

**Age Action**

**IRELAND**

*For All Older People*

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Green Paper on Demographic Change  
DG EMPL/E/1  
J-27 01/122  
European Commission  
B-1049 Brussels.

DG EMPL - CAD A/ 20833
Date: 13-09-2005
CF: E
C:

Dear Sir/Madam

Find enclosed response to the Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations" which I am submitting on behalf of Age Action Ireland Ltd.

I have chosen to make general comments under the three headings in the Green Paper rather than respond to the particular questions. I hope nonetheless that the comments will be taken into consideration. We would be happy at a later date to enter into further dialogue on the issues raised.

Yours sincerely



Dr. David Stratton  
Head of Policy & Research  
For Age Action Ireland Ltd.

**Patron President of Ireland Mary McAleese**

**Directors of Age Action Ireland Ltd**

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Registered in Ireland No. 198571. Charity No. CHY 10583

**Regional Offices**

Age Action West, Age Action South East, Age Action North Dublin.

## **Green Paper Response**

### **Age Action Ireland Ltd.**

#### THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPEAN DEMOGRAPHY

- 1.1 There is almost an unqualified acceptance of the Lisbon Agenda in framing the discussion in the Green Paper. There is inadequate critique that employment is the solution to our social ills. There is an assumption that a job is the only route out of poverty.
- 1.2 There is a further assumption that the low fertility rate is the result of obstacles to private choices. Low fertility is also due to the choice of contraception. While incentives like childcare may have a positive impact on the birth rate and increase employment, a choice may also have to be made between employment and having children. To overcome the problem of low fertility, it is not helpful to link it with employment as if the two have to go together. This limits discussion on other possibilities that might support higher fertility rates, such as a basis minimum wage for all, regardless of one's employment status.
- 1.3 The contribution of immigration to mitigating the effects of falling populations has to be acknowledged. Immigrants' contribution to the economy is also evident. Yet, immigration rules within the EU fail to acknowledge economic refugees as a legitimate category, while also denying those seeking asylum the right to work. Restriction regarding family reunification place further burdens on those who wish to live and work in Europe.

#### A NEW SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

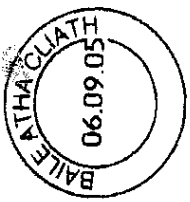
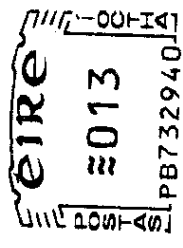
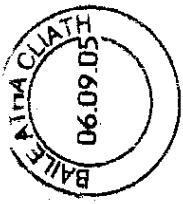
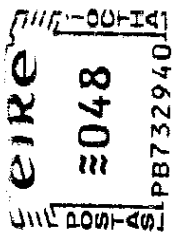
- 2.1 The contribution of older people as mentors of the young has not been exploited to the full in the educational system. Nor has the contribution of grandparents as educators of their grandchildren been adequately supported.
- 2.2 Age discrimination remains a major barrier to the employment of older workers. The young need to be challenged on their prejudices, just as the old need to be challenged on their own prejudices regarding young people.
- 2.3 In employment, more choices for older workers, including gradual retirement, would facilitate longer working lives.
- 2.4 The option of continuing to pay into a retirement fund after 65 with associated increased benefits would also facilitate working beyond 65.
- 2.5 The introduction of a basic pension for all could be considered without prejudice to remaining in employment. It could also significantly address the issue of the risk of poverty for many older people, especially women who may have been denied the opportunity of making adequate provision for their pension.

- 2.6 Screening for various illness and treatment for the over 65s should not be determined on the basis of age alone.
- 2.7 As far as practicably possible, older people should be supported to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

#### WHAT SHOULD THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ROLE BE?

- 3.1 The EU needs to take a life-course approach to the issue of ageing and to meet the various care needs that arise at different stages of life with appropriate social services.
- 3.2 Standards for universal design in terms of housing, etc. should be set to meet the needs of all generations.
- 3.3 Upper age limits for retirement and for access to services should be abolished.
- 3.4 Educational programmes that encourage intergenerational solidarity should be promoted.
- 3.5 Member states should establish quality standards for services for older people in all care settings.
- 3.6 Member states should adopt active ageing policies to establish the equal rights of older people in order to combat discrimination on all grounds, including age, and to promote equality and diversity.

**Dr. David Stratton  
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