

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

Identification of case	
IPM Reference Number:	459197
Creation date	12-10-2005
Modification date	
Privacy statement	
Personal Data	
Do you consent to the publication of your personal data/data relating to your organisation with the publication of your replies to the consultation?	Yes
Name	Maria Skouroliakos
E-mail address	ergostat@otenet.gr
Are you replying as an individual or an organisation?	Organisation
On behalf of which of the following are you replying?	European NGO
Please specify the name of your organisation or institution	Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (C.O.T.E.C)
Country where your organisation is based	UK - United Kingdom
Explanation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you take the view that the discussion of demographic trends and managing their impact should take place at European level?If so, what should be the objectives, and which policy areas are concerned? <p>European level discussion of demographic change should take place. This should focus upon how to support continued employment of older people and how to help individuals to remain fit and healthy in older age. However, Europe also has to be aware of the need to ensure that discussion and subsequent policies maintain a global context.</p>	
1. The challenges of European demography	
1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate	
<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">How can a better work/life balance help to tackle the problems associated with demographic ageing?How can a more balanced distribution of household and family tasks between men and women be encouraged?	

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

A better worklife balance can be encouraged by ensuring that all parents have access to benefits and support to enable to continue working. Flexible working arrangements should be a right rather than a privilege. The E. U. should encourage cultural change towards a better distribution of tasks between fathers and mothers. However, policies must also acknowledge the physical impact of birth upon women. The E. U. should recommend the provision of state run nurseries and require all member countries to make equivalent provision.

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?

Using immigration as a means of ameliorating the effects of demographic change is a flawed policy. Europe should work to help develop the economy of member states so that migration is less attractive. Certain countries can benefit from migration but to the detriment of those where the migrants have moved from. Again a global context is necessary.

2. A new solidarity between the generations

2.1. Better integration of young people

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

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

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

people?

policies to encourage intergenerational exchange should be introduced.

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?

Paid employment needs to be made into an attractive proposition for all generations. For older people, this means providing choice over the continuance of work or taking retirement rather than maintaining a fixed retirement age. Home based working and part working must be encouraged. Free courses should be made available to all age groups for skill development in use of new technologies to support different ways of working.

- 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?

Establishing ways of viewing the contributions of different groups of workers within societies has to change. The E.U. should encourage the positive portrayal of older people as workers and as contributors to 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?

The statutory age for retirement should be removed in all member countries, with individuals provided with choice regarding continued work. This must be supported with services to support older people to continue working including regular health checks and vocational rehabilitation. The greater employment of older people in the non statutory sector should be encouraged and supported through the work of community champions. Older people who seek to relocate in retirement should be made fully aware of the health and social care services available elsewhere, the cultural differences they will encounter in services and any financial considerations. Across Europe older people should be helped to maintain their health through: Encouraging the uptake and maintenance of physical activity, with facilities being subsidised if possible Continued participation in work if preferred or in the local community Proper diet and nutrition Health checks including quick effective services to manage sensory loss and poor mobility The availability of well designed effective assistive technologies to enable continued participation The

availability of reliable safe and cheap public transport Subsidised or free access to community facilities

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?

The concept of long term care needs to change so that it is not always viewed as being a last resort. Selected residents should be provided with rehabilitation so that a move back into community might be a reality for some. The system of pensions and benefits must be simplified. Monetary benefits for older people should be led in each country by a department for older people rather than maintaining a fragmented system.

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?

E.U. should form and promote policies regarding the demographic changes facilitating the countries to adapt to these changes. A coordination of employment and social protection policies should encourage the individuals to remain fit and healthy and active members of their societies.

The Questionnaire

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met