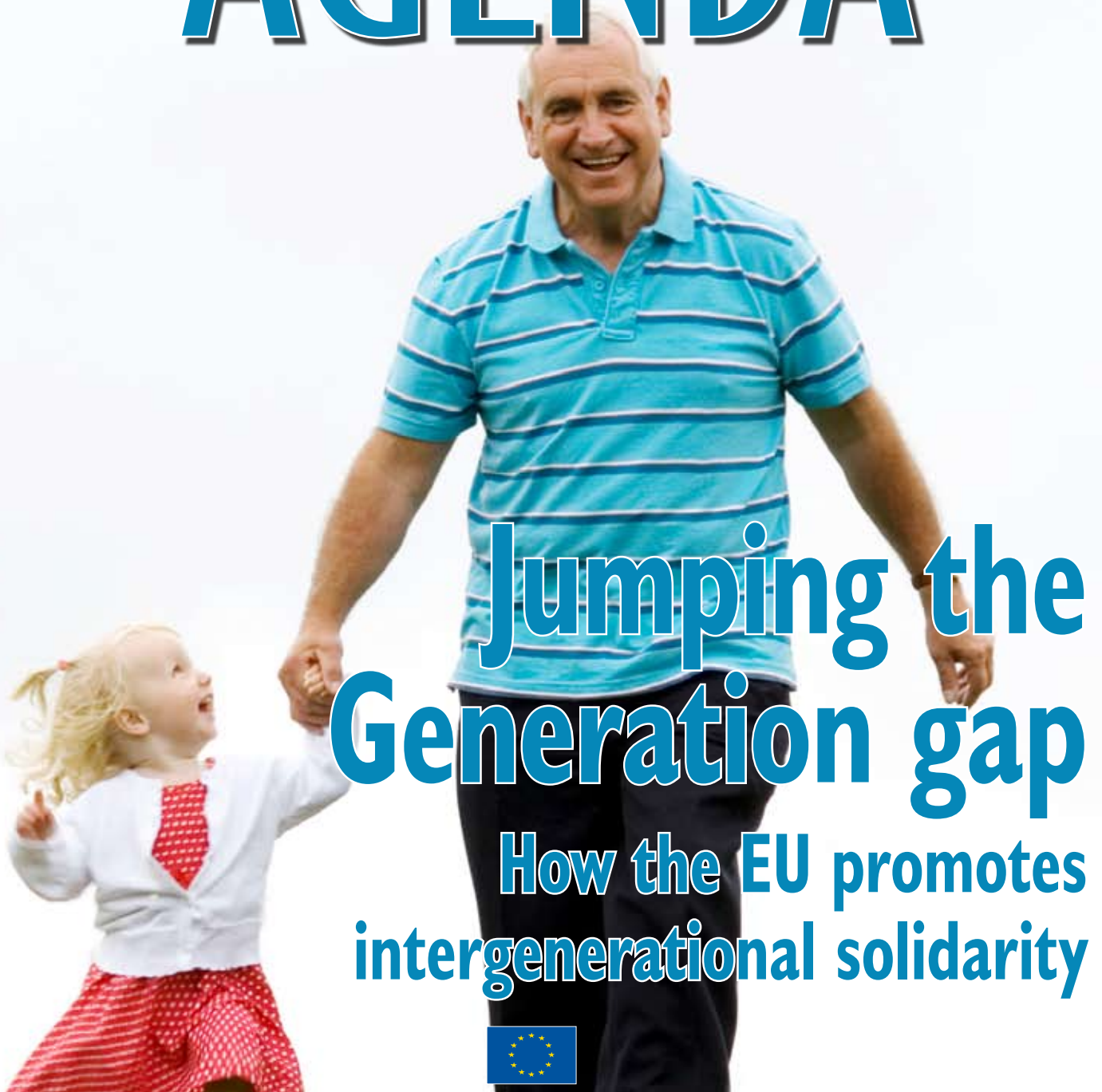


SOCIAL AGENDA



Jumping the
Generation gap
How the EU promotes
intergenerational solidarity



Older people are a large and growing section of the European Union's population.

However, the context of demographic ageing often gives rise to a negative narrative about older people being a growing burden to society. The notion of a demographic time-bomb is regularly heard and it is common for commentary on ageing to focus negatively on the challenges this poses to the age structure of the labour force, to old age dependency ratios and to the high costs of pensions and health care provision. Such negative perceptions fail to acknowledge the enormous cultural, social and professional resource represented by older people. Their ongoing contribution to society, often in an unpaid capacity, is too often overlooked, and their potential for wider involvement and contribution left untapped. Solidarity between the young, the active and the elderly cannot be approached solely from a financial perspective. It must encompass the promotion of mutual cooperation and exchange between the generations. It must also encourage a better mutual understanding of the needs and expectations of other age groups and explore new forms of coexistence. The way in which our society is organised must be reviewed in order to rebuild the social fabric and the links between and within the different generations so that all can find the place that suits them where they can flourish and make their contribution to the general well-being as best they can.

“Solidarity between generations has long been high on the EU agenda, both in terms of policy-making and of awareness-raising.”

arising from the shift towards demographic ageing. We report in more detail on the views and concerns of

Solidarity between generations has long been high on the EU agenda, both in terms of policy-making and of awareness-raising. The Commission wholeheartedly endorsed the first European Day of Solidarity between Generations – an initiative of civil society organisations – which took place on 29 April 2009. To mark the event, it carried out a flash Eurobarometer survey. The findings shed an interesting light on citizens' perceptions on the relationship between young and old, on the contribution older people make to society, and on the role of public authorities in fostering intergenerational solidarity.

In this issue's "special feature", which begins on page 15, we examine the new challenges and opportunities

European citizens on the relations between generations in an ageing society, and we examine the many ways in which older people contribute to social cohesion through volunteer work.

In our regular interview former Director General of DG Employment Nikolaus G. van der Pas looks back on his four years at the helm of the Directorate-General, while in the "Other Voices" feature on page 26 Anne Sophie Parent, director of AGE, the older people platform, explains why we need a European Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012.

Robert Verrue
Director-General of DG Employment,
Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

Special feature



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Intergenerational solidarity

The debate on intergenerational solidarity cannot and should not be restricted to the economic and financial aspects of demographic ageing. The wider implications for society need to be recognized and used to the best advantage of all.

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Employment



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The creation of green jobs addresses many of the key problems currently facing the EU: unemployment, the recession, the environmental crisis and climate change, and dependence on oil imports.

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Discrimination



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Women belonging to ethnic minorities and in particular Roma women experience a greater social exclusion compared to men from their own community and to women of the majority society, a new study finds.

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As Europe seeks to cut greenhouse gas emissions and develop new clean technologies, more and more people could find themselves picking up a "green" paycheck

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GENERAL

- 5 May



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Commissioners Vladimír Špidla (Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities) and Danuta Hübner (Regional Policy) welcomed the finalization of an agreement by the Council and European Parliament in support of the Cohesion Policy package in response to the economic crisis. The comprehensive package includes a battery of measures, ranging from a massive cash injection in the form of additional advance payments from the Structural Funds to fast-track procedures to accelerate project implementation and the possibility for the EU to co-finance energy-efficiency improvements in housing. Member States have already received an additional €6.25 billion in advance payments - €4.5 bn from the European Regional Development Fund was paid out in mid-April, with a further €1.5 bn from the European Social Fund (ESF) soon after. The aim of this cash injection in the 27 Member States is to stimulate project implementation and help protect and create new jobs.

EMPLOYMENT AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

- 10 June

Latest data covering the period up to May 2009 show that, in the wake of the economic downturn, EU labour markets

continue to deteriorate. Unemployment is rising, job vacancies are still falling and companies continue to announce substantial job reductions across several sectors. However, while the outlook for the coming months remains bleak, there are some tentative signs that the pace of deterioration may be moderating. The number of announced job losses observed in April-May has halved compared to the preceding months. Economic sentiment including firms' employment expectations and consumers' unemployment expectations, although it remains pessimistic, improved after deteriorating for more than two years.

- 7 May



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A special Summit dedicated to employment took place in Prague. The Member States of the Troika (the Czech Republic, Sweden and Spain), together with President Barroso, Commissioner Špidla and the social partners discussed the consequences of the crisis on employment. They identified practical ways to keep people in jobs and to get those who have lost their jobs back into work as quickly as possible. They also discussed how coordinated action at European level can best complement actions being taken at national level, and how to make the best use of the tools and resources at European level including the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Fund.

- 5 May

The Council adopted a regulation facilitating access to grants co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to mitigate the social impact of

the financial crisis. The main objective of the new regulation is to simplify the management, administration and control of ESF operations by simplifying the justification of indirect costs (i.e. costs which are not directly linked to the project, but which are necessary for its implementation such as phone or electricity costs) and reducing the workload and number of supporting documents required to justify expenditure. The Council also decided to extend the scope of the ESF regulation to three additional forms of eligible costs: indirect costs, declared on a flat-rate basis, of up to 20% of the direct costs of an operation; flat-rate costs calculated by the application of standard scales of unit cost as defined by the member states, and to lump sums to cover all or part of the costs of an operation, within a limit of €50 000. The new rules will apply retroactively from 1 August 2006.

WORK ORGANISATION, WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

- 24 June



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The European Commission has approved two applications for assistance from the European Globalisation adjustment Fund (EGF) from Spain and Portugal to help workers in the textile sector. The applications will now be sent to the European Parliament and Council for decision. For Spain, the €3.3 million requested will help

1 100 redundant workers back into employment. Portugal would receive €832 800 to help 1 504 redundant workers. The Spanish application relates to 1 720 redundancies in 46 small- and medium-sized enterprises in Cataluña. The funding will help the 1 100 most disadvantaged of these redundant workers back into employment. The total estimated cost of the package of EGF assistance for the textile workers of Cataluña, which will include career guidance, vocational training, support for entrepreneurship and skills recognition and certification for the redundant workers is €6.6 million, of which the European Globalisation adjustment Fund has been asked to fund €3.3 million. The Portuguese application concerns workers made redundant in 49 small- and medium-sized enterprises in the two neighbouring regions of Norte and Centro. The northern region of Portugal is the most specialised in the EU in the textile and clothing sector. In terms of employment in this region, the sector represents over 14% of the total labour force. In the Centro region, the textile and clothing industries represent 15% of industrial employment. The total estimated cost of the package of EGF assistance, which will include career guidance, vocational training, support for entrepreneurship and skills recognition and certification for the redundant workers is €1.6 million, of which the European Globalisation adjustment Fund has been asked to fund €832 800. Following the end of the World Trade Organisation Multi-Fibre Arrangement at the end of 2004, imports of textile and clothing articles into the EU from lower-cost countries almost doubled. EU producers, including those in Spain and Portugal, were faced with a very competitive market. In addition, much of the production has been relocated from the EU to low-cost countries (China and India in particular).

- 24 April

The Council has formally adopted a directive aimed at improving the functioning of European Works

Councils (EWC), by enabling them to fully play their role in the anticipation and proper management of change and in developing genuine cross-border social dialogue. The EWC directive establishes a right for workers in large scale companies (with more than 1 000 workers in at least two Member States) to transnational information and consultation of the workforce on the progress of the business and any significant changes envisaged. EWC's currently operate in 820 major companies across the EU, covering some 14.5 million employees.



PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

- 15-16 May

People living in situations of poverty and social exclusion in all EU countries met in Brussels to debate and report to EU and national policy makers how housing, financial inclusion and access to basic services policies could meet their expectations. The meeting was organised jointly by the Czech Presidency of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Anti-Poverty Network. The basic purpose of the Meetings of People experiencing poverty is to listen to people experiencing poverty, and to establish a dialogue with policy- and decision-makers in the field of fight

against poverty and social exclusion at the European level and at national levels. They are also about stimulating activities and initiatives including marginal groups into the processes of seeking solutions and building strategies and policies to improve their lives.

- 29 April

The Belgian and Danish Governments have decided to open their labour markets to workers from eight EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe for the third and final phase of the transitional arrangements from 1 May 2009. Germany and Austria have informed the Commission that they intend to continue to apply transitional measures on labour market access until 30 April 2011. The United Kingdom continues to apply its Workers Registration Scheme. Denmark will also open its labour market to workers from Bulgaria and Romania. 1 May 2009 marks the beginning of the final two years of transitional arrangements that allow EU countries to restrict the free movement of workers from eight of the ten states that joined the EU in 2004. The transitional arrangements apply for a total period of seven years and started on 1 May 2004. Unless a Member State communicates to the Commission that it is experiencing a serious disturbance of its labour market, or threat thereof, the transitional measures end on 30 April 2009 and Community law on free movement of workers applies (in other words, no restrictions apply). Belgium and Denmark have now decided to end restrictions for workers from the EU-8 Member States; in Denmark the labour market will also be open to workers from Bulgaria and Romania. Five years after accession, only Germany and Austria have requested that workers from the EU-8 Member States continue to apply for a work permit before taking up employment. The Commission is currently examining their notifications. This will take several weeks. In the United Kingdom, EU-8 workers have to register with the Workers Registration Scheme within

30 days of commencing employment. The transitional measures will end on 30 April 2011 at the latest when all Member States must apply Community law on free movement for workers from the EU-8 Member States.

GENDER EQUALITY

- 18 June

The European social partners signed a revised Framework Agreement increasing the duration of parental leave from three to four months per parent. The Agreement applies to all employees regardless of their type of contract. It is the result of six months' negotiations between the European social partners (ETUC, BUSINESS-EUROPE, CEEP and UEAPME) and reflects the changes that have occurred in society and on the labour market since the first Framework Agreement on parental leave was signed in 1995.

- 14 May

The Commission referred Poland to the European Court of Justice for non-transposition of EU rules prohibiting gender discrimination in access to and supply of goods and services. Poland has not yet adopted the necessary measures to give effect to the legislation in national law, despite a 'Reasoned Opinion' (second stage warning) sent by the Commission in 2008.

The EU rules ban sex discrimination outside the workplace and prohibit direct and indirect discrimination based on sex, as well as sexual harassment. They apply to goods and services offered to the public, outside the area of private and family life, such as transport, housing, banking and insurance.

- 3 March

The European Commission has launched an EU-wide campaign to help tackle the gender pay gap. Across the EU economy, women earn on average 17.4% less than men. The

Is our work
valued the same?



simple concept of 'equal pay for work of equal value' is at the heart of the campaign, launched in the context of International Women's Day on 8 March to raise awareness of the pay gap, its causes, and how to tackle it. To reach out to citizens, employers and workers, the campaign will promote good practices on the pay gap from around Europe and distribute a campaign toolbox for employers and trade unions at European and at national level. Other activities include the campaign website, advertising in European press and a poster campaign.

The 2009 report on equality between women and men presented by the European Commission on the same day, confirms that despite some progress on gender equality, significant gaps still remain in several areas. While the employment rate of women has been steadily rising over the last years (now 58.3% for women against 72.5% for men), women still work part-time more often than men (31.2% for women and 7.7% for men) and they predominate in sectors where wages are lower (more than 40% of women work in health, education and public administration – twice as many as men). However, women represent 59% of all new university graduates.

- 26 March

The European Court of Justice ruled against Greece for providing that public sector employees are entitled to receive old age pensions at different ages depending on the circumstances and on whether they are male or female, and for providing differences in minimum service requirements. As a general result of these differences, Greek law imposes less favourable conditions on men for obtaining a pension than on women, the Court found.

INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES

- 20 March

The European Commission has published two studies looking at how the EU's external assistance programmes promote employment and decent work. The first takes on board evidence from experiences in 30 countries, 10 of which are analysed in depth: Mexico, Kenya, Vietnam, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Bangladesh, Syria, Zambia and Honduras. It follows on from a 2006 Commission Communication that set out the EU's contribution to the international decent work agenda. The Commission has been working closely with the International Labour Organisation and other international partners to promote decent work. The second study looks at EU Member States' bilateral co-operation on employment and decent work. The study identified and analysed 620 recent projects with ten partner countries: India, China, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Russia, Indonesia, Ukraine, Morocco and South Africa. The study draws out key trends and aims to support the further development of dialogue and co-operation activities between the EU and the selected partner countries, with a view to enhancing synergies between EU level activities and those of Member States and international organisations.



Green jobs for a greener economy

The creation of green jobs addresses many of the key problems currently facing the EU: unemployment, the recession, the environmental crisis and climate change, and dependence on oil imports. The latest Restructuring Forum looked into the issue

As a prelude to the EU's 2009 Green Week, the European commission devoted the latest edition of the Restructuring Forum (22 and 23 June) to the impact of climate change on employment. Around 300 delegates from trade unions, employers and governments as well as experts analysed the ways in which climate change policies will affect the labour market and what can be done to smooth the transition to a low-carbon economy. They addressed issues such as how many jobs will be lost and how many created due to climate change; how skills and qualifications will have to evolve; and what role the social partners can play to help.

Climate change policies affect an ever-increasing share of the economy.

Brown jobs may be lost, and green jobs created, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. Reducing the carbon footprint of the economy means that the vast majority of employees will be affected one way or the other. Mostly, they will have to learn green skills in order to do the same jobs with less CO₂.

The Restructuring Forum looked at job creation, in the various renewable energy sectors or resulting from improved building insulation. For instance, a recent study by the European Commission put the net number of jobs created by reaching the target of 20% for the share of renewables in energy use in 2020 at 410 000. It also looked at job losses, for example in energy-

intensive industries or in relation to international competition.

Moreover, it analysed how jobs which are neither lost nor created will need to adapt, particularly in terms of skills and qualifications required from employees. To do this, the Forum addressed issues such as research and training needs, the potential for job transformation by the employees themselves, and regional aspects.

Finally, the Forum discussed how the social partner organisations, i.e. employers and trade unions, can work together to ensure that the economy will not be more disrupted than necessary.



The wind energy sector alone employs over 150 000 people across Europe

as well as to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although renewables currently account for a small part of all green jobs, the sector has a high potential for job creation. In 2005, the renewable energy sector employed 1.4 million people across the EU, i.e. 0.7 % of the total EU workforce, and generated € 58bn of value added (0.6 % of EU GDP). EMPLOYRES, a recent research project supported by the European Commission, found that under current policies, total employment in the sector would amount to roughly 2.3 million jobs in 2020 and 2.8 million jobs if accelerated deployment policies were to be implemented, namely in the framework of the new directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. In other words, by increasing the yearly capital expenditures for new renewables by 50 %, the sector's current employment figures would virtually double. Skilled jobs are expected to account for about a third of the net employment growth. In this context, Germany's renewables industry recently expressed concerns about companies suffering from a shortage of qualified employees, and especially those needed in knowledge-intensive positions. So did organisations in other EU countries, including the Confedera-

According to the official definition, green jobs are those that contribute appreciably to maintaining or restoring environmental quality and avoiding future damage to the Earth's ecosystems. Such jobs can be found in sectors ranging from agriculture through manufacturing, construction and transport, as well as scientific, technical, administrative, and service-related activities. They include jobs that reduce energy and water consumption through high-efficiency strategies, help develop a low-carbon economy and minimise the generation of all forms of pollution. Even considering only a very narrow definition of green jobs in 'eco-industries' (those mainly active in pollution prevention and treatment), this sector employed 2.3 million workers across the European Union (EU) in 2005. Using a broad definition, which also takes into account activities closely dependent on a good quality environment (e.g. environment-related tourism, sustainable forestry, organic agriculture and renewable energy, all agriculture and renewable energy sources as a whole, etc.), then green jobs accounted for 21 million workers in the same year, equivalent to no less than 10 % of the EU's workforce.

Renewables sector: the future is bright

Renewable sources of energy include wind, solar (photovoltaic, or PV, and thermal), hydro-electric and tidal power, as well as geothermal energy and biomass. They form an essential alternative to fossil fuels and contribute to increasing the security of energy supply

Effects at national level: the case of Germany

Germany is a recognised leader in renewables development. The country's share of the world market for renewables production equipment and components was 17 % in 2004. Roughly one in three of every wind turbine and solar photovoltaic cell in the world is German-made (2006 data). Some 20 000 companies - many of them small and medium-sized - can be found in the renewables sector, half of them in solar energy, about 5 000 in biomass, 3 500 in wind power and 500 in the geothermal field.

According to detailed studies commissioned by the German environment ministry (BMU), Germany currently

has 250 000 jobs related to renewables, while workers in environmental protection total 1.8 million. Deputy economy minister Astrid Klug has said the number of jobs in renewables will triple by 2020 and reach 900 000 by 2030, in the wake of Germany's twin € 80bn stimulus package, which combines tax cuts with infrastructure investments focusing on climate protection and energy efficiency. In a shorter-term perspective, the government recently announced that strong growth in Germany's renewable energy sector along with increased state spending for environmental protection could help shorten the recession.

tion of British Industry, referring to the case of sectors going green which are struggling to find technical specialists, designers, engineers and electricians. In coming decades, this ambitious policy, which involves, among other things, efforts on the part of national governments, the European Investment Bank and the creation of a new 2020 Fund for Energy, Climate Change and Infrastructure, can be expected to create a large number of new jobs.

The EU leading the way

The European Union has been at the forefront of renewables development over the last decade. In 1997, it adopted a goal of doubling the share of renewable energy to 12 % by 2010. In 2001, the EU's Renewable Electricity Directive set a goal of increasing the share of renewables in electricity generation from 14 % in 1997 to 21 % by 2010. The new directive on renewables sets legally binding targets for all Member States and stimulates them to reach a share of 20 % of energy from renewable sources by 2020, against 8.5 % in 2005. These efforts are supported by the ongoing European Economic Recovery Plan, which puts a particular emphasis on speeding up the shift towards a low carbon economy, in order to limit climate change, and on promoting energy security. This strategy encourages innovative technologies, "greening" of EU investment, and consequently the creation of so-called "green collar jobs". However, according to the European Restructuring Monitor, whereas most surveyed restructuring cases relating to green jobs involved business expansion in 2007 and in the three first quarters of 2008, recent cases suggest that the economic downturn is also having some impact on the renewables sector. Still, growth appears robust in specific sub-sectors, such as biofuels (4 000 new jobs at Cargill in France at the end of last year) and solar cell manufacturing (1 100 jobs to be created at Bosch and Ersol Solar Energy in Germany by 2010).



Traditional jobs will have to adapt to a low-carbon economy

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From wind to sun

Wind, together with biomass and hydropower, is the renewables sector which employs the most people. A recent study by the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA) revealed that the wind energy sector alone now employs 154 000 people across Europe. Of this total, turbine and component manufacturing account for 59 % of direct employment, wind farm development for 16 % and installation operation and maintenance for 11 %. Utilities and power providers account for a further 9 %, while consultants and research and development make up 4 %.

Germany, Denmark and Spain account for close to 75 % of all wind energy jobs in Europe. Germany (which produces 7 % of its electricity from wind power and has produced more than half of the onshore wind turbines installed in the EU) is the leader in wind energy employment, accounting for nearly 38 000 direct jobs, rising to 84 300 if indirect employment is included. The country with the second highest number of wind energy jobs (23 500 people employed directly) is Denmark, which benefits from its position as a wind energy pioneer and global manufacturing hub. With Germany, Denmark leads the world in turbine production, accounting for around 29 % of all the turbines installed worldwide in 2007, while Danish offshore wind capacity remains the highest per capita in Europe. Spain too has seen a significant jobs boost from its wind energy sector,

which directly employs nearly 21 000 people. France and the UK rank fourth and fifth, with 7 000 and 4 000 direct jobs respectively, followed by Greece and Ireland, with 1 800 and 1 500 jobs respectively.

According to the EWEA, current levels of employment are only a fraction of what can be expected in coming years. In 2008, wind power became the largest source of renewable energy in Europe. The EWEA forecasts a growth in Europe's total installed capacity from 64 GW in 2008 to 180 GW in 2020 and 300 GW by 2030. EWEA estimates that by 2020, direct employment in the wind power sector will have more than doubled to 330 000 people. Up until 2025, EWEA estimates that onshore wind will continue to account for the largest share of this employment market, but after this, offshore could become dominant. Between 1990 and 2000, among all renewables, wind energy had the highest annual growth rate (39.8 % in terms of EU-27 primary renewable energy consumption. Between 2000 and 2005 though, it has been outstripped by PV solar sources, a more recent technology, which enjoyed a 66.5 % annual growth rate while wind energy's annual expansion declined to 26 %, which nevertheless remains remarkable for this long-established and relatively cheap technology. The findings of the Employ-RES study confirm that such a strong increase in wind power, as well as PV and thermal solar technologies, could significantly contribute to raising employment in the future.

ESF in the United Kingdom – promoting green tourism



The tiny 17th century chapel at Lagness, near Chichester on the south coast of England, looks over rolling hills, wide pastures and distant horizons. It now houses four comfortable double bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. Sandra Barnes-Keywood and her husband Charles have lovingly restored the former ruin as the centrepiece of the bed and breakfast business they opened eight years ago.

Little did they know then that a training programme co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund (ESF) would set Sandra on the road to becoming an award-winning pioneer in 'green tourism' and a recognised "maker and shaker" in promoting environmental business practices.

Sandra was born in west London. But she always loved the country life, and set her heart on moving to Chichester. With a Higher National Diploma (HND) qualification in hotel catering and management, Sandra bought a run-down public house and turned it into a restaurant. However, after the couple's daughter Jasmine was born 16 years ago, the long hours proved too hard to combine with childcare, and they sold up. "When Jasmine was about eight I decided I really wanted to get back into the hospitality business," recalls Sandra, and a B&B seemed a flexible solution.

As a qualified restaurateur, she was sceptical about the value of further training. But then an outbreak of foot and mouth disease among cattle in the UK left many small, rural businesses struggling. With ESF support, Tourism South East launched its Rural Welcome scheme and in 2004 Sandra signed up. "I was really surprised," she admits. "I realised you never stop learning in life." It showed her that while she was already running the B&B on environmental lines, she wasn't getting the message across to her visitors, and that highlighting her green ideals could make a huge difference. "I had a story to tell, but no-one was hearing it," she says.

The course gave Sandra the boost she needed. "That training changed my career. I never looked back. Now I have got the tools to do what I want to do and I feel confident. I don't feel like that little housewife who gave up work. It has helped me to get my life back on track.

"We are completely involved in the environment," continues Sandra. "We believe that green tourism is a philosophy, not a product." She grows her own fruit, to put in guests' rooms or make jams for breakfast. She buys organic produce from local farm shops, and makes her own natural cleaning materials. She encourages guests not to waste power or water,

cutting the laundering of towels by 43%. All 'grey' wastewater is recycled for the garden. Solar panels heat the water, and 'light tubes' funnel daylight into windowless bathrooms.

Sandra's work has won her wide recognition. Old Chapel Forge has a gold rating from the Green Tourism Business Scheme, the UK's leading sustainable tourism certification scheme. "That gave me credibility, because I had been independently assessed. I became a business champion for the UK, helping others to get accredited. But I realised the advice on offer was outdated, so I wrote my own training programme." Now through her Green Training Company she assists regional departments and tourist organisations around Britain. Among a series of awards, Sandra and Charles won a Green Apple Award for architecture in 2006, for their environmentally friendly chapel renovation, Arun Business of the Year Award in 2007, and the Sussex Sustainable Business Award in 2007-8.

"The Rural Welcome project was very successful," confirms Sue Gill, from Tourism South East. The organisers hoped to reach 485 small businesses, and ended up with 622. More than 350 participants went on to further training. "It was something they needed," she concludes.



The European Health Insurance Card: don't leave home without it

As the holiday season approaches, the European Commission seeks to increase the knowledge and use of the European Health Insurance Card amongst citizens

“Europe” is often perceived as being removed from its citizens' daily life and concerns. But it is thanks to Europe that its citizens can enjoy the same treatment as the residents of the country they are visiting, should they need health care while travelling in Europe. The European Health Insurance Card (also known as EHIC) was introduced 5 years ago, and its implementation has proved to be a success. More than one third of the European population already has their EHIC, that is, over 180 million people. A Belgian family spending their summer holidays in the South of France? A British businessman going for a two-day seminar in Milan? A Polish student going to spend a semester in Barcelona? All these people can benefit from carrying a European Health Insurance card.

Between June 2004 and December 2005 the EHIC was progressively introduced to replace the previous paper form called

“E111”. The EHIC makes it easy for cardholders to get the medical care they need if they become sick or injured while temporarily visiting one of the 31 participating countries.

The card is most widely held in Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Austria where respectively 99%, 96% and 96% of the population have an EHIC. These high circulation rates can be explained by the fact that the EHIC is on the reverse side of those countries' national health care cards: so for these residents, receipt of the EHIC is automatic.

Statistics show that usage of the EHIC card has also increased every year, another indication that the initiative is working. The continuing rise in the number of cards in circulation and the increased usage figures together indicate that people are becoming more and more familiar with the advantages of the card.

The common European design of the card itself is one of the reasons the card is a success. To help ensure that health-care providers can easily recognise the European Health Insurance Card, a uniform design is used by all participating countries. The same data is always in the same position on the card, and this minimises the chance for confusing information – particularly when considering language differences. The only difference is the length of validity: it is up to each Member State to decide how long the card is valid for.

However, the card and its advantages are still not known widely enough, by citizens and health professionals alike. As the holiday season approaches and many people prepare to travel to other European Union countries, the Commission has launched a campaign on the European Health Insurance Card, to increase awareness of the card and its benefits among citizens.

While European citizens enjoy free movement between Member States, they are not always aware that they derive the EHIC benefits from the same core idea: free movement and non-discrimination on the basis of nationality. This right already existed in the Treaty of Rome, with free movement of workers as one of the four pillars. The EHIC thus constitutes the perfect example of the implementation of a fundamental right in very concrete terms, in everyday life.

This campaign is a targeted one. With a rather limited budget, it focuses on tourism or health related events and media. It started with advertising on internet in January, just before the peak of the skiing season, when precisely so many tourists travel to the Alps or other European countries to find snow. It is developing in spring and summer 2009 with further advertising, press releases, publications such as leaflets, postcards and posters, partnerships in the field of tourism or health care providers. All these lead to a new website, with easy-accessible information available in all EU official languages.

Beyond the EHIC, this campaign highlights the benefits of the coordination of social security schemes. This long-standing coordination has ensured over the last decades that people do not lose their social security rights when moving within Europe. A modernised coordination will enter into force next year.

While the principles of social security coordination remain the same (equality of treatment regardless of nationality; aggregation of insurance acquired in different Member States; the possibility of exporting most types of benefit; and the requirement that the legislation of only one Member States can apply to a person at a time), the focus of the modernisation process is on improving institutional procedures, and so protecting citizens' rights more effectively under the Regulations.

The driving force of the new system is enhanced administrative cooperation between various Member State authorities, between Member States and social security institutions, between various social security institutions, and between the citizen and the institutions, thanks to the

introduction of a new system of electronic data exchange, known as "EESSI".

After the campaign on the EHIC in 2009, a wider campaign on how the modernised coordination system will affect people will start in 2010.

The European Health Insurance Card at a glance



How does it work?

Whether you travel for business, pleasure or to study abroad, you may need medical care during this stay in another country. The EHIC, which is free of charge, makes visiting a state-run hospital, doctor's surgery or pharmacy easy and means you will be treated in the same way as someone who lives in that country.

Who is covered?

Anyone who is insured by or covered by a State social security system of one of the 27 EU Member States or of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

Each member of the family needs a separate card, including children.

Where can you benefit from the EHIC?

In state-run hospitals, doctors' surgeries or pharmacies. The underlying principle being that you are treated in the same way as the residents of the country you are visiting, you can benefit from the EHIC in the same situations: a public hospital of course, a doctors' surgery linked to the State health system - which in most countries includes dental practices - and pharmacies.

What exactly is covered?

The EHIC gives access to treatment that is necessary during the stay in order to enable the insured person to continue their stay under safe medical conditions and not to be forced to return before the end of the planned duration of stay to their State to obtain the treatment they requires. In the case of posted workers, or students studying abroad, the period can be relatively long, and the range of treatment accessible may be more extensive than for a tourist staying only a few days.

What is not covered?

The EHIC does not cover private healthcare or repatriation costs, for example if you need to return home by air ambulance. Nor does it cover situations in which you are going abroad specifically to receive medical treatment (in this case, you need an authorization from your health insurance institution).

Where can you get your EHIC?

You can get you EHIC free of charge by contacting your health insurance institution as each individual country is responsible for producing and distributing the card in its own territory.



How the gender pay gap affects women's pensions

Women's weak position on the labour market means not only that they earn less than their male counterparts, but that once they retire, their pensions will be significantly lower, too

Across the EU women over 65 face a higher risk of poverty compared with men. The figure stands at 22% versus 16% for men (2007). There are several underlying factors to explain this difference.

Chief amongst them is the problem of the gender pay gap: women currently earn around 17% less than men for every hour worked. The pay gap is linked to a number of legal, social and economic factors, often interrelated. Its persistence results from direct discrimination on the labour market and structural inequalities, such as access to education and training, sectoral and occupational segregation, biased job evaluation and pay systems and the under-valorisation of female dominated jobs. But even those women who do not earn less than their male

colleagues face other challenges to their career development, notably due to their role in childcare and care for dependants. In fact it is mainly women who interrupt their career for caring purposes and even when they come back to work, they have greater recourse to part-time work in order to combine it with their family responsibilities.

Financially less rewarding careers and longer interruptions from their work are significant factors contributing to women's lower pension entitlement. All Member States try to correct the insufficient pension accrual of women by applying specific measures in their pension systems, such as the equalization of the retirement age for women and men, benefits in the case of divorce, survivor's pensions or minimum

guarantee pension schemes, which can have a positive effect on improving the situation of women.

The emphasis on strengthening the link between contributions and benefits in the reform of many European pension schemes, however, may have a specific impact on women's pension entitlements, if labour market inequalities persist. Generally speaking, longer contributory periods needed for a full pension have redistributive effects that are often to the advantage of women, who often tend to have longer and flatter income careers as opposed to those with shorter steep income careers who tend to benefit from shorter contributory periods. From a legal point of view, EU law forbids provisions contrary to the principle of equal treatment. These provisions include those based on sex, either directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to marital or family status for fixing different retirement ages. This means that the obligation for women to work as long as men will permit them to reach a better level of pension benefits.

At the same time, if contributory periods are to be extended it is also important to consider the protection for periods of family-related career breaks in the pension system. This is especially important for women who tend to have a weaker link to the labour market and also tend to take on a majority of the care responsibilities.

Finally, the weak position of women on the labour market can be intensified given the current economic situation and high unemployment. Women are more often engaged in part time and non-permanent work contracts, making their situation more vulnerable. It is therefore important that Member States consider their protection during unemployment and subsequently in the pension schemes for those with atypical career patterns and work contracts. This is especially important in Member States where a substantial part of social security and pensions rely on occupational schemes, as those with atypical contracts may not be covered by such schemes.



ESF in Austria – valuing experience

“There’s a feeling that once you get older, employers don’t need you any more. We have the ability, but we’re just too old and too expensive.”

If there’s a hint of bitterness in 55-year-old Roswitha Kerbel’s voice, it is easy to understand. For a woman with a wide range of qualifications who has spent much of her life pursuing a high-powered career in publishing, suddenly finding yourself unemployable when you know you want to work is deeply frustrating. In her early 50s, she spent four years hunting for a job in Vienna, Austria, without a suitable offer. “I got a lot of refusals,” she recalls. “I got very discouraged. You start to feel old and worthless.”

Finally, her job centre suggested she should contact Initiative 50, a scheme funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund and designed to put older workers in touch with employers who recognise their value. In January 2008 they suggested she should send her CV to Licht ins Dunkel (Light in the Darkness), a popular Vienna-based charity organisation that works with Austrian TV and celebrities to raise money for needy families. The organisation called her to interview, and within an hour Roswitha was offered a job.

Roswitha was born in Graz in Austria, but moved to Stuttgart in Germany at the age of six, where she grew up and studied. She qualified in librarianship before obtaining extra skills in economics and information technology and moving into publishing.

When her first marriage ended in divorce, she moved back to Austria in 1993, where she met her second husband Michael Estl. Roswitha felt the time had come for a change in her life. “My first marriage broke down because I was so busy in my job,” she recalls. “I was away from home for too long and it was too tiring. I didn’t want the same thing to happen again.”

At that time, Roswitha also needed flexibility to care for her elderly father – every two or three weeks she travelled back to Stuttgart where her parents still lived – and for her mother-in-law in Vienna. She gave up her job in publishing and started to look around for a new career direction. Initially she took a one-year training course in landscape gardening, followed by employment in the Vienna Woods nature park. She was responsible for planning events and excursions for groups of visitors, as well as accounting and adminis-

tration, but the post did not last. “I would have loved to get a permanent job, but I was too old.”

Roswitha says she started to become aware of the age discrimination problem some 10 years ago. She puts it down to the higher cost of social insurance that employers pay for older staff. “There’s a lot of pressure, because there are not that many jobs on the market, so companies offer work to the cheaper staff,” she argues.

Yet Initiative 50 has given Roswitha another new start. She has been working full-time for Licht ins Dunkel since February 2008. The scheme pays participants’ salaries for the first three months, giving employers an additional incentive to hire. She admits that office administration is not her ‘dream’ job, and it could be more interesting. “But at my age I don’t want to have all that responsibility any more,” she explains. “I want to take life easier. It’s a difficult situation, and I appreciate the opportunity to have a job again. I’m not a typical housewife. I like working very much, and I enjoy being with my colleagues. And I’m glad to be able to earn my own income because I like to be financially independent.”



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Jumping the generation gap: how the EU promotes intergenerational solidarity

As Europe's populations became increasingly "old", the issue of intergenerational solidarity has been steadily climbing up the political agenda. It is clear that a drastic shift in balance between young and old will require a comprehensive assessment and a reworking of our economic and social policy framework. How to ensure pensions remain sustainable in spite of a shrinking workforce and growing numbers of healthy long-lived pensioners is probably the most quoted example, often used to evoke negative images of an impending intergenerational conflict. However, the debate on intergenerational solidarity cannot and should not be restricted to the economic and financial aspects of demographic ageing. The wider

implications for society need to be recognized and used to the best advantage of all.

In this respect, European citizens seem to be ahead of their own governments. A Eurobarometer survey published on the first International day of Solidarity between generations on 29 April shows that far from considering older people a burden to society, EU citizens of all ages recognized and valued their contribution to society in its many forms. And while some concerns were voiced about the affordability of pensions and the availability of jobs for the young, most people credited the old with being prepared to accept the need for major pension reform.

Although national governments retain responsibility for policies in this area, from employment and pensions to the provision of social services, the European Union has been playing a major role in initiating and maintaining debate on new forms of solidarity between young and old as well as promoting the exchange of ideas and best practice among member States. The Commission first presented its views on the demographic challenge and the best ways for tackling them in its Communication "The Demographic Future of Europe – from Challenge to Opportunity" adopted in October 2006 following a major public debate launched the year before by the Green Paper "Confronting Demographic Change: a new solidarity between the generations". Since then, every two years the Commission has been publishing a European Demography Report presenting its assessment of the demographic situation and reflecting the ongoing debate and research in the EU, in conjunction with the European Demographic Forum which had its first meeting in 2006.

The EU heads of state and government decided at their Spring summit 2007 meeting the establishment of a European Alliance for Families, serving as a platform for the exchange of views and experience on family-friendly policies and good practices between Member States. The Commission set out in its Communication Promoting solidarity between generations, adopted in May 2007, how it will support the European Alliance for Families. In its Communication, the Commission highlights areas where Member States, social partners and civil society as well as the EU can play an important role in supporting the quality of life of families.

The articles you will find in the following pages look in more detail at how older people are perceived in the European Union, at the role they play within family structures and to the ways in which they contribute to social cohesion through a range of volunteer activities.



Solidarity between the young and the old – what Europeans think

Intergenerational solidarity is alive and well across the European Union – but governments need to do more to foster better relations between young and old

In spite of recurrent talk about a looming conflict between generations, the vast majority of Europeans has a generally positive image of older people. The Eurobarometer survey carried out by the European Commission to mark the first European Day of Solidarity between Generations shows that there is a solid basis of confidence and understanding between the young and the old, and that the contribution of older people to society is widely appreciated. However, there is

also a widespread feeling that governments do not do enough to foster better relations between generations and help older people remain active and autonomous, and that frail older people and carers are often let down by the system.

Across the EU as a whole, at least two-thirds of people reject the statement that older people are a burden on society: the total level of disagreement ranged from 95% in the Netherlands to 66% in Lithuania. Surprisingly,

the oldest respondents (over 64) were most likely to consider themselves as a burden: they were twice as likely as the youngest to agree that older people are a burden on society (25% vs. 12%).

This positive image of older people is also confirmed by the fact that more than two thirds of respondents do not share the view that companies which employ mostly young people perform better than those employing people from different age groups. Only in three countries (RO, CY, EL) did a majority feel that companies with young employees are doing better.

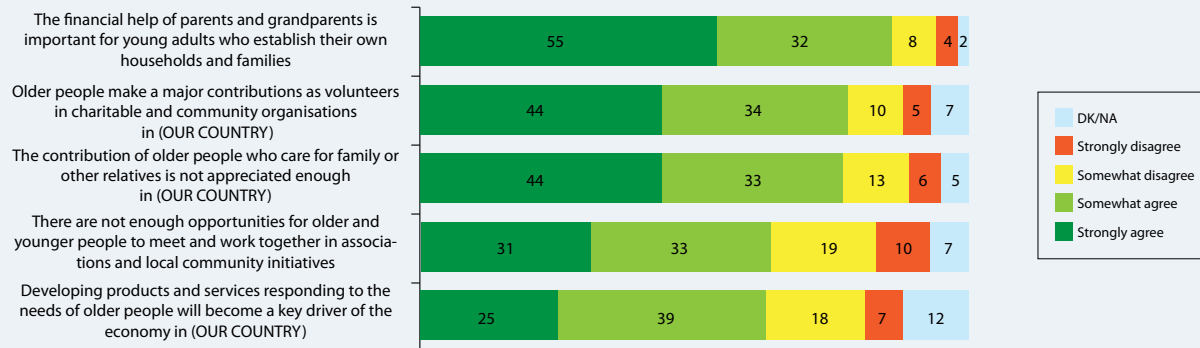
The vast majority of Europeans also believe that governments must make more money available for pensions and care for the elderly. Almost half strongly agree with this statement and another third of the population tends to agree. There are no signs of a divergence of views between young and old: total agreement with this statement amounts to 80% among the 15-24 year-olds and 85% among the over-65s.

However, more than half of Europeans also believe that governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people in the coming decades. The middle-aged tend to be most pessimistic.

On average, half of those interviewed fear that people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people. However, there are significant differences across countries, with people in Sweden and Denmark being most optimistic in this regard and the Portuguese and Germans most pessimistic.

More than two thirds of Europeans tend to believe that young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society – which won't come as a surprise to anybody who has teenage children or grandchildren. However, only a minority of Europeans expect that, because there will be more older voters, political decision-making

Perceptions regarding older people's contribution to society



Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

Base: all respondents, % EU27

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 269

will take less account of the needs of young people.

A majority of Europeans think that governments are spending too little on education and young people relative to older people (46% vs. 43% who disagree), but the difference is small. The views on this issue tend to reflect the age of the respondents, with the youngest feeling most strongly that they do not receive enough public spending. Above the age of 55, more respondents tend to reject rather than support the idea that spending on the young is too low. These results do not seem to suggest a strong divide between the generations. However, differences across countries are considerable.

It is also interesting to note that Europeans do not perceive older people as an obstacle to pension reforms necessitated by ageing. A majority of Europeans believe that older people accept the need for major pension reforms to ease the burden on working-age people (48% agree, 39% disagree). This view is most strongly held by the young (49% of people aged 15-24) and the over-55s (around 50%).

Older people contribute to society in a variety of ways: they offer help to their children and grandchildren, they work as volunteers and they support economic activity as consumers. The Eurobarometer survey found a strong recognition of these contributions, although most Europeans also feel that

the caring role of older people is not sufficiently appreciated. However, the EU averages mask considerable cross-country differences.

One important way in which the ageing baby-boomers can make a contribution to society – and to the sustainability of pensions and care systems – is by staying in employment longer than their predecessors. Most Europeans support the view that governments should make it easier for older people to continue working beyond the normal retirement age, if they wish. Support is similarly strong in all age groups.

An enhanced contribution to society through increased employment of the ageing baby boomers might be made more difficult by the fear that older workers might be taking away jobs from younger people. More than half of respondents (56%) believe that this is the case. There are significant differences across countries, but there are only four countries where most people appear to reject the idea that old and young people are competing for the same jobs.

Most Europeans do not believe that their governments are doing enough to promote a better understanding between the young and the old; indeed only 27% of respondents said that they thought their government was doing a good job. Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands and Malta were the countries where the perception of the government was most positive in this regard.

Across the EU, there is strong support for local authorities to help associations and initiatives fostering stronger relations between young and older people, for public centres where older volunteers are helped to find opportunities for volunteering matching their skills and wishes, and for schools promoting better relations between the generations.

Autonomous living is both an aspiration of older people and it prevents them from having to rely on their relatives or on expensive care institutions. A large majority of Europeans (84%) consider that many frail elderly people cannot live autonomously because homes are not adapted to their needs.

Another widely perceived problem is the lack of sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home. Only about one third of Europeans believe that there are sufficient such services in their country, compared to 59% who disagree with this view. There are only five countries where a majority of the population thinks that the supply of services is sufficient.

Support for carers is also seen as insufficient by a clear majority of respondents in all but three countries. Only one quarter of Europeans feel that people who have to care for older family members at home receive good support from social services.



All in the family

Far from being a burden for those around them, older people often provide invaluable support to family members and relatives through the provision of care as well as by helping financially

In most Member States the family continues to be the primary source of solidarity between generations. Nowhere is the contribution of older people – parents and grandparents – more appreciated. As society undergoes major transformations and new forms of family emerge (a higher number of single parent families, divorces, recomposed families, etc.) the ageing baby-boomers provide considerable informal help, notably to family members and relatives. Caring for grandchildren is the most obvious example. Without the help of grandparents, many women in Europe would be unable to go back to work, especially in those countries where childcare structures are still inadequate. According to the Survey on Health and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, which

does not cover all Member States), about two in five grandparents in the countries covered by SHARE provide care to their grandchildren, one in five grandfathers and almost one in four grandmothers almost weekly or more often. If we take a closer look at the results, it comes as no surprise that Sweden and Denmark, but also Germany and the Czech Republic, exhibit comparatively low levels of regular childcare by grandparents whereas the proportion of Greek and Italian, but also Belgian grandparents who provide almost weekly childcare is roughly twice as high as that found in the Scandinavian countries.

But the caring role of older people is not limited to looking after their grandchildren. Longer, healthier lives mean that

people can stay active longer. It also means that they often chose to delay parenthood while they complete their education and consolidate their careers. This has led to the emergence of the so-called "Sandwich Generation", a generation of middle-aged adults who are becoming increasingly caught between the dual responsibilities of caring for their own children and for aging parents or relatives. In terms of public policy, as family carers are mainly women and people over 50, two categories whose employment rates still fall short of European Union targets, improving their employment options will require new policies and resources to enable them to reconcile work and family life and promote intergenerational solidarity within today's families. To give an example, in a few Member States, parental care leave is extended to grand-parents. Another example is the carer leave that workers can take to care for a seriously ill relative. Overall however, such initiatives are still an exception, and there is a clear public perception – highlighted in the recent Eurobarometer survey on intergenerational solidarity – that the contribution of older people who have a responsibility of care for family members or relative is not sufficiently appreciated. This perception is most widespread in Portugal (91% of those interviewed), the United Kingdom (87%) and Finland (85%). It also generally felt that people who have to care for older family members at home do not receive adequate support from social services, particularly especially in Portugal, Bulgaria and Greece. Only in Luxembourg did the respondents think that support from the social services was sufficient.

But the positive contribution of older people within the family is not limited to their role as caregivers. There is a financial aspect as well. As young people tend to remain at home for longer and to enter the labour market later than previous generations – often with fewer privileges and guarantees – the financial help of parents and grandparents is often necessary to enable young adults to establish their own households and families.



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European pensioners still have a lot to give

As we live longer and healthier lives, more and more people choose to remain active after retirement, contributing to community life and social cohesion through volunteer work

These days, 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 an excellent historic achievement. But rising life expectancy, combined with low birth rates, also implies a changing balance between younger and older people, a shift that is currently being accelerated by the

fact that a the number of so-called baby boomers is reaching retirement age. 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 generations. This view neglects, however, the significant actual and potential contribution that older people, and baby-boomers in particular, can make to society.

A key opportunity for tackling the challenge of demographic ageing and preserving intergenerational solidarity therefore consists in ensuring that people stay longer on the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous for longer after they retire. The scope for progress is considerable, especially in the area of volunteering. A Eurobarometer survey carried out in September 2008 showed that the majority of older people want

to continue to contribute to society after they retire: almost three quarters of Europeans approaching retirement would consider participating in community work or volunteering after retirement. However only less than half of the retired currently do so. There is therefore a vast untapped potential waiting to be assisted in finding a convenient activity bringing important benefits to society.

The benefits are considerable for both the individual and the society. On an individual level, volunteering contributes to improve the individual's self-esteem and life satisfaction: it increases social contacts, helps to keep the social relations and facilitates involvement in the community. It also helps to develop further competences and skills. It has beneficial effects on health and well-being. A gerontologist speaking at a recent seminar on volunteering of older persons organised by the European Commission in March of this year stressed that: "Isolation and inactivity are the first risk factors for the health of older persons, before hypertension or cardio-vascular problems. To develop the activities of seniors should be therefore a major element of public policies".

The benefits for society are manifold. Recent figures indicate that the volunteering sector could represent a value of around 5% of GDP in some countries. Many older people are regular volunteers and are a valuable resource for a number of associations which could not exist otherwise. Senior volunteering prevents isolation and promotes a better understanding between generations when young and old work together on common projects. Volunteer work by older people can also ease the transition from full-time employment to retirement.

As the AGE platform, a European organisation representing older people explains, older people who participate in volunteer activities bring with them considerable skills, knowledge and commitment. They have distinct

qualities to offer due to their social maturity, accumulated life experience and sense of societal obligation. Older people volunteer in diverse areas including community, welfare, political and religious organisations; education, training, sport, youth development and senior citizen groups; and local heritage, environmental protection and overseas development.

Given all these benefits and the potential still waiting to be deployed, it is important to address the barriers preventing older people from engaging in volunteer work. These include negative stereotypes and attitudes, cultural and legislative barriers and even discriminatory practices. Older persons themselves may hesitate to volunteer due to a lack of awareness, information and of assistance to match their desires and competences against the demand of voluntary associations and because of a lack of self-confidence or inadequate understanding of the tasks involved.

Such barriers need to be lifted and it is important that a change in attitude to older persons' role and involvement in

society is achieved. This will bring the EU closer to achieving the goal stated German Chancellor Angela Merkel last June: "Older persons must have their place at the centre of our society, and not on sideline". Finally, a recent Eurobarometer survey in all the EU's 27 Member States showed a strong support for policies and initiatives that would help older people to remain active and autonomous (such as through public centers for volunteers where older people are helped to find opportunities to volunteer for tasks that match their skills and wishes) and foster better relations between generations.

In order to raise awareness in this area and spread the experiences gained through innovative measures, the European Commission is currently considering designating 2012 as European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity.

It is clear that each level of authorities and other organisations from the EU to national, regional and local level have to play their role and contribute to the smooth development of senior citizens' volunteering in Europe.

Helping retiring workers to plan for an active future – the example of Volkswagen

With its Initiative "Pro Ehrenamt" (pro-volunteering), the Volkswagen company aims to increase awareness of volunteering activities and to support them. It is a platform for people who want to volunteer and those who have voluntary work to offer. The initiative is targeted to all Volkswagen employees at the production locations in Germany and in particular to all interested retirees or early retirees. Active and former employees at Volkswagen can access a comprehensive database, in which they can find vacancies and skills required for voluntary activities. In

particular, the employees who are beginning a new phase in life following the official end of their career are often interested in perspectives and tasks which provide them with personal satisfaction, the feeling of being useful and recognition. The activities provide opportunities to enrich both others and themselves by passing on their wealth of experience e.g. by helping out those starting their career, advising young people during their apprenticeship or supporting people coming home from overseas or other activities extracted from the database.



Commission proposes shared commitment for employment

The EU will make available 19 billion € of planned European Social Fund expenditure to support people hit by the economic crisis

As Europe grapples with its worst economic crisis for decades, and with unemployment figures rising in almost every EU country, the impact of the crisis on jobs remains the European Union's number one concern. Recent job losses around Europe mean hardship and distress for millions of workers, their families and their communities.

This is why the Commission recently proposed a shared commitment by EU countries, by European institutions and by workers' and employers' organisations to employment – a commitment

to reduce job losses and help millions of people to find new and better jobs.

The proposals are based on the main outcomes of the Employment Summit which took place in June in Prague. The participants agreed on the necessity to introduce short-term measures to maintain jobs and on the reforms needed to prepare the labour market for the post-crisis period. “In this respect, we consider an assessment of the adopted anti-crisis measures from the point of view of their efficiency, as well as the sustainability of public

finance to be of key importance”, said the Czech Minister of Labour and social affairs Petr Šimerka in his opening speech.

The conclusions of the Summit were incorporated by the European Commission into concrete measures to be adopted by individual Member States, the Commission itself and the social partners in a “Communication on a shared commitment for employment”. Concrete events should be attuned to changes in the labour markets and the budget situation of each Member State. The communication should mobilise all accessible finances of the Community – the European Social Fund, the European Investment Bank and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. Agreement on new requirements for drawing money from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund that can be used, for instance, for training employees, for supporting their mobility and for advisory services during their search for employment was successfully negotiated during the Czech Presidency as part of the financing of anti-crisis measures.

The Commission put forward three key priorities: maintaining employment, creating jobs and promoting mobility; upgrading skills and matching labour market needs; and increasing access to employment. They should be seen as complementary to other actions being taken by the Commission to face the crisis, including recent proposals on financial supervision and the proposal to make the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund work better in times of crisis. They are also consistent with the EU's longer term strategies to reform labour markets including the Lisbon Strategy. There is a particularly strong focus on young people, to provide them with the training and work opportunities they need to ensure they don't miss their entry into the labour market this year because of the crisis.

To these ends, all available tools will be used, making direct support available from the EU budget, with 19 billion €

of funding from the European Social Fund in 2009-2010. The European Commission will help Member States put in place rapid reaction packages, together with social partners, focusing on the three key priorities mentioned above. To help make this happen, Member States will not have to provide national co-funding in 2009 and 2010; so vocational training, and other active support measures can be funded 100% from the EU budget.

Finally, the Commission, together with the European Investment Bank group and others, is proposing to set up a new EU micro-finance facility

for employment, to support small companies and the social economy. This new facility will extend the range of targeted financial support to new entrepreneurs and help them to overcome the squeeze on credit. 100 million € of EU funding will help to leverage some 500 million € in loans.

The proposals have been endorsed by EU leaders meeting at the June European Council. They are no less than a social recovery plan for Europe. And they are part and parcel of the social justice and solidarity that the Commission sees as the heart of the European project.



Informal meeting of the Employment and social Affairs Ministers

- Accelerating €19 billion of planned funding to help people to stay in work or move towards new jobs, through upgrading skills, encouraging entrepreneurship and improving public employment services under the European Social Fund. For the period 2009-2010, the Commission can reimburse Member States' declared expenditure at a rate of 100%. That means there is no need for national co-funding so that projects that help people can be put in place more quickly.
- Reallocate €100 million from the existing EU budget which - when combined with funding from international financial institutions, particularly the European Investment Bank Group - will provide more than €500 million for the creation of a new EU micro-credit facility. These micro-credits will support those at-risk of not obtaining funds to set up a business such as the recently unemployed and reinforce employment in micro businesses facing the credit crunch.
- A commitment to provide at least 5 million apprenticeships across the EU for young people facing unemployment; and the setting of targets to provide young unemployed with early opportunities for training or work.
- Support for schemes – including through the ESF – to maintain viable employment through short-time work and training.
- Immediate help for the unemployed to avoid the risk of long-term unemployment and the loss of relevant skills, including proposals that an early opportunity for training or work should be provided to each unemployed person: within 1 month for young people under 20 years old, within 2 months for those under 25 years old, and within 3 months for over 25 year olds. The ESF should support the achievement of these "new start" targets.
- Help to get the most disadvantaged back into jobs, for example, through lower non-wage labour costs, recruitment incentives and the promotion of low-skilled job opportunities in household and care services.
- New online 'map and match' service to help jobseekers match their skills with job vacancies throughout Europe via the existing European jobs portal EURES and a commitment that unemployed people looking for a job in another Member State should be eligible to receive, for at least 6 months, the unemployment benefits they were entitled to in their country of residence.
- A focus on skills upgrading and a better match with labour market needs, with a Commission sector-by-sector analysis of EU labour market needs today and for the future including green skills.
- A practical toolkit to help companies, workers and their representatives better manage and anticipate business restructuring.
- A guide for training in small businesses to help SMEs maintain and obtain the skills they need.



ESF in Spain – building a business through training

© European Communities

“I worked hard to create my own business from nothing. However, when I almost lost everything, I realised I needed to make some big changes,” says José Salmerón. The 47-year-old heads a fast growing medium sized business, Grupo Salmerón, specialising in metalworking and building products and services.

Jose grew up in the wildly beautiful region near Sierra Nevada, the son of small-scale farmers. He left school at 14 with no formal qualifications. However, being hard working and adaptable, he turned his hand to many types of works, until he discovered he had an aptitude for metal work and learnt how to weld.

In 1983, with money borrowed from friends and relatives, he started his own factory making car trailers and building fixtures. Initially he operated from a tiny 20m² premises and, together with wife Concepción, ran all aspects of the business. However, in the early years progress was haphazard. “We didn’t really run it as a business. To tell the truth, we didn’t even really know what a business was,” remembers José. “It was often hit or miss.”

The business took over their lives as they took a hands-on role in all operations. “I used to think I could do everything myself,” he says.

Then crisis hit. They lost their biggest client and the company was on the edge of bankruptcy. After having invested so much of himself in the business, he fell into a deep depression. “For about one and a half years, activity in the business fell to virtually nothing,” says José.

He went to see a psychologist and things began to turn around – both personally and professionally. The therapist suggested that business training could change how José ran the company and relieve the pressure.

José took a course for entrepreneurs co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund and run by EOI Business School. The course gives entrepreneurs counselling and training on how to improve their companies and expand their markets, by bringing in innovative practices and improved networking.

The training changed how he thought about business. “I learned that it is not enough to be good at one job to run a company. You may be the best worker, but it doesn’t mean you will be the best manager. You need training to lead a company,” he says.

José applied what he learned on the course to his business and transformed the way it operated, bringing in spe-

cialist staff and new processes. “I was able to put into practice what I was learning,” he says. “I saw the results immediately.”

The business has now diversified and is growing fast. In the last seven to eight years, the staff has doubled to over 70 full-time workers. Since 2005 there have been four divisions to the group – dealing with the manufacture of trailers and small decorative metal items; real estate and property management; larger scale engineering projects such as the frameworks for shopping centres or factories; and a distributor for aluminium items such as garage doors, frames or handrails.

Annual revenues of the company are now around €10 million and plans are to double the factory in the next three years. However, he insists that money is not the main motivation. “My main objective is doing things well and I hope that other companies can learn from my experiences and apply my methods.”

“I’ve learned that the most important thing in a business is the people. I’m really proud of the team we’ve built. Together we are prepared for the future ... whatever it brings,” he says. “I’ve got what I couldn’t have dreamt about. I couldn’t dream about it because I did not know it existed.”



care, social benefits, and to employment and financial services. The report also presents the main legislative and policy responses developed at the national level to target their social inclusion with some good practice examples. The information in the report covers 30 European countries (EU and EEA/EFTA).

The comparative analysis shows the importance of adopting the dual approach of gender mainstreaming (promoting gender equality in all policies targeting the social inclusion of disadvantaged ethnic minorities) and specific actions (addressing the differentiated needs of disadvantaged ethnic minority women) in order to ameliorate their situation.

European countries are developing a certain degree of convergence in policy approaches. However, national differences remain considerable, reflecting both the specific characteristics and dimension of the residing disadvantaged ethnic minorities and the structure of national welfare regimes. Specific integration policies targeting ethnic minorities and immigrants are being developed in recent years, with increasing attention to gender differences. The report identifies good practices in the domains of labour market integration, social inclusion, healthcare, education and training, housing as well as legal counselling. Some of these programmes support the cultural mediation role women may have between their communities and social services.

The report underlines the importance of local authorities and NGOs, together with women and ethnic minorities associations, due to their closer links with disadvantaged communities at the local level. In addition, it stresses that the monitoring of gender disparities within disadvantaged groups, cross-border co-operation and exchange of practices, advocacy and campaigning may help in understanding the specific needs of different communities and the design of effective policies.

Ethnic minority and Roma women in Europe: A case for gender equality?

Integration policies targeting ethnic minorities and immigrants need to pay specific attention to gender differences

Women belonging to ethnic minorities and in particular Roma women experience a greater social exclusion compared to men from their own community and to women of the majority society. This is the case in accessing education, employment, health and social services. They are more likely to suffer multiple discrimination, and tend to present poorer levels of educational attainment (except for those of second and third generation) than ethnic minority men and majority women. When employed, they are more likely to work in informal or occasional low wage jobs, even when they have high qualifications. Poor housing conditions and overcrowding can impact negatively on their health, while their access to

health services is often hampered by cultural and language barriers.

These are the conclusions reached by a comparative report prepared by an independent Network of experts in gender equality, social inclusion, health and long-term care, co-ordinated by the Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale and the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, both based in Italy. The report presents the socio-economic conditions and perspectives of women belonging to disadvantaged ethnic minorities, with special attention to Roma women. The analysis focuses on those ethnic minorities that suffer the most disadvantages in a given national context, mainly in terms of access to education, housing, health-



ESF in Estonia - Integration project opens doors

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Messurme Pissareva is managing director of a real estate company in Jõhvi, northern Estonia. But before she embarked in 2004 on a training programme for the integration of non-Estonians, co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund, her life was very different. She was unemployed, isolated and frustrated.

Messurme grew up in Dagestan in the Soviet Union. She spoke the local Lesgin language, which has a Cyrillic alphabet and incorporates elements of both Russian and Turkish.

Twenty years ago she moved to Estonia. Her older brother had arrived in the country as a soldier with the Soviet army, when the Baltic States were still part of the USSR. After military service he decided to stay on and settle in the region, enabling Messurme – then aged 17 – to join him and go to school in Jõhvi. “He said it was a different kind of civilisation,” she remembers. “Initially I intended to go back to Dagestan after my education finished, but then I met my husband.”

So instead she got a job in a local chemicals plant in Jõhvi where her engineer husband now works for a machinery manufacturer. She signed up for an evening course in Tallinn studying mechanics and construction, undeterred by making an unusual choice for a young woman at that time. But the job

was hard, with long, tiring shifts, and when her second and third sons were born she took maternity leave and then stayed on at home to look after them.

After six years confined at home with the family, she began to feel increasingly excluded and under-qualified. “It was hard financially because we had only one income, but I didn’t know what to do to fit back into the labour market after being out of it for so long.”

Besides a lack of confidence, her main problem was linguistic. Messurme had studied in Russian. About one-quarter of Estonia’s population is of Russian origin, and Jõhvi, which is near the border, has many Russian speakers. At school in Dagestan she secured good grades in the language, but finding herself among native speakers she realised she was far from fluent, and she knew no Estonian at all.

The local employment office referred her to the ESF co-funded project, run by the Ontika Training Centre. It offered not only a chance to learn the language, but also to get to know Estonian history and culture, as well as social skills such as writing a CV, applying for jobs, and interview techniques. Through discussions, video presentations and excursions, with experts ranging from lawyers to psychologists, Messurme gradually recovered her self-esteem.

After three months, she found a job in a bookstore, where she was later promoted to manager. “My goal was to acquire the skills to go further,” she says, so she started more courses to upgrade her knowledge, and moved into the real estate business. Once her Estonian is perfected she plans to apply for a law degree at Tartu or Tallinn University. “I feel I need more knowledge,” she declares enthusiastically.

Messurme feared that when she quit her job she would never get another one. But the project changed that. It taught her to look forward without being afraid of the future. When she arrived in Jõhvi she knew only her brother, but now she has a wide circle of friends.

The most important thing she gained was self-confidence. “Psychologically, the project taught me that I could do anything – that I’m not a pushover. I needed a shove to get out of the situation I was in, and on the project we were told: You can do it!”

“If you want to achieve something you have to work hard,” confirms project coordinator Eha Korkus. Eha also believes the teachers gained as much as the students. “Not all Estonians are fond of Russians,” she explains. “We had to change ourselves – not everyone can do it.”



29 April 2009
European Day of Solidarity
between Generations

Why we need a European Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity

Solidarity between generations and between citizens is an integral part of our shared heritage and must be preserved and encouraged

Every country in Europe is faced with rapid demographic ageing which might create tensions between the generations if we do not review the way in which our societies function. In recent years, the political debate at EU and national level has essentially focused on the problems associated with the financial sustainability of pensions systems and the expected explosion in health-care demands when the baby-boomer generation, those aged 50-65 today, become dependent in old age. At the same time a recent Eurobarometer showed that 73% of older workers want to volunteer when they retire but only 44% actually do. This discrepancy is due to the various barriers older people face which prevent them from remaining actively involved in their community.

The demographic reality, together with the impact of the current crisis, will however force us to fundamentally

re-think our economic, fiscal, social, urban and transport policies. European society has changed rapidly over recent years, even over recent months, and the ways in which we respond to these new demands will have to adapt accordingly, keeping in mind the fundamental principles which have allowed European society to become what it is today: a region of peace and solidarity supported by an efficient social market economy. While they may vary in their approach, the economic, fiscal and social systems of the EU Member States are all based on solidarity between the generations and between citizens, between the rich and the poor, and between the healthy and the sick. This solidarity is an integral part of our shared heritage and must remain at the heart of any reform to how our societies function.

The first European Day on Intergenerational Solidarity and Cooperation met with great interest from a wide variety

of stakeholders. The numerous activities organised around 29 April 2009 across the EU to mark the first European Day of Intergenerational Solidarity demonstrate that there is a keen interest for a debate on active ageing and solidarity between generations among local and national authorities, civil society organisations, town planners, public transport operators, public health organisations, social service providers, architects, social housing organisations, media, schools, universities, etc. The European Day has got off to a great start and we hope the debate will continue for many years to come and that all countries and regions in the European Union will succeed in finding suitable solutions to tackle demographic ageing by building greater social cohesion.

A European Year would help find sustainable solutions to respond to EU demographic challenge in the context of the current crisis. When Vladimir Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, announced at the Slovenian Presidency conference in April 2008, that he would like to propose that 2012 should be declared the European Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity, he met with a very enthusiastic response from the audience. Since then, a growing number of stakeholders have gathered in support of such European Year. At European level, non-governmental organizations AGE, AEIP, AIM, CECODHAS, COFACE, Eurochild, the European Women's Lobby and the European Youth Forum are campaigning together to raise awareness of the need to launch a major debate at EU, national and local level to find innovative solutions to encourage active ageing and greater solidarity and cooperation between generations and the best way to achieve that would be to have a European Year devoted to that theme in 2012.

*Contribution by Anne Sophie Parent,
director of AGE
– the older people's platform.*



Shortly before leaving his post as Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Nikolaus G van der Pas spoke to Social Agenda magazine

You are about to leave the DG, after almost four years as Director-General. What, in your view, have been the most significant developments in European social policy during this time?

Equality is a fundamental value of the European Union, and discrimination has no place in it. We've been able to come forward with a very ambitious piece of antidiscrimination legislation, and that is a great success. Our proposals for better and longer maternity leave, the stimulus we have given to the social partners to improve their parental leave agreement, bring real improvements to the lives of European citizens. Improving the situation of the Roma people deserves every attention in the European Union. We have put this issue high on the EU political agenda and now see a positive follow-up.

But there many other achievements we can be proud of: the adoption of the renewed Social Agenda, our recommendation on active inclusion, the strengthening of European Works Councils, giving equal rights to temporary workers, to developing promising concepts like flexicurity and new-skills-for-new-jobs, raising awareness of our demographic challenges, supporting social services

of general interest, modernizing the coordination of social security systems, improving health and safety at work, helping Member states in the fight against the crisis (through better support from the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Fund.

Any set-backs or areas where you wish things had gone differently?

I am disappointed that we have not been able to get an agreement on the review of the Working Time Directive. One group of Member states, and a majority in the European Parliament, argued that the EU should give a strong social signal by imposing a strict limitation of working time; another that working time is a matter for individual workers and employers to agree upon. The two positions have so far proved irreconcilable. But the issue will not go away and will require a fresh approach.

The economic and financial crisis has hit EU labour markets hard. How can our policies and instruments be mobilised to help recovery?

We should never forget that the main levers for action are in the hands of the Member states. They have done a lot in

order to stabilize the financial sector, to maintain employment and to protect the most vulnerable. At the same time the EU's internal market cannot function properly unless national policies are convergent and don't create negative spill-overs. EU policies and financial instruments must support national action. That was the gist of the Commission's recovery plan of November last year, endorsed by the European Council.

We are following the same logic with regard to employment. Firstly, we want to help Member States to avoid unemployment, create new employment and make people fit for the upturn when it comes, especially in areas with a future, like the "green" economy. Secondly, money from the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Fund should become accessible more quickly, simply and effectively to help Member States finance their actions. We already took several steps under the recovery plan, increasing the advance payments to the Member States, simplifying the rules and accelerating decision-making. We now propose further steps, including the redirection of money from existing programmes to support some 500 million € micro credits for unemployed people who want to become entrepreneurs themselves.

What are the main challenges facing your successor?

There are some hopeful signs that the worst of the crisis might be over. Even so Robert Verrue will have a lot of work for some time to come to deal with the employment and social consequences, including a review of the Lisbon Strategy, the European Employment Strategy, and the Open Method of Coordination. Moreover, the EU must decide before 2014 how much money will be available for which policies. The financial crisis obliges us even more to develop solid arguments for sufficient funding for EMPL policies and instruments in support of a strong European social dimension.



EU action against discrimination - Activity report 2007- 08

The report "EU action against discrimination" presents the activities carried out by the European Commission in 2007-08 to fight discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards to employment and occupation. It describes the policy and partnership aspects, the state of play in the legislation and its implementation at national level including some case law and the various activities conducted to communicate equality. This publication is available in printed format in English, French and German and in electronic format in all other EU official languages.

Catalogue No.: KE-AX-09-001-EN-C



The provision of childcare services - A comparative review of 30 European countries

The availability of adequate childcare services is a growing concern for citizens across Europe. Better childcare services can help boost labour market participation and gender equality while also working to reverse declining fertility rates by reducing the cost of childbearing in terms of career opportunities. This report examines the situation of childcare across the European Union including the extent to which demand is met, the importance attached to childcare and national childcare policies. It is available in printed format in English with French and German summaries.

Catalogue No.: KE-78-09-680-EN-C



Restructuring in Europe 2008 - A review of EU action to anticipate and manage employment change

This report reviews all the European Union's policies and instruments of a mainly structural nature that contribute to facilitating economic and financial adaptation. It illustrates the greater coordination effort the Commission has made over the last few years to mobilise them effectively in the pursuit of that objective. It is available in English, French and German.

Catalogue No.: KE-81-08-503-EN-C

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The home page of Commissioner Vladimír Špidla: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/spidla/index.cfm

The home page of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

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