, that we ask ourselves what we want to do with our time during this period of our lives; what might we need to train in beforehand, from financial and legal issues, to preventive health, social skills, leisure activities, dependence prevention.

Bru stresses the importance of carrying out awareness-raising campaigns on the value of the third age in society, aimed both at the general public and those approaching retirement: "More and more people are living longer and in better health [and] the sudden stop in the activity you have spent your whole life engaged in" can lead to depression and related mental health issues.

Encouraging physical activity and inspiring a sense of inclusion and purpose is the overarching goal of the BALL project, but the key for Bru is that retirees, or those approaching retirement, are able to "reinvent themselves. Engage in something they've never done before, like volunteering. If you prepare yourself in good time and with good organisation and guidance, a better retirement is possible".

The idea, Bru tells us, is to continue work in the EU to put these recommendations into practice. Indeed, they are already being implemented by companies that took part in the project, as well as at an institutional level, via the regional ministry of education and the University of Alicante. Not to mention at the UPUA itself: "Much of the material we already teach is straight out of the project recommendations. This is why they asked us to participate, for our experience" (Bru).

Source: University of Alicante, via Asociación RUVID.

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Last update: 20/10/2016 | Top |