2012: European year of active ageing workforce. What happens to project managers over 60?

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ABSTRACT

2012 was appointed by the EU as the Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. According to literature active ageing means “a healthy ageing with equal opportunities for social participation; a satisfactory occupation; and self independent living”. With this appointment, European Governments seek with active ageing to capitalize their human resources, even the elderly; and to keep the European society informed regarding the contribution of older people both in the workplace and in society. Moreover, European states aim to promote active ageing characteristics, which become challenging due to improved life expectancy.

This paper will focus on project managers who exceed the age of 60. These professionals hold a range of skills, such as communication, leadership, personal and methodological techniques etc. and in this context, authors will try to answer the following questions: what are the particular skills that they must develop? What is the role of project managers in Greece compared to the European experience? How do they perform their leadership to younger employees?
In order to answer these questions this paper will (i) study literature, (ii) carry out fieldwork and (iii) compare data from other countries and models.

The expected outcomes are particularly important and they can contribute future to studies regarding employment and special skills of project managers beyond the age of 60s, compared to those who are beginning their careers.

**Keywords**: Active ageing, leader, project manager, project management

**JEL**: M1, M11, M12

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*Be not afraid of greatness; some are born great; some achieve greatness — others have greatness thrust upon them*

W. Shakespeare, Twelfth Night

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1. Introduction

According to recent studies human beings live longer and in this order elders’ number increases (Beck, 2009). At the same time, youths’ number decreases as a result of birthrate flow across developed countries. Low birthrate is the outcome of a number of modern life’s facts such as, urbanism; female employment; lack in kinder garden infrastructure; insufficient family allowances; and social values change in general (Katsanevas, 2003).

European Union 27 member states (EU27) account a total population of an approximate 500 million citizens. Life’s expectancy is estimated to rise to 76 years for male and 82 years for female by 2060. Fertility and children-per-mother indexes have been significantly decreased since 60s. As a result, manpower shrinks too and less occupied support more retired (this rate is estimated to reach 6.3 percent by 2025) (Annexes I and II).

Population in Greece accounts 10.815.197 citizens according to 2011 census survey. Moreover, over 65 years’ population represents the 19.6 percent and over 75 years’ the 9.7 percent. These values show that Greek population becomes old rapidly,
while at the same time manpower of the ages between 15 and 64 years decreases to the 66.1 percent (Annexes III and IV) \(^1\). How could Greece deal with this challenge?

Two methods could close the gap, which is structured with the above demographic phenomenon: immigration to EU states or active ageing. In this context, European Committee (EC) announced 2012 “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” as a means to disseminate active ageing for employment and participation. Moreover, this announcement aimed to sensitize Europe regarding elder contribution to employment.

According to Giotis (Project Management Services, 2013), 6 million project managers appear in LinkedIn (®) social media. This number confirms the existence of an extensive competition as well as a market requirement for project manager skills. The most significant five traits that project managers must hold concern sensual intelligence, uncertainty management, change management, generations’ understanding and technical skills \(^2\).

This article aims to answer the following question: what is the profile of a project manager who exceeds 60 years old? This problem is extremely important due to the rapid ageing phenomenon and to the requirement for active ageing by all professionals and by project managers respectively. In order to structure the profile, this article will investigate the appropriate skills that old project managers must develop; the processes that develop these skills; the position of this particular professional group in Greek market; the ideal cooperation methods between old and young professionals; and the means with which elder deliver leadership to young project managers.

The remaining of this article is structured as follows: section 2 analyzes the theoretical background that lies behind the context of this paper, such as ageing, project management professionals etc. Section 3 illustrates previous studies in these domains. Next, section 4 presents the research methodology of this paper. Then,
section 5 contains a discussion on the outcomes and finally section 6 contains conclusions and future thoughts.

2. Background

Continuous birthrate decrease, accompanied by the increasing life’s expectancy, replace World War II’s «baby-boom»\(^3\) and signify the transition to an older population, which is already observed in various EU regions\(^4\). At the same time, youth market new entrants decreases and employers are obliged to depend more on professionals who belong to the second or even the third age. However, under the appropriate conditions, this phenomenon could benefit companies.

Today, each 100 occupied support 26 old people who exceed 65 years old. Old dependency indexes that exceed 30 percent have been noticed in 68 European regions, most of which concern Mediterranean countries, such as France, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Employment increase and labor elongation concern primary national objectives (Coggan, 2011). Recent Europe2020 strategy recognizes this phenomenon and aims to increase the employment rate of citizens between 20 and 64 to 75 percent. This employment rate increased from 36.9 percent to 46 percent in 2009\(^5\).

This target could be established, only if existing culture against elder changes and improves. Age equal opportunities in labor market demand appropriate space design and operational changes such as: job definition; mobility; time breaks; ergonomics etc. (Eurobarometer, 2012; EASHW, 2009).

However, beyond the abovementioned requirements, old professionals hold particular skills due to their employment experience. For instance, they are mature, strategic thought, holistic cognition and patience, while they address customer satisfaction and product quality. Moreover than not, old professionals hold technical

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\(^3\) After WWII birthrate emerged in developed countries and this phenomenon was named baby-boom.

\(^4\) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Population_change_at_regional_level/el

\(^5\) https://osha.europa.eu/el/priority_groups/ageingworkers/index_html
skills and they can decide under pressure better. On the other hand, old professionals’ physical abilities and senses flow (vision and hearing)\(^5\) and they become tired quickly (Kathimerini 2009; Kathimerini 2011).

*Active ageing* is defined as the phenomenon where a citizen grows with good health and equal opportunities; an old person feels satisfied from his job and enjoys an enhanced quality of life\(^6\). Active ageing is described in the EU Chart of Fundamental Rights: article 21, § 1, refers to *discrimination forbidding [including age and disabilities]*, while article 25 refers to *elder rights [EU recognizes and respects the right of the old for a descent and independent life and to participate in social and cultural living]*.

László Andor, European Commissioner of Employment, Social Issues and Social Inclusion, stated that “*Active ageing refers to the support that is provided to the old people, in order to remain professionally active and to share their experience […] Active ageing is a primary factor of our effort to establish an employment rate of 75 percent, which will release from poverty 20 million people by 2020. Year 2012 calls us to activate in various domains such as employment, social protection, education and training, health and social services, housing and public infrastructure*”\(^7\).

Year 2012 was named the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” as a means to address active ageing in employment (as well as in social and cultural activities), with which elderly people are encouraged to remain at their jobs beyond today age of retirement. Moreover, old people are encouraged to become socially active with this symbolic action. Old people occupation and participation could be established with a combination of activities such as, vocational training and access to life-long learning programs (Charalambous, 2012; Kollia, 2006).\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Europe was not alone in this initiative. New South Wales in Australia for instance, developed a Third Age Strategy in 2012, where it identified sustainable communities, participation and employment discrimination, security, dignity etc. ([http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/251406/GRE_1124_ADHC_AgeingRoundtable.pdf](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/251406/GRE_1124_ADHC_AgeingRoundtable.pdf)).
Old professionals hold different skills compared to young ones. These differences, accompanied by their experience and maturity often balance health and other age-related problems. It is important to be mentioned that the rate of professionals who take days-off for health reasons is almost the same across different ages. At the same time health-related days-off inversely reduce to the age. However, old professionals are less likely to have accidents although accidents at these ages are usually cause severe injuries (Eurostat, 2010).

Age management follows alternative approaches during active people’s lives, as a means to shape equal opportunities. Age profiling; skills’ assessment; ability to share knowledge; job mobility; or even hiring for different jobs are only some of the tools that are capitalized by age management. (Ilmarinen, 2008; Tuomi et al, 1998). In this order, manager enhances professional maturity. Super et al (1996) define professional maturity as the development rate, the point where professional has exceeded the professional development baseline, which varies from curiosity to decline. Normally, professional age matches cognitive age.

This problem is severe in the project management domain. Project Management (Project Management Body of Knowledge, 2004) concerns the process with which, knowledge, skills, tools and techniques are applied on activities’ execution during a project, in order to succeed in establishing project stakeholders’ expectations (Dimitriadis, 2004; Polyzos, 2004; Lewis, 2000).

Project manager is the professional regarding project management domain and demands studies, education and experience. The institutions that offer tertiary education in project management are Project Management Department of the TEI of Larissa, while at a postgraduate level several programs exist: MSc in Construction Management offered at Civil Engineering Department of the AUTH; MSc in Project Management at TEI of Piraeus; MSc in Project and Program Management at the TEI of Larissa; and MSc in Construction Management at the Hellenic Open University (Rouboutsou, 2005).

Gaddis in 1959 (Fitsilis et al, 2007) pronounced the significant contribution of a project manager to a project. He illustrated the appropriate education and skills in order for a project manager to succeed in his mission. Each project is unique and in this order project manager counts. He undertakes –above others- to define project scope; to successfully manage the project team; to secure information for project
stakeholders; to deliver activities in time; to respect budget; and to implement project deliverables according to the agreed requirements (Fitsilis et al., 2007).

Moreover, Murch (2000) defined the required Project Manager skills and he mentioned personal; technical; managerial; and agility and adaptation to project environment (Rubin, 1967). Furthermore, there are ten traits of project managers who are really making ideas happen. The characteristics are command authority naturally, possess quick sifting abilities, knowing what to note and what to ignore. Set, observe, and re-evaluate project priorities frequently, ask good questions and listen to stakeholders. Do not use information as a weapon or a means of control. Adhere to predictable communication schedules. Possess domain expertise in project management as applied to a particular field. Exercise independent and fair consensus-building skills when conflict arises. Cultivate and rely on extensive informal networks inside and outside the firm to solve problems that arise. Look forward to going to work (Baker, __).

Theofanidis, during his speech at the 3rd International Conference in Project Management Best Practices (Theofanidis, 2008) described project manager’s behavioral competences. He mentioned that no methodology can guarantee project success, when project manager is not a leader, cannot motivate, communicate, has not self-control or enthusiasm. Moreover, project manager must be confident, ethical, open, intelligent, experienced, passionate, educated, productive, persistent and can negotiate.

Finally, version 3.0 of IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB) (IPMA, 2006) defines a set of contextual, behavioral and technical project manager competencies. ICB certifies project managers’ capacity and in many cases guarantee their efficiency to manage particular projects. Various interrelations can be observed between ICB competencies. Leadership behavioral competence for instance influences crises management technical skills and vice versa. These interrelations confirm that an old project manager could perform some project management duties, although he would probably not able to become a site manager for a construction project.

The above literature review illustrate that a project manager must hold specific skills such as communicative, organizational, team working, motivation etc. At the same time he must also hold behavioral competencies such as productivity, patience, persistence etc. Finally, he must also own several technical skills such as finances,
information systems, procurement etc. (Fitsilis et al., 2007; Heerkens, 2002; El-Sabaa, 2001; Thamhain et al., 1974; Wilemon et al., 1970) (Annex IV).

3. Previous Studies

Levi – Montalcini confirms that human mind can continue to operate appropriately even at old ages, regardless potential damages of other human organs. Various old persons have performed well, such as Galileo, Michelangelo, Picasso, B. Russel and recent astronaut J. Glen, who participated in a space travel at the age of 77. Last but not least, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill became the British Prime Minister at the age of 66 (Levi – Montalcini, 1999).

Moreover, Crawford (2000) approached project manager’s profile in a quite objective manner, since he collected data relative to theory and practice. His analysis validates a short connection between job performance at labor space and productivity compared to the ideal.

Additionally, a study that was carried out among 7.718 employees in 2004 entitled «The new employee / Employer equation survey», showed that older professionals in U.S.A. are well educated and with quite high benefits and salaries. Moreover, compared to younger ones, old emphasize on organization, they are less adaptive in technological changes, while they do not declare to be ambitious (http://www.agewave.com/research/landmark_employeeEmployer.php).

Further, Prof. Papanis in his social study that was carried out in Greece in 2007 showed that “changes due to age can be classified according to knowledge, personality and adaptation. Moreover, weaknesses regarding new knowledge gain can be observed, which however can be balanced by critical thought, experience capitalization and empirical knowledge. Social participation can be established by interpersonal relations, continuous new interest seek, employment after retirement or social activity programs” (http://epapanis.blogspot.gr/2007/09/blog-post_7466.html).

Finally, Eurobarometer (2012) depicts that the majority of the Europeans (60%) are opposite to later retirement. These values are higher in Romania (87%), Latvia (86%) and Slovakia (83%). Lower values are illustrated in Denmark (58%), Netherlands (55%), Ireland (53%), U.K. (51%) and Austria (49%) (European Commission, 2012).

Literature review is summarized in the following (Table 1), which will lead research method’s formulation.
Table 1: Literature review summary regarding ageing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher / Year</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Research context</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crawford / 2000</td>
<td>353 project manages located in 3 different countries.</td>
<td>Criteria by which project success is judged, the factors that contribute to the success of projects; and the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of project managers that are expected to lead to achievement of successful project outcomes.</td>
<td>There is little direct relationship between perceived performance in the workplace and the level of project management knowledge and experience reported against either project management standards or previous research findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new employee - Employer equation survey / 2004</td>
<td>7,718 workers in U.S.A.</td>
<td>Workers’ comparison.</td>
<td>Old workers, in contrast to young ones, emphasize on organization, adapt slowly to technological changes and are not ambitious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papanis / 2007</td>
<td>400 interviews to third age people located in different Greek geographic regions/</td>
<td>Personality shaping and memories’ description.</td>
<td>Physical changes can be classified according to education levels, personality and adaptation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission / 2000</td>
<td>E.U. member states’ civilians</td>
<td>Retirement age levels in different member states.</td>
<td>Majority of the questioned civilians are opposite to retirement age extension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Research Methodology

The above literature review returned useful outcomes regarding active ageing and project manager. Moreover, project manager’s profile was shaped and several required skills were documented. However, in order to answer this paper’s research
question, these findings have to be combined and confirmed. Bibliographic findings’ combination can be summarized in the following:

1. Although majority or Europeans are opposite to retirement age extension, ageing challenge seems to oblige European Governments to encourage active ageing. In this context, several professionals and project managers respectively will be encouraged to remain in their jobs longer.

2. A project manager must hold various contextual, behavioral and technical skills, which are being developed both via training and empirically.

3. Age influences some of these skills either positively (i.e., leadership, organization, maturity, quality assurance etc.) or negatively (i.e., adaptation to technological changes, physical requirements for site management).

4. Positively enhanced skills could be capitalized by labor market and give third age project managers chances to undertake duties, where they can perform.

The above findings outline a potential old project manager’s profile, which has to be validated and confirmed. In this order, authors aim to perform a deeper interview based research on second and third age project managers. Interview is a qualitative research method and does not concern a typical dialogue process between the researcher and respondents. The researcher has to manipulate respondents’ reluctance and fear. Researcher is human, thus sensually “sensitive” and his reactions and spiritual manifestations can influence respondents. Both researcher’s social level and culture play crucial role during an investigation. In order to avoid these interview weaknesses and secure objectiveness, two researchers will perform the interviews.

The researcher can structure an “interpretation” framework and exclude outcomes on the basis of the respondents’ social space and of the investigation particular timing. It is important to be mentioned that interview is placed in the middle of qualitative research methods and concerns direct communication between questioned and reviewer (Babbie, 2011; Paraskevopoulou-Kolia, 2008; Saunders et al, 2000). Interviews will be performed in at least two rounds, according to the DELPHI method, since the interview sample is expected to be limited and survey results have to be validated (Belali et al, 2011).
5. Questionnaire’s Structure

The questionnaire is accompanied by a cover letter which describes the purposes of this survey, which is “old project manager’s profile shaping and the identification of the skills that are influenced either positively or negatively by the age”. Moreover, the survey aims to conclude regarding the capability of an old project manager to undertake several duties during a project’s life-cycle.

The questionnaire (Annex VI) is organized in two parts. Part A collects respondents’ demographic information; and Part B contains several questions, which concern project manager’s skills, how these are formed during a career and whether some have improved or declined in time. Some of the professional skills, which are going to be investigated concern leadership, engagement and motivation, self-control, assertiveness, relaxation, openness, creativity, efficiency, consultation, negotiation, conflict & crisis, reliability, ethics, systems, products & technology, personnel management, risk & opportunity, teamwork, problem resolution and communication.

The questions that follow concern project manager’s ability to use several tools and communication means; his physical ability; his productiveness etc. The survey is under execution and its results are not publishable yet.

6. Motivation – Contribution

The contribution of research in science has been identified from the ancient times, when Ippokratis (About Art) mentioned that empirical findings validate theories and support truth discovery, mistake avoidance and everyday life. Moreover, Levi-Montalcini (1999) said that “the ability to capitalize our mental and physical forces during all or life and more especially when we grow is the most valuable skill”. This study grounds a significant relevant research question that concern existing ageing social challenges, which are recognized by the developed countries.

This paper presented (a) the primary theoretical basis regarding ageing and project management skills; (b) existing literature review findings; (c) an interviewing investigation’s structure, which is under execution. Literature review confirmed that this paper’s research question has not been answered yet, while it outlined the framework around this research question and returned project manager’s skills and abilities that have to be investigated further. Both bibliographic results and the
interviewing research method are expected to contribute significantly in this paper’s research question.

References


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• Polyzos, S., (2004), Project Management – Methods and techniques, Vol. 1, Athens : Kritiki [in Greek].

Legislative Articles
• European Council (2012). Healthy Ageing during the entire (2012/C 396/02), Brussels.

8.2. Διαδικτυακές πηγές
9. Παραρτήματα

Παράρτημα 1: Population structure by major age groups – EU 27, 2011 - 2060
Πηγή:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing,
προσελήφθηκε στις 28/3/2013.

Παράρτημα 3 : Στοιχεία πληθυσμού της Ελλάδας από την απογραφή 2011
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Σύνολο πληθυσμού</th>
<th>10.815.197</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Άντρες</td>
<td>5.303.690 (49,2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γυναίκες</td>
<td>5.484.000 (50,8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Κατά ηλικία</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008 σε %</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2011 σε %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 14 ετών</td>
<td>1.666.888</td>
<td>15,20%</td>
<td>1.614.785</td>
<td>14,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 64 ετών</td>
<td>7.423.889</td>
<td>67,71%</td>
<td>7.569.304</td>
<td>67,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+65 ετών</td>
<td>1.873.243</td>
<td>17,08%</td>
<td>2.029.695</td>
<td>18,1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Προσδόκιμο ζωής</th>
<th>79,78 έτη</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Άντρες</td>
<td>78,2 έτη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γυναίκες</td>
<td>81,9 έτη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δείκτης θανάτων</td>
<td>9,3 ‰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δείκτης γεννήσεων</td>
<td>9,8 ‰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δείκτης μετανάστευσης</td>
<td>3,63 ‰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Παράρτημα 4: Η πυραμίδα των ηλικιών στην Ελλάδα
Πηγή: http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%91%CF%81%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF:Pyramide_Greece.PNG, προσπελάσθηκε στις 29/3/2013.

Παράρτημα 5: The complete project manager

Παράρτημα 6: Το ερωτηματολόγιο της έρευνας

Είναι γεγονός ότι η αύξηση του πληθύσμου των ηλικιωμένων στον δυτικό κόσμο θα επιφέρει αλλαγές στο τρόπο αλλά και την διάρκεια του εργασιακού βίου των ΔΧΤ. Με τον παρόν ερωτηματολόγιο θα διερευνηθεί η επίδραση της ηλικίας στις δεξιότητες του ΔΧΤ και η δυνατότητα να ανταπεξέλθει στη πρόκληση τις παράτασης του εργασιακού βίου τις σημερινές συνθήκες.

ΕΡΩΤΗΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΟ

Όνομα
Επώνυμο
Τίτλος σπουδών
Παρούσα κατάσταση
Θέση
Προηγούμενη θέση
Ηλικία

Α. ΔΕΞΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ

Κατά την διάρκεια τις μέχρι τώρα καριέρας σας αυξήθηκαν - μειώθηκαν με την πάροδο του χρόνου. Παρακαλώ δώστε βαθμό με κλίμακα 0 - 5
1. Ηγεσία -Leadership involves providing direction and motivating others in their role or task to fulfil the project’s objectives. It is a vital competence for a project manager.
2. Engagement and motivation – δέσμευση και κίνητρα.
5. Relaxation - χαλάρωση.
6. Openness - ειλικρίνεια.
7. Creativity - δημιουργικότητα.
8. Efficiency - αποδοτικότητα.
12. Reliability - αξιοπιστία.
15. Personnel management – ανάπτυξη προσωπικότητας «πως»?

17. **Teamwork** - ομαδική εργασία.

18. **Problem resolution** - επίλυση προβλημάτων.

19. **Communication**-- Communication may take many forms: -- oral, written, text or graphic, static or dynamic, formal or informal, volunteered or requested -- and may use a variety of media such as paper or electronic means. Communication may take place in conversations, meeting.

20. Χρησιμοποίηση σύγχρονων εργαλείων διαχείρισης έργων (msProject, cad ..).

21. Χρησιμοποίηση σύγχρονων εργαλείων επικοινωνίας (mail, skype, social media, teambox, dropbox, sms, web).

22. Νιώθετε ότι από άποψη φυσικής κατάστασης του οργανισμού σας μπορείτε να ανταποκρίνεστε στις απαιτήσεις της εργασίας σας;

23. Παρακολουθείτε τις εξελίξεις στον τομέα σας (σεμινάρια – ημερίδες – πιστοποιήσεις).

24. Νιώθετε ότι έχετε ξεπεράσει από τις σύγχρονες απαιτήσεις του επαγγέλματος

25. Μέχρι πια ηλικία πιστεύεται μπορείτε να είστε παραγωγικοί στη διαχείριση έργων και γιατί.