

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

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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>The demographic change is a phenomenon, by which in particular the industrial nations of Europe are affected, it represents a common challenge to Europe. However, the impact of the demographic change differs among the member states of the European Union: some cities or regions are more affected than others, different causes and different effects can be observed among the different cities and regions of the member states, some national governments have already successfully implemented actions to cope with the demographic change where others have been less active. Therefore an exchange between the member states of the European Union is useful and necessary to find effective answers to the challenges imposed by demographic change. Besides the know-how-exchange the European Union can offer incentives to create basic conditions which positively influence the demographic change. The following objectives can be identified: - collection and evaluation of demographic data of all EU member states which considers also the differences between cities and regions - increase of the overall birth rate, especially in cities - improvement of education chances, lifelong and for all ages and social groups - work life balance for parents (in particular women) - flexible social services - support for the Elderly - improvement of the use of the human capital elderly people offer - development of new technologies in fields as medicine, care, construction, tourism, etc. The following policy areas are concerned: - economic and employment policy - family policy - social security policy - educational policy - science and technology - immigration and integration policy - regional and structural policy - anti-discrimination policy</p>	

1. The challenges of European demography

1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate

Over many years, the Union has been making considerable efforts to achieve equality between men and women and has coordinated national social protection policies.

- 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 compatibility of work and life can contribute to solve the problems of demographic ageing if it improves the living of families with children. Various approaches can be taken to tackle the problem: - parental leave for both parents: flexible with ensured comeback to work - flexible work hours and work places (part-time, telecommuting) especially for parents with small children - residence and/or job near child care with flexible opening hours - acknowledgment of parental leave as qualification - design of child-friendly and family-friendly public space (traffic-calmed zones, playgrounds, parks, housing) - integration of foreign employees and their families A more balanced distribution of household and family tasks between men and women could be encouraged through the following actions: - Campaigns aimed at changing the attitude of employers, employees as well as men and women in general - equal financial payment of women and men as employees - promotion of the the image of "house men" and "career women" and the acceptance of employers for men taking parental leave and for women with small children to work - education of children towards an equal partnership of women and men - equal housekeeping instructions to boys and girls in school - create more telecommuting jobs and part-time jobs for young fathers and mothers In order to encourage men and women equally to take a parental leave, the following actions should be considered: - the wage payments of both parents should be the basis for the calculation of the money which the parents receive during the parental leave - wage payments should be continued in full height if employees take a parental leave so that also parents with a higher income take this time, too The availability of child care structures and elderly care structures ca be improved into two directions: quantitatively and qualitatively. The following actions are conceivable: - multiple and intergenerational use of existing and new planned facilities (e.g. one house used in the morning as child care and in the late afternoon as a senior meeting place) - facilitate semi-professional, private-based, small-scale, flexible child care - cross-linking of existing facilities (e.g. private small-scale child care with professional child care centres in order to cover personal vacancies during vacation, illness, etc. and to ensure professionalism) - combine child care with private enterprises - create incentives for voluntary commitment in the field of child or elderly care (e.g. grandparents service, senior attendance service) - provide opening hours of facilities according to the need of the users In order to enable young parents who still attend vocational training to raise their children, the following actions are advisable: - provide child care facilities at low costs for trainees and students - offer part-time training or study possibilities - financially support the child care by the parents or grandparents of students or trainees (e.g. tax favours) - raise social acceptance for the model "training and children" equally to "first training then children" - fiscal relieve should be given according to the number of children living in the household instead according to the status of marriage - create more flexible jobs for parents (part time, telecommuting jobs) - offer training and education for parents during the parental leave in order to easily enter their jobs afterwards again - introduce a "family compatibility examination" among all planning processes

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?

Immigration can reduce the effects of the demographic ageing on a short-term and medium-term basis by helping to meet the shortage of labour and by offering an contribution to the stabilization of the pensions. Yet, in the long term immigration does not solve the problem. With the integration of immigrant families into the social system of their new country their habits of family formation also change and their once high birth rate decreases. Leipzig, like other cities has little or no competence in the area of migration policies. Most migrants tend to settle in cities however, and migration and integration policies are of central concern to Leipzig as well as to cities more generally. Regardless of competences and resources allocated, cities have to deal with positive and negative aspects of migration. Documented as well as undocumented migrants live in cities- and cities are affected as: a. Service providers (health, education, housing etc.) b. Responsible for social cohesion c. Politically accountable (to deliver welfare to its citizens) Following from this, not only do cities play a key role in making integration policies work, they also take a keen interest in improving integration in any way possible. In this respect, cities have two key concerns: 1. To solve challenges related to integration on a practical, day-to-day level. 2. To ensure that multidimensional, functional and sustainable integration strategies are developed, at the local, national and European levels. In order to maximize the potential contribution of immigration to our societies, Leipzig supports EURO CITIES recommendations on how to make integration work ("Immigration and Integration the local level, political recommendations to national governments and the EU institutions") in that it is essential to recognize that: 1. migration and integration are two sides of the same coin, immigration must always be accompanied with integration strategies 2. integration strategies must be sustainable and multidimensional covering a wide range of policy areas 3. in ensuring sensible and well-functioning strategies, structured dialogue between the EU, national and local governance and with cities in particular, is essential 4. cities play a key role in implementing integration policies, so: a) learning and exchange must be facilitated at national and European levels b) adequate resources and competences must be allocated to cities allowing them to carry out Furthermore, in order to assure a better integration process of immigrants, the following measures should be taken into consideration: - develop educational policies in order to offer support at language acquisition for immigrant children and adults - create equal educational chances for migrant children - offer vocational training possibilities - develop a uniform immigration and integration policy for all EU member states with clear criteria for residence and work permissions - fight right-wing extremist tendencies - assure integration through housing policy and urban development The guidelines of the European Union for anti-discrimination give the obligatory framework for the national legislation and contribute thereby to a climate of equal treatment and the protection from disadvantages. The structure funds and employment programmes can help to remove structural disadvantages of immigrants in the fields of education and qualification. They also can offer chances for immigrants to productively use their intercultural competences and foreign language abilities. Certainly, establishing an Integration Fund as suggested in the Financial perspectives 2007-2013 would contribute to increased integration.

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

Initial training and adult training schemes can be improved by the following actions: - increased investment in measures aimed at preventing early and unqualified school leaving - promotion of binary vocational training (practical training in enterprises combined with theoretical instruction in vocational schools) - increase of practical training within vocational training and study - shortening of vocational

training in favour of training on the job and life-long-learning - provision of general education through courses or voluntary work programmes (e.g. language, social competence) in addition to specific training - definition and use of quality standards - promotion of language competence among immigrants - cross-linking of educational institutions and employers in order to develop market-relevant education - use of multifunctional learning methods: group work, excursion, project work Informal learning settings are very important for achieving basic competences as learning behaviour, language skills, habit, motivation, etc. Informal learning settings greatly influence the reproduction of social differences. Therefore it is very important to widen the knowledge about informal learning and how to influence those processes. Voluntary work offers to the volunteer various learning settings and possibilities of social integration. Moreover it creates social values. Therefore voluntary commitment is indispensable in the field of learning and social work. The structural funds and the instruments for achieving better access to the knowledge society can contribute to the improvement of initial training and adult training schemes particular by promoting equal access to knowledge. They could promote: - the access to vocational training for disadvantaged young people - the first entrance of young people into the labour market, - the futile development of informal learning settings of disadvantaged people and - the extension of voluntary engagement. The bridges between school and working life and the quality of young people's employment can be improved by the following actions: - develop a realistic job orientation of young people by providing early and frequent contacts to the work field during school (e.g. trainee programmes, partnerships between schools and enterprises) - improve the quality of the employment programmes for young people by defining clear targets und the use of internal and external monitoring

- 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?

The risk of poverty among children, single-parent families and young people can be reduced by the following actions: - monthly benefit support for children - promotion of job creation for single parents - support of working single parents regarding the provision of a place for child care - promotion of training facilities - assistance for young people searching for training and work offers - development of innovative and individual-based employment integration methods and projects The following examples offer approaches of how the solidarity between young people and elderly people can be fostered: - promotion of intergenerational projects such as voluntary based services like grandparents services that support young families (e.g. supervise children, cook for the family) or senior attendance services that visit elderly people in their homes and help with small services (e.g. writing letters, shopping, reading) - promotion of individual partnerships between young and elderly people such as "Big Friends for Youngsters" - use of facilities by different age groups - public hearings and discussion dealing with intergenerational topics such as values, solidarity

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?

The organisation of work could be modernised as follows, to take into account the specific needs of each age group: - payment of wages, which considers the different qualities of all age groups and the special needs of families - improve flexible work time (part-time work, telecommuting jobs) - formation of work teams of mixed age - constant qualification and further training for all employees (life-long-learning) - dismantling of prejudices against younger, older employees, and/or employees with children - re-education of elderly employees into new professions, in particular when physically exerting work is less possible The integration of young couples' into working life, the balance between flexibility and security to bring up their children, to train and update their skills to meet the demands of the labour market can be facilitated as shown by the following examples: - see also remarks at chapter 1.1 - flexible work hours and flexible use of work places (part-time work and telecommuting) especially for parents with small children - residence and/or job near child care with flexible opening hours - use of

remote study models for advanced training Older people can be enabled to work more by the following examples: - flexible work hours and flexible use of work places (part-time work and telecommuting) - promotion of voluntary engagement - continuation of education and training (life-long-learning)

- 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?

A flexible and gradual transition into retirement depending upon the momentary work and the individual situation (physical condition, so far gained pension sum) of the person is conceivable and meaningful. To work longer but less hours a week could be a useful strategy to maintain older people longer in the work force. A combination of pension, partial time earned income and/or financial incentives for social commitment and/or tasks of care for family members might be useful as a future income-model for elderly people. In order to increase the involvement of elderly people in voluntary work various fields of work are possible, e.g. senior attendance service, grandparents service. A bonus system provided by health care insurances for preventive actions concerning ones health (e.g. regular physical training, healthy nutrition, non-smoking) might improve the overall health condition of the population. This leads to health and independence also at old age. Moreover healthy work and living environments could be created.

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?

Burnout and Dropout of nurses and caregivers in nursing homes can be prevented by job rotation, time-out from work, part-time work and supervision. The work in nursing homes can be made more easier by the more intensified use of appliances. The public acknowledgment of the work should be promoted and the help of relatives, volunteers and semi-professionals more effectively used to support the professional staff. The care at home by relatives should be more strongly supported by: - designing barrier free living conditions - providing necessary appliances - professional consultation for nursing relatives - close cooperation with social services and geriatric homes and/or hospitals to create regional networks of support and infrastructure The following fields of technology should be developed to support older people: - technical appliances - barrier-free access to housing, business, physicians, means of transport - elderly friendly clothing, furniture, wrappings, etc. - communication technologies (easy appliance, long-distance social contact, emergency call, education) - health technologies can improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of elderly people and thus promote independence until high age

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 European coordination of employment and social protection policies could better take on board demographic changes by taking an integrated, multidimensional and sustainable approach where economic policies and social investments are seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing and not as conflicting. Investments in providing for universal access to child- and elderly care may be costly in the short term perspective, for example, but the only sustainable solution in a long-term perspective. Yes, the European Union should promote exchanges and regular (e.g. annual) analysis of demographic change and its impact on societies and all the policies concerned, but with clearly defined targets. An interesting question would be the promotion of the local level regarding projects for: - young families and child-friendly politics - work-life-balance of families - life-long-learning for all - developing sustainable structures for elderly people on the local level (planning of housing and infrastructure) - promotion of solidarity between young and elderly people - integration of immigrants The financial instruments – particularly the structural funds – should take into consideration those target fields.

The Questionnaire

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met