

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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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?	Yes, but our discussion of trends in Europe should not result in double standards. If we are interested in increasing family size in Europe, the EC should not be seeking to reduce fertility levels in poor countries. Rather than seeking to correct the problems arising from long periods of below-replacement fertility by short-term policy approaches such as getting more women into the workforce, the approach should be integrated and should be based on the best interests of the family and of society in general.
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?	More family-oriented policies should be developed in caring for the elderly. Incentives should be provided to family members to care for elderly parents. Retirement should be optional up to 70 years of age. Greater incentives should be offered to parents wishing to take care of their children, rather than having both parents under severe pressure and depending on inadequate care to look after their very young children. There is a need to reverse the contraceptive mentality which has become so prevalent, and which emphasises an individualistic approach towards family life. There needs to be a greater emphasis on the social good of having children and seeing children as playing a central role in family life.

<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>Immigration can make a positive contribution, but it tends to be short-term. Much more significant changes in social attitudes towards the significance of the family, and of the hugely potential role which parents can play in society need to be brought about. The reality is that policy for many years has been more based on individualism rather than on the common good. This needs to be reversed and the significance of the common good must become a central plank in education and in policy development. Rather than the current emphasis on multiculturalism, a policy of integration which places greater emphasis on our common humanity needs to be developed. This would include a greater emphasis on inalienable rights of all people. Basic ideas such as the fact that if we diminish the rights of others, we diminish ourselves need to be instilled through education and public policy. Another key idea which people need to have a greater appreciation of is the common destination of goods - that we are interdependent as people, and we need to create a greater appreciation of solidarity as a social virtue. These ideas have been well developed historically by Christian thinking, which has become so undervalued as a means of creating a more worthwhile society in Europe.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>The major weakness of education in Europe today is a neglect of human and social virtues. Society cannot be constructed simply on game-playing models. Young people need to hear about deeper philosophical values to understand the reasons why we are interdependent and why we need to value each other. Young people are potentially idealistic, but need clear leadership in order to learn the reasons for adopting a self-sacrificing approach towards constructing a good society. The messages young people are getting constantly is that we are unsure of what 'good' means, that we no longer are sure what the family is about, and that they should be facilitated to have 'safe sex' or whatever else takes their fancy. This is not a basis for creating self-respect, respect for others, or creating solidarity within society.</p>
<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?</p> <p>What forms of solidarity can be fostered between young people and elderly people?</p>	<p>Currently social welfare policy and many involved in moulding public opinion encourage young people to adopt irresponsible approaches towards sexuality and personal relationships, which have tragic consequences for huge numbers of young people and their children. In many cases young parents don't have the necessary background to be responsible parents, and in many cases they are in situations of desperation. The EC needs to encourage a much more responsible approach by means of education and policy to these issues. If anything, the signals emanating from Brussels in these areas are not encouraging.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>Rather than becoming lost in jargon and cliches, policies need to return to fundamental aspects of education - encouraging people to read more useful classics of literature, etc, rather than wasting their time with TV/internet, etc. Greater attention in education needs to be focused on the acquisition of human virtues, and on the need to have a spirit of service towards others. There is huge potential (and practice) in societies like Ireland for voluntary service within communities. This needs to be recognised and encouraged.</p>
<p>How did you perceive this questionnaire?</p>	<p>Expectations met</p>