

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

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| 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 |
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| Are you replying as an individual or an organisation? | Organisation |
| On behalf of which of the following are you replying? | Regional or local authority |
| Please specify the name of your organisation or institution | Association of London Government European Service |
| Country where your organisation is based | UK - United Kingdom |
| 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 ALG European Service welcomes the current debate on the consequences of demographic change and considers the European Union should play a role in managing its impact. Most of EU Member States are facing common problems and should try to find together common solutions. The ALG European Service considers the following issues as main priorities for London with regard to this debate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for greater efforts to fight against child poverty. The solution to this problem affecting a large number of children in London requires improving access to employment for lone parents and developing childcare structures. - The integration of immigrants and members of black and ethnic minority groups remains a high priority and this should be translated in more intense political action. - Although London has a relatively young population, London's older people are projected to increase. Greater attention should be paid to the needs of the elderly population. |

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| <p>Over many years, the Union has been making considerable efforts to achieve equality between men and women and has coordinated national social protection policies.</p> <p>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?</p> | <p>The ALG European Service welcomes efforts to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, with a particular attention to the issue of childcare. Improving access to affordable childcare continues to be a major priority for London in terms of promoting social inclusion. We believe extra resources will be required for significant capacity building of local authorities and providers. The development of childcare workforce should be adequately funded and supported in order to maintain quality childcare provision.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> <p>To what extent can immigration mitigate certain negative effects of demographic ageing?</p> <p>What policies should be developed for better integrating these migrants, in particular young people?</p> <p>How could Community instruments, in particular the legislative framework to combat discrimination, the structural funds and the Employment Strategy, contribute?</p> | <p>The Association of London Government believes that targeted training and support to key groups offers the best type of accompanying measure to facilitate admission and integration of economic migrants. The ALG is responsible for delivering £7 million of ESF Objective 3 funding to NGOs in London in the form of 27 projects. The ALG became a co-financing organisation primarily because of its concern about the ability of the new arrangements to deliver to key ESF target groups, including BME groups and refugees. As a funder of the voluntary sector, the ALG is concerned that if NGOs lose out, their constituencies might as well. The organisation has a long history of supporting the voluntary sector and by implication, NGOs, through its grant programme – placing it in an ideal position to assist NGOs to access provision.</p> |

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| <p>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?</p> | <p>When considering child poverty in EU large cities such as London it is important to look not only at the problem of low household incomes but also at high costs. London's high costs exacerbate child poverty in the capital. Many London children continue to live in poverty in workless families as the high costs of housing and childcare in the capital make it difficult for their parents to move into employment. Lone parents face significant and particular barriers to employment, which are exacerbated in London. The cost and availability of childcare is a particular problem - the cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under 2 is an average of £40 per week higher in Inner London and £26 per week higher in Outer London than the national average cost (£128 per week). EU policies should contribute to develop childcare structures and make work pay.</p> |
| <p>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?</p> | <p>Over a number of years London boroughs have developed projects and initiatives to improve the provision of services to the elderly. One of the problems has been in sustaining and maintaining these initiatives and where appropriate building them into effective mainstream provision. Often 'good ideas' simply remain at the ideas stage. EU instruments can contribute to make sure that these initiatives, where they have worked, that they can be developed and sustained. In terms of participation of elderly people in the voluntary sector, some voluntary organisations claim to have problems with arranging insurance for older volunteers. Others mention problems such as the need for more 'flexibility' when recruiting older volunteers.</p> |
| <p>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?</p> | <p>Most London boroughs do not have the capacity to map and project demographic (or other) changes within their populations. A discussion at the European level is welcomed not least in terms of mapping changes at the macro level but also from the perspective of potential resources to develop our own capacity to map that change and respond to it. The ALG European Service emphasizes the role of the EU Structural Funds as main financial tools to contribute to the better management of demographic change.</p> |
| <p>How did you perceive this questionnaire?</p> | <p>Expectations met</p> |