

## Aging Fit – Strong in the GymWorld

### Strategy of the German Gymnastic Federation (DTB) for the promotion of HESA for Elderly (Summary)

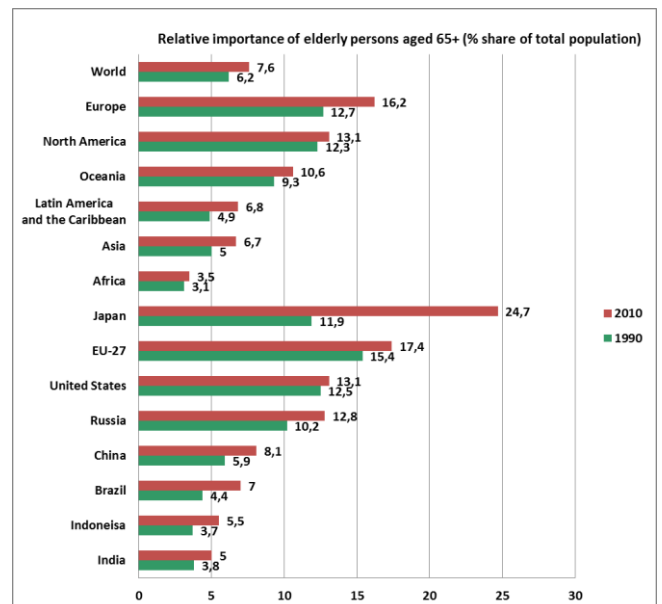
#### The societal and political background:

Like hardly another topic aging has moved into focus of public interest. The population in our modern societies is gradually growing older. The age pyramid has changed due to higher life expectancy and lower birth rates. Very soon the majority of the living persons will be older than 60 years. No generation before in history had the chance to reach a lifespan as long as now. Improved health care, better nutrition, ongoing activities and involvement in social life had contributed for many more people to maintain a greater vitality and to reach a longer lifespan.

This progress in personal human life creates on the other hand societal challenges. Higher expenditures for pensions, explosively rising costs for health care, poverty and social isolation of parts of the “growing grey generation” are some characteristics which mark socio-political challenges regarding the living situation of senior citizens.

Both, the individual expectations and needs for a longer life and the societal challenges of the “growing grey generation” are demanding an intensive involvement of the sport movement for the target group of senior citizens. We know today through a lot of scientific researches and through personal reports on experiences given by senior citizens that manifold improvements to the quality of daily life of senior citizens can be achieved through physical exercises and sports, namely

- Improvement of well-being, fitness and health
- Retention of independence and mobility
- Improvement of social situation through sociability, common interests, communication, co-operation, social exchange, social integration into a group
- Strengthening of personal identity and self-image
- Experiencing a new challenge and purpose of live.



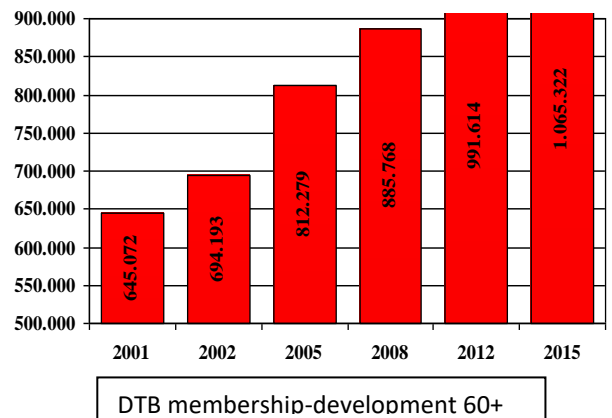
Therefore physical activity and sport stands for an indispensable subject of successful and healthy aging!

## The position of DTB in the field of Active Aging

Activity programs for older club members have a long tradition in DTB. The importance of taking care for this target group is mentioned in different policy papers and rules and is based on particular working structures (functions) on all levels of the federation.

As the DTB counts more than 1 mill. members over 60 years old, he feels obliged to provide appropriate activities for this target group. Even if 56% of DTB clubs offer particular activities for older people there is a need to encourage more clubs and to increase the number of activity programs. From a recent scientific survey we know that our clubs want to establish two more activity groups on average. Moreover the demographic development and changing behaviour of older people will challenge the clubs to take care for older persons not yet being physical active.

The strategy “Aging fit – Strong in the GymWorld” intends to inspire and enhance the further development to promote health-enhancing physical activities and sport for elderly people.



### Main strategic goals:

- Retaining of aging members.
- Recruitment of new members
- Provision of services for gym-clubs to offer enough activities in a fairly good quality.
- To contribute to the social challenges in regard to older people.

#### Policy development:

Strategic goals; implementation ; procurement of resources; PR

#### Product development:

Exercise programs; teaching material; projects; quality mark;

#### Basic elements of the DTB Aging-Fit Strategy

#### Human resources qualif.:

Instructor -, leadership-, management qualification

#### Organizational developm.

working structure; communication; external cooperation

### Table of content:

#### 1. *Reasons for a new strategy for the target group of older people:*

- Demographic development and challenges for organised sport;
- Characteristic of aging and the influence of physical activity on the process of aging;
- Motivational alterations within the process of aging.

#### 2. *Differentiation of sub-groups within the target group of elderly people in regard to physical activity and sport:*

- Active and fit older people.
- Older sedentary people, often with health problems and health risks.
- Old-old people with activity restrictions.

### 3. Exercise program development:

Objectives:

- To encourage more clubs to offer exercise programs
- To establish more groups in a club
- To initiate more differentiated (tailor made) exercise programs
- To initiate more programs in cooperation with external partners and in new settings.
- To activate passive elderly club members and to retain members in higher age.

Problems and problem solving in the development of exercise programs:

- Lack of facilities.
- Less willingness of older newcomers to become a club-member.
- Lack of innovation within traditional programs

### 4. Human resources development:

Objectives:

- To recruit, to educate and to retrain more instructors for groups of older people.
- To train available instructors to the needs of older people.
- To examine and revise the qualification curricula for the target group of older people.

### 5. Internal organizational development:

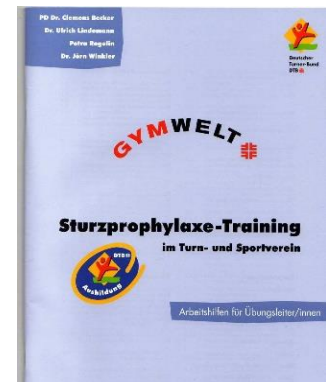
- Creation of functions and entities being responsible for the target group on all levels of the organization.
- Definition of responsibilities in the function concerned (job description).
- Securing internal communication structures.

### 6. External organizational development:

- Establishment and taking care of a political-strategic network.
- List of cooperation partners/stakeholders on different levels of the organization.

### 7. Public relation and marketing:

- Creation of a brand/slogan ("Aging fit – strong in the Gym World").
- Press articles in newspapers.
- Contacts to editorial departments.
- Press conferences.



- Participation in contests.

### **8. Action Plan for implementation:**

Measures on DTB-level:

- Presentation and discussion of the strategy with the regional states Gymnastic Federations.
- Creation of a contest “The age friendly gym-club”.
- Creation of new exercise programs in cooperation with universities.
- Qualification of disseminators for the programs.
- Survey of the exercise- program and instructor situation in the gym-clubs.
- Collection of good practise of promotion concepts on club-level.
- Cross-sectoral networking on the federal level.
- Promotion of groups in clubs not yet involved in programs for older people.

Recommendations for measures in the regional state gymnastic federations:

- Declaration of the organizational readiness to follow the strategy.
- Appointment/election of leaders taking care for pursuing the strategy on the regional state level.
- Common initiative with DTB for the promotion of gym-clubs not yet being involved in programs for older people.
- Common initiative with DTB to create new groups for older inactive people.
- Public relation initiatives on regional state level.
- Cross sector cooperation and networking on regional state level.
- Political lobbying on regional state level.
- Provision of education courses for instructors.

Recommendations for measures in the regional district associations and for gym-clubs:

- The recommendations are very similar as before, but regarded to the district and club level.



### **9. Concluding:**

Formal agreements

#### **Experiences with the implementation of the strategy:**

Some measures of the action-plan are already realised, others are still in the pipeline. The number of realised measures and the speed of implementation are very diverse and differ between the federations on the regional level. The implementation is mostly dependent on available resources.

The strategy is not an formally binding instrument within the DTB policy; it's created to give guidelines and recommendations for DTB leading entities on all levels of the federation to go once own for a more systematic and holistic approach to promote

physical activities for older people. This openness is on one hand an advantage, but also its weakness. Concrete, verifiable working-plans are until now mostly not available.