



**Keynote Speech: Günther Oettinger, European
Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society**
Official Opening of the Conference of Partners

Dear Members of the European Parliament, dear Ministers,
Dear Partners of the European Innovation Partnership on
Active and Healthy Ageing,

I am delighted to officially open the 4th Conference of Partners
of the EIP on Active and Healthy Ageing.

This year the focus of the Conference is on *"Accelerating the
uptake of innovation for active and healthy ageing"*

The demographic challenge is much broader than health and
care sustainability or care workforce shortages.

Like other societal challenges, it calls for cooperation and
investment across administrative and economic silos.

When in a crisis we have only one option - **to innovate!**
Innovate in the way we deliver services, innovate in the way we
address unmet needs and innovate in the way we cooperate
and invest in the future.

As European Commissioner responsible for the Digital Economy and Society, I believe that digital innovation is a critical factor to transform **demographic change** into an **opportunity** for Europe.

Digital innovation can support an inclusive and caring **Digital Society**, catering for the evolving needs of our ageing population.

The Silver economy presents us with an opportunity to grow our **Digital Economy** and strengthen the global competitiveness of our industry. Across different sectors ranging from ICT to real estate, housing, health and care services.

(The Digital Single Market)

One of our current priorities is to **achieve a Digital Single Market**. The Digital Single Market is key to bring benefits to our economy and society in the ongoing global digital revolution

It is one of the main vehicles to realise the vision of turning demographic change into an opportunity.

We must work together across silos to leverage our biggest assets: our internal market of more than **500 million** people, **20 million** companies and **many hundreds** of national, regional and local administrations.

An important societal dimension of the Digital Single Market is also that of a "**Europe that cares**" for its citizens.

A Europe that promotes digital innovation in public services, improves inclusion and contributes to sustainability of health and care systems.

A Europe that provides opportunities through new digital skills. We may face an **estimated shortage** of 20 million qualified care workers by 2025 and a great number of carers **do not have digital qualifications**.

About 90% of all jobs will require some level of digital skills in the near future – and the health and care sector is one of the largest "employers" in Europe.

A Europe that cares also ensures that the elderly remain active and valued contributors to society. **We must not deepen inequalities**. Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing must benefit our citizens - all of them.

I am proud of our health and social care systems in Europe. They have contributed to our improved health, wellbeing and longevity.

But **these systems need to evolve** – and benefit from the digital revolution in order to sustain the provision of suitable health and care services to our ageing population.

Increasingly, smart home and city solutions based on the latest digital technologies can support independent living and connected care at home.

There is a **vibrant and flourishing** technology and service **industry** in Europe ready to respond to this "need" of transforming our systems.

European entrepreneurs and innovators are already creating and offering some of the most innovative solutions for ageing well and digital health.

We must enable new business models to **flourish**, start-ups to **grow** and our industry to **innovate and compete** at a global scale.

This ambition requires a reliable and trusted digital infrastructure based on **broadband connectivity**. I am determined to ensure that we all benefit from it.

(The role of the European Innovation Partnership)

An increasingly complex and hyper-connected world as the one I have just described requires **new partnerships**. The Commission cannot do this alone. Governments cannot do this alone. Neither can companies. It has to be a **joint effort** between all stakeholders, both in the public and the private sector.

In a Digital Union **everybody has to play their role**: the European Union, the Member States and the social partners.

Today, **I want to invite you to work together** with the European Commission and with the other partners, **in creating a shared vision** on how digital innovation can transform Europe's Ageing Society in the 21st Century.

We must work across sectors and borders to:

- **boost** patient and citizen empowerment,
- **move** to results-based delivery of health and care efficiencies, and
- **develop** new business models and economic opportunities in consumer markets which can scale across Europe and beyond.

A shared vision is essential to **mobilise investment** and guarantee the commitment of all actors to this digital transformation of care for the ageing society.

The **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** plays a pivotal role in contributing to this shared vision.

You have **already brought together** industry, research organisations, user organisations and regional authorities from across Europe; United to scale up innovation.

But we can no longer settle for the "prize" of having developed some of the most innovative digital solutions in the world for active and healthy ageing.

Now **we must ensure that all the promising solutions become mainstream practices**, deliver positive outcomes across Europe, and not only in one country and region. We must focus on **taking this "innovation to the market"** and scale it across the different European countries and regions.

(Leading the way forward)

The Digital Single Market and the **Horizon 2020** Research and Innovation Funding allocated to Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing, will **continue to support** our ambition to scale up innovation for active and healthy ageing.

Your renewed focus on scaling up innovation across Europe, together with your active contribution to the development of a shared vision on how digital innovation can transform Europe's Ageing Society **are essential pieces** of this strategy.

I am privileged to **announce today** that under the auspices of the European Commission, the European Innovation Partnership will **re-launch a new Call for Reference Sites and for Commitments**.

The contents of the new Call will build on the previous Calls (from 2012) but **will be strongly aligned with our aspiration** of scaling up innovation for ageing well across the EU.

I am equally **proud** to see that **so many different regions** are here today and have **endorsed a joint declaration** in support of the valuable work of the European Innovation Partnership. These are regions that made a clear commitment to scaling up innovation for ageing well across borders.

This event and the level of commitment from the partners is a **great example** of how European collaboration exists and can **deliver on our economic and societal goals**.

Europe's digital transformation is underway but **has a long road ahead**. Your event today comforts me that we can overcome our challenges, and move forward together.

Together we can realise a shared vision using digital innovation to transform ageing into an opportunity for Europe.

Thank you for your attention.