

Conference

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Title

A Taste of What's to Come: Changes in Individual Expectations on Ageing and Later Life in Times of
Welfare State Reforms and Economic Crises

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Abstract

Resources, needs and evaluations are dimensions of quality of life and pre-conditions for autonomy
and life planning. Projections of older people's future living standards in Europe predict declining
levels and increasing inequality due to pension reforms and changing employment patterns. Effects of
ongoing economic crises need also to be considered as well as changing needs, expenditures and
values of older people.

Recent data from the German Ageing Survey (DEAS) demonstrate stable socio-economic resources
and increasing inequalities among retirees. The most important trend is an increase in concerns about
future living standards which is very significant from a social policy as well as from a gerontological
perspective. Based on this data, the presentation calls for its sources and conclusions to be drawn. It
presents descriptive information and results from multi-level modelling. It heightens awareness of
changes in later life due to reforms and crises and will contribute to a wider understanding of multi-
level interactions between individual resources, evaluations and societal development.

The DEAS is a representative cross-sectional and longitudinal survey of those aged over 40 (n=8.200
in 2008) in Germany, funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and
Youth (BMFSFJ).

Three hypotheses – a) hypothesis of social structure effects, b) hypothesis of cohort change of later
life, c) hypothesis of differentiation of inequality patterns – are tested and mostly supported by the
study. Analyses show that increasing concerns influence the individuals' demands for welfare state
intervention. Concerns interact with income and portfolio structures but are partly independent of
education and gender. Moreover, differences between regions mirror context effects.