



Brussels, 1st June 2009
D(2009) 8107

Consultation

In view of a possible designation of 2012 as European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity

BACKGROUND

Today, Europeans are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. Since 1960, life expectancy has risen by eight years, and demographic projections assume a further increase of five years over the next forty years. This is a historic achievement that deserves to be celebrated.

Rising life expectancy, combined with low birth rates, also imply a changing balance between younger and older people, a shift that is currently being accelerated by the fact that the large baby boom cohorts are reaching their retirement age. These trends have been described in the Commission services 2nd European Demography Report *Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society*¹.

Many fear that this accelerated ageing of Europe's societies could lead to the older generations becoming too heavy a burden on younger, working-age people and that this could result in tensions between the generations. This view neglects, however, the significant actual and potential contribution that older people and the baby-boom cohorts in particular, can make to society. This potential has been highlighted in a Council resolution on the contribution of older people to social and economic development which was adopted on 22 February 2007².

A key opportunity for tackling the challenge of demographic ageing and preserving intergenerational solidarity therefore consists in ensuring that the baby-boom cohorts stay longer on the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous for longer after they will have retired. The potentials for progress are considerable:

¹ SEC (2008) 2911
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=502&newsId=419&furtherNews=yes>

² SOC 70 adopted the 22 February 2007
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st06/st06216-re01.en07.pdf>

- The employment rate of people aged 55-64 remains below the Lisbon target of 50% set at the 2001 Stockholm European Council for the year 2010; it was close to 45% in 2007, compared to 70% in Sweden and around 60% in Estonia and Denmark.
- Older people can also make a major contribution as volunteers. According to the Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), between 10-20% of people aged 50 and above are active in volunteering, but these levels vary considerably from one country to another. Yet, a Eurobarometer survey carried out in September 2008³ revealed that almost three quarters of Europeans who are not yet retired would consider participating in community work or volunteering after retirement.

In this context, it was proposed, notably at the Slovenian Presidency conference on intergenerational solidarity in April 2008, to organise a European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity⁴. Such a European Year should strengthen intergenerational solidarity by increasing the awareness of the contribution of older people to society and by spreading innovative measures which could help to mobilise the full potential of the ageing baby-boom cohorts.

Past European Years have helped to harness political support and pave the way for broader political commitments. European Years can be an effective tool in raising awareness by involving a wide range of stakeholders in public debates and the exchange of experiences on a major policy issue and by fostering synergies between various levels of intervention (EU, Member States and regional/local, social partners, civil society).

The purpose of the present consultation is to collect ideas and suggestions from the key stakeholders and experts on how to achieve the greatest possible impact with a European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in the case the Commission decides to organise such a European Year. Taking part in this consultation will offer government bodies, social partner and civil society organisations and other stakeholders as well as experts an opportunity to contribute to the design of a European Year that should produce the greatest possible positive impact on intergenerational solidarity.

The attached questionnaire is meant to help respondents in structuring their response to this consultation, and the Commission in analysing the responses. Responses should be submitted by the 31st of July 2009, preferably in English, French or German, and should not exceed eight pages.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_247_en.pdf

⁴ See Information note from the Slovenian Presidency to the EPSCO Council on the Conference on Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies (Brdo pri Kranju 27-29. April 2008) 10318/08 SOC.
http://register.consilium.europa.eu/servlet/driver?lang=FR&typ=Advanced&cmsid=639&ff_COTE_DOCUMENT=&ff_COTE_DOSSIER_INST=&ff_TITRE=intergenerational+solidarity&ff_FT_TEXT=&ff_SOUS_COTE_MATIERE=&dd_DATE_DOCUMENT=&dd_DATE_REUNION=&dd_FT_DATE=&fc=REGAISEN&srm=25&md=100&ssf=DATE_DOCUMENT+DESC&rc=1&nr=2&page=Detail