

The German Senior Citizens' Day Experience

Counting on Age – The German Senior Citizens' Day Experience

Every three years the German Senior Citizens' Day takes place in a different federal state. At the first German Senior Citizens' Day in Düsseldorf in 1987 the idea of founding a lobby for senior citizens was developed. Initially a forum for well-publicised exchanges, the German Senior Citizens' Days are now a major three-day event with some 20,000 visitors. Festive events and debates with prominent political guests, such as the Federal Chancellor, the Federal President, and numerous Ministers, regularly constitute star attractions. Visitors can choose from almost 100 events and activities to join in.

German Senior Citizens' Day is accompanied by the SenNova Exhibition, where the BAGSO associations, other organisations, and firms provide information and advice related to the topic of ageing.

Traditional elements of the German Senior Citizens' Days are the ecumenical religious service and the final declaration on senior citizens' policy that is composed in concert with the BAGSO associations.

The German Senior Citizens' Days regularly present themselves as the culmination of cooperative effort by the BAGSO associations and cooperating organisations, which are responsible for defining, planning, and implementing the many individual events as well as series of events. Overall coordination is in the hands of the BAGSO offices in Bonn. Success and impact are also due to positive cooperation with the politicians and stakeholders in senior citizens' work of the respective region or city. The motto of the large scale three-day event reflects current political debate and new key issues, but also political upheavals in Germany or Europe (see table with all Senior Citizens' Days since 1987). ■

- 1987: 1st German Senior Citizens' Day in Düsseldorf: the **idea of a "Senior Citizens' Lobby"** is born
- 1988: 2nd German Senior Citizens' Day **"Old – so what?"** in Düsseldorf
- 1992: 3rd German Senior Citizens' Day **"Older People – New Perspectives"** in Berlin
- 1994: 4th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Age in Movement"** in Wiesbaden
- 1997: 5th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Ageing Unites"** in Dresden
- 2000: 6th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Shaping the Future with Senior Citizens"** in Nuremberg
- 2003: 7th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Senior Citizens – Active in Europe"** in Hannover
- 2006: 8th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Age as Opportunity"** in Cologne
- 2009: 9th German Senior Citizens' Day **"Living Age – Taking Responsibility"** in Leipzig
- 2012: 10th German Senior Citizens' Day **"YES to Age!"** in Hamburg
- 2015: 11th German Senior Citizens' Day **"United Into the Future!"** in Frankfurt

At the last three Senior Citizens' Days a wider audience could be reached thanks to more extensive public-relations work with a dedicated online presence, a thematic newsletter, as well as media partnership agreements with television, radio, and the daily press. Furthermore, schoolchildren and students were invited to attend free of charge to further the dialogue of the generations.