

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

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Country where your organisation is based	ES - Spain
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>Demographic trends and managing their impact can be discussed at many levels. However, to be able to discuss it at European level, first we should have succeeded in displaying local and national policies, from villages to states, which would allow us to try to extract good practices to solve common problems in the EU. Many policy areas should be concerned. In fact, if we take in consideration that "demography" means "citizens", we will agree that many policies must help them to find a better way of life. Many departments of Administration should be concerned, from Health and Social Affairs, to Economy and Finance, even those of Industry and those managing public transport and infrastructure issues. The result must be a global policy according demographic changes. It is a challenge but policies must face challenges presented by society and try to solve them. Then the several levels of Administration shall try to find a global policy in this sense and try to find the way to involve one level into a another in order to get more satisfactory results.</p>	
1. The challenges of European demography	
1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate	
<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>	

- 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?

Education is behind all solutions to achieve a better work/life balance for current and future generations though obviously, it will probably be much easier to educate the new generations in equality since childhood, than correcting the current unbalances. Many programs have tried to develop this type of social education in order to correct and they've got quite a few good results, always relating to the age of the population. The older the population is, usually the most unbalanced work/life situation. Working with these generations become really difficult as men and women have totally assumed a role at home and changing it becomes a challenge. Fortunately, some correction has been achieved and now we can see that distribution of tasks has changed, almost among the youngest and it is in their hands to change the way their parents go on at home. On the other hand, we must celebrate that at least labour regulation is going on the way to contribute to a new order. This order is more or less possible by law, what means that men can take care of their just born children and many countries have promoted the reconciliation policies. Working less hours in order to take care of your family is today a possibility, though the rate of men/women that takes this option is still low, probably because of economic and other personal reasons. Income is a constant inconvenient for many families and offering some money from the Administration once per year to working mothers / fathers is not enough. More effective policies on reconciling work/life and on parental leaves, etc. shall be displayed and companies should think about offering other compensations instead of increasing salaries: probably many people would prefer to have some economic help with the nursery or with the health insurance of their children than getting a higher salary. To encourage youngs to have the number of children they want and at the same time the career they wish is not that easy so new elements should be introduced in the negotiation between company and worker. We agree on that a reduced rate of VAT would be a first step to assist the development of health services but we shall remember that many people does not have acces to private services for economic reasons what means that they would not benefit from a measure like this.

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?

In Spain, immigration has certainly become one of the causes that increased the birth rate. However, integrating is a key point on its development. A convivial atmosphere and respect for the different traditions must be assured by articulating methods to know each other.

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?

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?

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- 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?

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?

Care for elders must be showed as a new employment sector because it is in fact a strong social need. There is only a way to combate low qualifications, generally speaking, among the human resources involved: training of good quality. Public protection system as well as private should work coordinated on it in order to give a better care to our elders and in order to train people best way. Probably social services of the city halls must play a main part as far as they are the closer Administration to the citizen. They can be who detect an unbalanced distribution of care and other problems and they can help to articulate the needed assistance.

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 Questionnaire

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met