

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

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<b>Personal Data</b>	
Do you consent to the publication of your personal data/data relating to your organisation with the publication of your replies to the consultation? <span style="float: right;">Yes</span>	
Name Anna Freeman	
E-mail address anna.freeman@wlg.gov.uk	
Are you replying as an individual or an organisation? <span style="float: right;">Organisation</span>	
On behalf of which of the following are you replying? National employers' organisation	
Please specify the name of your organisation or institution Welsh Local Government Association	
Country where your organisation is based <span style="float: right;">UK - United Kingdom</span>	
<b>Explanation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you take the view that the discussion of demographic trends and managing their impact should take place at European level?</li> <li>• If so, what should be the objectives, and which policy areas are concerned?</li> </ul> <p>Yes, discussions need to be held at a European level, the issues concern social policy, employment policy, economic policy, sustainable development, regeneration, social justice .....</p>	
<b>1. The challenges of European demography</b>	
<b>1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate</b>	
<p><i>Over many years, the Union has been making considerable efforts to achieve equality between men and women and has coordinated national social protection policies.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can a better work/life balance help to tackle the problems associated with demographic ageing?</li> <li>• How can a more balanced distribution of household and family tasks between men and women be encouraged?</li> <li>• Should the award of certain benefits or advantages (leave, etc.) be linked to an</li> </ul>	

equal distribution of tasks between the sexes? How best to ensure an adequate income for both parents on parental leave?

- How can the availability of child care structures (crèches, nursery schools, etc.) and elderly care structures be improved by the public and private sectors?
- Can a reduced rate of VAT contribute to the development of care services?
- How can parents, in particular young parents, be encouraged to enter the labour market, have the career that they want and the number of children they want?

Better work life balance will enable people to balance work with caring for older relatives. It will also enable older people to take a stepped approach to retirement, working alongside younger people and passing on their expertise before they leave the workforce. Achieving a more balanced distribution of household tasks needs to be tackled by a variety of means - better, more affordable childcare, better education of children on the issues, getting advertisers 'on side' so that they stop reproducing the same old tired stereotypes, better distribution of paid leave for childcare between men and women I don't think it would be practical to link award of benefits or advantages to equal distribution of tasks between the sexes per se, but in the area of child care and parental leave perhaps more paid leave could be available if both parents share the leave rather than just one taking it. Child care provision can be improved by encouraging and facilitating organisations within an area to collaborate and make joint provision on a partnership basis. Also by setting up child minding networks and funding co-ordinators for these. Yes, reduced VAT can help Parents can be encouraged to enter the labour market by better education and support services to discourage them from becoming parents too early, through better education to ensure their choices are made clear to them and are less constrained by stereotypes, by the availability of good quality affordable childcare at a convenient location.

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

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

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

Ethnic minority groups usually have a younger demographic profile so can immigration can mitigate the effects We need policy and practice that ensures that we make use of the skills that migrants have - all too often they are professional people whose skills and qualification just don't quite match our requirements so they go to waste. We need to ensure that there is provision to train them up to the host countries required standards.

## **2. A new solidarity between the generations**

### **2.1. Better integration of young people**

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

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

More people that have had a checkered early life (ex-offenders etc.) but have come through should be trained up to act as mentors and counsellors to young people and to young adults. Too often young people, young men in particular get drawn into a life of petty crime and their potential is wasted. They need help that can break the cycle as early as possible and need support from people who have some credibility in their eyes.

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

## 2.2. A global approach to the “working life cycle”

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

- How can the organisation of work be modernised, to take into account the specific needs of each age group?
- How can young couples’ integration in working life be facilitated and how can we help them to find a balance between flexibility and security to bring up their children, to train and update their skills to meet the demands of the labour market? How can we enable older people to work more?

Far more and more innovative approaches to flexible working and homeworking. Provision of support to businesses to introduce flexible and homeworking arrangements. Tax breaks or other financial inducements to organisations that have done this. Older people need to be able to wind down in to retirement over a longer period without affecting their pension rights. We need a change of culture from one that says early retirement is good and a rightful reward after 40 years of work to one which says keeping involved in the world of work in a way which suits the stage of life you are at, is better.

- How can work organisation best be adapted to a new distribution between the generations, with fewer young people and more older workers?
- How can the various stakeholders in the Union contribute, in particular by way of social dialogue and civil society?

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

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

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

gradual flexible retirement

## 2.4 Solidarity with the very elderly

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

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

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

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

## The Questionnaire

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met