

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

id_request	456250
DT_CREATE	13/07/2005
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	Dr Etelka Daróczy
E-mail address	daroczi@enevjegy.radio.hu
Are you replying as an individual or an organisation?	Individual
Gender	Female
Age	55-64
Country of residence	HU - Hungary
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>* Yes, I do take this view because demographic trends may converge and their impact could be largely similar. Discussion of trends and managing – at least some of – their impact at European level is a promising step towards improving the situation. Converging trends and similarity of impact does not, however, mean that the best practice would be their uniform management all over Europe. Differences in historical experience, cultural heritage, and levels of welfare call for regional variations in addressing similar problems in order to attain the intended results. * There should be several objectives but selecting a few for immediate action seems more effective. I personally consider closing the gap between the actual and the desired number of children by families the most important objective. How to achieve this? Combating unemployment (creating jobs) and reconciling couples' (not only women's) aspiration for children and career are the most important instruments. What can we see in everyday life? There is much more emphasis on securing personal rights of individuals for restricting their number of children ('imposing no minima') than on safeguarding individuals' and families' right for having and raising as many children as they would love to ('imposing no maxima').</p>

<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. 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>If no grandparent or other family helper is available, it is practically impossible to reconcile aspiration for children with career when both the father and the mother wish to have 'outdoor' careers. This is, of course, not always the case. In new member countries a great number of mothers—even among the highly educated—only take a job because a single earner cannot put enough bread on the table. But grandparents may not be alive, live far, still have jobs or need help themselves. Lack of intergenerational understanding or personal conflicts or simple unwillingness can also be an obstacle. The number of such cases will necessarily increase in the future so new solutions should be found to substitute for traditional ones. Availability of child care structures (or elderly structures for that matter) is necessary but not sufficient. Institutions can never be available everywhere or by everyone and cannot be flexible enough to satisfy all kinds of varying needs.</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>My suggestion—not an alternative but a complement to existing schemes—is to develop a modern network of household helpers, including child-carers and elderly carers. The idea is to keep the advantages of the 'archaic' situation—domestics living with well-to-do families—and leave all the detriments. The modern network I have in mind should have the following characteristics: * Specific schools/courses to teach and train both men and women of any age how to help families in need (possibly in three directions: daily household chores; child-care; elderly-care). The knowledge to be provided would be much less sophisticated than what is required from social workers. A certificate stating the competence of the person for such tasks is nevertheless necessary. It would create trust, better image and respect as well as self-esteem of providers, particularly to those without any (previous) qualification. The certificate could be replaced by a proof of practice in these fields. Information on existing schemes (e.g. course curricula) should be collected in member states and good practices circulated. * A registration possibility (e.g. web-site) must be available for persons providing or seeking household help. Matching need and demand could be done with or without organized assistance. Longstanding practices/facilities in this respect e.g. in France, Germany, Sweden or UK could serve as models for new members. * Elaboration of standard contracts by local legal experts to assist both parties (families and helpers). * Since families are not profit making entities, but able to create numerous new jobs, they should enjoy benefits as employers, also because the salaries they pay derive from their taxed income. Such kind of benefit is likely to be available in France. Good practices should be familiarized. There are many more aspects and details of this network which are to be developed a later stage. Immigration, especially when arriving in huge, periodic waves, can only temporarily mitigate the negative effects of ageing. On the longer run it could worsen them. Immigration is neither to be encouraged nor discouraged on demographic grounds. Labour</p>

	<p>shortage could be a good, high unemployment a bad omen of the possible societal impacts of immigration.</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 proposed network of family helpers can contribute to achieving these objectives. Within the present frame I only wish to highlight some—mainly but not exclusively demographic—impacts of a broad network of family helpers which should be available to many more than just the privileged: * Recipient parents would have more time for their children (better intergenerational relationship, less children loafing around) and more time for making money (increasing activity rate, higher standards of living); * New jobs would be available (within reach) for providers (e.g. early school-leavers, mothers on maternity leave, 'young' retired persons). Children raised in institutions or in harsh circumstances could see, train in and practise different ways of living. Retired persons could use their skills to teach family members while helping them. The psychological hardships of empty nest and widowhood could be reduced by getting involved with another family. * Social networks of both parties would widen, social integration and solidarity strengthen. Mutual assistance can develop. * Encouraging both men and women to participate in the family helpers' network would also promote a more balanced gender distribution of household and family tasks. * The threat and hardship of unemployment could be eased a bit. * An increasing, and largely irregular sector in the economy could be somewhat regularized.</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? What forms of solidarity can be fostered between young people and elderly people?</p>	<p>See point 1.1.</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>See point 1.1.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Green Papers such as this one are felicitated. Good practices should be familiarized in the mass media.</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>Statutory retirement age is good for some and bad for others. This topic should be handled with great care. No simple and uniform answer is possible. Accessible life long learning (anything from cooking to programming) is the best way in helping the elderly to participate in economic and social life as well as to remain fit.</p>

<p>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?</p>	<p>All this seems to depend very much on the economic performance and the redistribution policies within the EU and within her member states. In new member states it is hard to imagine extending national social policies to long-term care when too many old people cannot even afford basic medicaments and healthy food.</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>* Absolutely. * Yes, but I am not familiar with the functioning of these funds to answer how. * By being more informed and empathetic. * Dialogue is important. This Green Paper is great. But useless if no action follows. * Demographic facts should be integrated and demographers should be present in all policy-making.</p>
<p>How did you perceive this questionnaire?</p>	<p>Expectations not met</p>
<p>Why?</p>	<p>Too long</p>