

# Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations"

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Do you consent to the publication of your personal data/data relating to your organisation with the publication of your replies to the consultation? <span style="float: right;">Yes</span>	
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Are you replying as an individual or an organisation? <span style="float: right;">Organisation</span>	
On behalf of which of the following are you replying? <span style="float: right;">Regional or local authority</span>	
Please specify the name of your organisation or institution Ministry for Generation, Family, Women and Integration of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)	
Country where your organisation is based <span style="float: right;">DE - Germany</span>	
<b>Explanation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you take the view that the discussion of demographic trends and managing their impact should take place at European level?</li> <li>• If so, what should be the objectives, and which policy areas are concerned?</li> </ul> <p>Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations"            Consultation process Opinion expressed by: ú Ministry for Generation, Family, Women and Integration of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), as lead partner of the Silver Economy Network of European Regions, SEN@ER (<a href="http://www.silvereconomy-europe.org">www.silvereconomy-europe.org</a>) In political debates the demographic change and ageing are mostly seen as threat. In these "risk-debates" the main focus is on the question of how to mobilise sufficient resources in a sustainable way to meet the needs of the growing number of seniors without negatively affecting the vitality and competitiveness of firms and younger people though ever increasing welfare contributions and tax burdens. What is required is a shift of focus and approach and the need to also view demographic change and the ageing of our societies not as a threat but rather as a challenge and as an opportunity for economic growth and for improving Europe's competitiveness. European politicians, decision makers in organisations as well as the citizens should look at ageing also from an economic perspective and not only from the health, social and welfare point of view. It opens up new powerful markets for new products, services, economic co-operations and networks from which European regions can benefit economically and in terms of competitiveness. To-day's senior people are healthier, more mobile and qualified, and dispose of more purchasing power than any generation before. Their needs and expectations are diverse, but all of them aspire a high quality of life and high quality services that meet their individual wants. This leads to increasing demand for new products and services - a growing market which more and more entrepreneurs discover. At the same time, new opportunities for qualified jobs develop. A wide variety of sectors can benefit from this new</p>	

"Silver Market" - amongst them construction and housing, public services, health and leisure, sports, culture, tourism, new media, telecommunications, financial services. This also refers to SMEs which are mostly active in a regional context. It can be expected that the development and implementation of such a "Silver Economy" will have a positive impact on economic growth, jobs, employment and competitiveness in European regions. First attempt to measure the economic impact of a "Silver Economy" have revealed positive results. Today we have some evidence, that seniors could become one of the major pushes for significant parts of the economy. For North Rhine-Westphalia – the by far largest state of Germany with approx 18 million citizens where the regional state initiated a "Silver Economy" initiative – a recent calculation shows that a proactive response to the needs and interests of the elderly could result in a plus of about 100.000 new jobs. Similar calculations for the whole Federal Republic of Germany expect more than 900.000 additional employees in the "Silver Economy" within the next two decades. There are no other sectors or businesses with a higher growth potential in the German economy. The situation will be comparable in other regions and countries in Europe. In order to reap the benefits in terms of economic growth, jobs, employment and competitiveness but also improvement of the quality of life for older citizens and support of cohesion and inclusion across European Union regions, Europe need a European "Silver Economy" initiative which should be developed and implemented through the Commission and eventually at all regional levels. (continued in next field)

## **1. The challenges of European demography**

### **1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate**

*Over many years, the Union has been making considerable efforts to achieve equality between men and women and has coordinated national social protection policies.*

- How can a better work/life balance help to tackle the problems associated with demographic ageing?
- How can a more balanced distribution of household and family tasks between men and women be encouraged?
- Should the award of certain benefits or advantages (leave, etc.) be linked to an equal distribution of tasks between the sexes? How best to ensure an adequate income for both parents on parental leave?
- How can the availability of child care structures (crèches, nursery schools, etc.) and elderly care structures be improved by the public and private sectors?
- Can a reduced rate of VAT contribute to the development of care services?
- How can parents, in particular young parents, be encouraged to enter the labour market, have the career that they want and the number of children they want?

Continuation of text: This requires that the European Commission should: ú create general awareness for the new opportunities of an ageing society; ú create a European pool of expert knowledge on economic, social and political issues involved (see also the Opinion on "Research needs in the area of demographic change – quality of life of elderly persons and technological requirements" authored by the European Economic and Social Committee (Official Journal of the European Union 2005/C 74/09) demanding such a knowledge base)); ú support networking of key players and stakeholders at regional level in both development and global marketing focusing on "Silver Economy" products and services; ú provide support services to help regional businesses and service providers in developing appropriate "Silver Economy" products and services; ú provide information on good-practices of "Silver Economy" products, services and regional networks; ú initiate and stimulate the exchange of experience on building regional "Silver Economy" clusters; ú foster policy initiatives at the European level, set an agenda for creating a highly competitive European "Silver Economy", and lobby at regional, national and European levels for support; This will result in an ú improvement of the quality of life for older citizens, and ú stimulate economic activity for growth and job creation, and ú support cohesion and inclusion across European Union regions. Contact: Ministry for Generation, Family, Women and Integration of North Rhine-Westphalia Dr. Albert Harms Head of Department Family and Seniors Fürstenwall 25 D-40219 Düsseldorf Germany Tel.: +49 (2 11) 8 55-34 60 Fax +49 (2 11) 8 55-37 05 claus.effe@mgsff.nrw.de <http://www.mgsff.nrw.de/>

### **1.2. The possible contribution of immigration**

*The Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003 declared that an EU integration policy for immigrants should help to meet the new demographic and economic challenges currently facing the EU. This is the debate initiated by the Green Paper adopted last*

January.

- To what extent can immigration mitigate certain negative effects of demographic ageing?
- What policies should be developed for better integrating these migrants, in particular young people?
- How could Community instruments, in particular the legislative framework to combat discrimination, the structural funds and the Employment Strategy, contribute?

## 2. A new solidarity between the generations

### 2.1. Better integration of young people

*European objectives have been laid down for the prevention of long-term youth unemployment, combating early school leaving and raising the level of initial training. The structural funds help to attain them at grass roots level.*

- How can initial training and adult training schemes be improved? What can non-formal education and voluntary activities contribute? How can the structural funds and the instruments for achieving better access to the knowledge society contribute?
- How can the bridges between school and working life and the quality of young people's employment be improved? What role should social dialogue play? What can dialogue with civil society, in particular youth organisations, contribute

- How can Community policies contribute more to combating child poverty and poverty among single-parent families and to reducing the risk of poverty and exclusion among young people?
- What forms of solidarity can be fostered between young people and elderly people?

### 2.2. A global approach to the "working life cycle"

*In order to foster the transition to a knowledge society, EU policies promote the modernisation of work organisation, the definition of lifelong learning strategies, the quality of the working environment and "active ageing", in particular raising the average retirement age. Demographic changes reinforce the importance of these policies, whilst raising new questions:*

- How can the organisation of work be modernised, to take into account the specific needs of each age group?
- How can young couples' integration in working life be facilitated and how can we help them to find a balance between flexibility and security to bring up their children, to train and update their skills to meet the demands of the labour market? How can we enable older people to work more?
- How can work organisation best be adapted to a new distribution between the generations, with fewer young people and more older workers?
- How can the various stakeholders in the Union contribute, in particular by way of social dialogue and civil society?

### **2.3. A new place for “elderly people”**

*The European coordination of retirement scheme reforms is promoting more flexible bridges between work and retirement.*

- Should there be a statutory retirement age, or should flexible, gradual retirement be permitted?
- How can elderly people participate in economic and social life, e.g. through a combination of wages and pensions, new forms of employment (part-time, temporary) or other forms of financial incentive?
- How can activities employing elderly people in the voluntary sector and the social economy be developed?
- What should be the response to pensioner mobility between Member States, in particular with regard to social protection and health care?
- How should we be investing in health promotion and prevention so that the people of Europe continue to benefit from longer healthy life expectancy?

### **2.4 Solidarity with the very elderly**

*The coordination of national social protection policies is due to be extended to long-term care for the elderly in 2006. How can this help to manage demographic change?*

- The coordination of national social protection policies is due to be extended to long-term care for the elderly in 2006. How can this help to manage demographic change?
- In particular, should a distinction be drawn between retirement pensions and dependency allowances?
- How do we train the human resources needed and provide them with good quality jobs in a sector which is often characterised by low salaries and low qualifications?
- How do we arrive at a balanced distribution of care for the very old between families, social services and institutions? What can be done to help families? What can be done to support local care networks?
- And what can be done to reduce inequality between men and women when they reach retirement age?
- How can new technologies support older people?

### **3. Conclusion: what should the European Union’s role be?**

- Should the European Union be promoting exchanges and regular (e.g. annual) analysis of demographic change and its impact on societies and all the policies concerned?
- Should the Union’s financial instruments – particularly the structural funds – take better account of these changes? If so, how?
- How could European coordination of employment and social protection policies better take on board demographic change?
- How can European social dialogue contribute to the better management of demographic change? What role can civil society and civil dialogue with young

people play?

- How can demographic change be made an integral part of all the Union's internal and external policies?

### **The Questionnaire**

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met