

# 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? <span style="float: right;">Yes</span>   |            |
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| Are you replying as an individual or an organisation? <span style="float: right;">Organisation</span>   |            |
| On behalf of which of the following are you replying? <span style="float: right;">Other</span>  |            |
| Please specify the name of your organisation or institution<br>Church Council of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland   |            |
| Country where your organisation is based <span style="float: right;">FI - Finland</span>  |            |
| <b>Explanation</b>  |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you take the view that the discussion of demographic trends and managing their impact should take place at European level?</li> <li>• If so, what should be the objectives, and which policy areas are concerned?</li> </ul> <p>The contribution of the Church Council of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland to the Green Paper "Confronting demographic change; a new solidarity between generations" (COM (2005) 94). The Church Council of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland supports the position presented by the Finnish government and also associates with the joint answer of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches, the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe and Eurodiaconia. In addition, the Church Council would like to bring forward the following remarks to the Commission's Green Paper. Background The Church Council strongly supports the aims to provide a better integration of European demographic change into EU policy, noting that demographic change affects all areas of EU policies and is indeed a big challenge for Member States both in an economic, social, cultural and political aspect. The Church Council emphasizes that the question does not only concern a quantitative but to a great extent also a qualitative development. Both regarding relations between generations, between family life and work and integration of migrants, the most essential factor is the quality of these relations. In this respect an extensive discussion about principles and values is needed on both a national and EU level. Safeguarding the well-being of the elderly requires a more intensified co-operation between different actors. In Finland, services are provided also by associations of general interest, organisations and foundations in addition to municipally provided services. Voluntary services are also important. The Church is also an important actor in this respect. The elderly have during a long lifetime gained a lot of human capital and knowledge. The networks of the elderly represent a lot of social capital, which needs to be properly</p> |            |

appreciated. The Church is in the process of making its own strategy for work with the elderly, which is to be published later this year. The strategy stresses the need to in the future work for an increased appreciation of both the elderly and of work done with the elderly. The main points in the strategy are: taking advantage of the social capital of the elderly in parish work and transferring this capital to the younger generations, and to support and take care of those elderly being in the risk zone of exclusion, including elderly living in service homes and institutions. A sense of community should be increased in parishes. According to the strategy, society ought to be responsible for the fundamental pillars and have primary responsibility for services and care of the elderly, acting in cooperation with other actors, such as the churches and diaconia. The Church should be actively involved in the socio-ethical discussion regarding care of the elderly with the aim of influencing the decision-making processes on both a national and a EU level in order to improve the living conditions of the elderly. 1) Do you take the view that the discussion of demographic trends and managing their impact should take place at European level? Demographic change represents a challenge for all Member States that requires active and extensive discussion on both national and EU level. Emphasizing the principle of subsidiarity, decision-making should however be maintained on a national level. 2) If so, what should be the objectives, and which policy areas are concerned? There should be a more intensified dialogue between social policies and economic policies in order to find common aims and guidelines in a changing context. Research and exchange of information on a EU-level is to be increased, especially regarding exchange of useful experiences and good practices.

## 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?

6) How can the availability of care structures (crèches, nursery schools, etc.) and elderly care structures be improved by the public and private sectors? In the Nordic welfare state model municipalities are responsible for providing basic services. Cooperation with different organisations, providers of private services and for example Churches is however constantly increasing. The Church Council emphasizes the need to monitor the quality of all social services and to guarantee an equal possibility for users of services to get high-quality services regardless of their financial position or domicile. The Church Council supports the view of the Finnish government according to which day care of similar services for children, including afternoon care for schoolchildren, is to be ensured and day activities and intermediate forms between open and institutional services for the elderly developed. 7) Can a reduced rate of VAT contribute to the development of care service? The Church Council supports the view of the Finnish government according to which the issue requires careful analysis, taking into account the different conditions in various Member States, different aims and various institutional structures of care services and possible economic and fiscal consequences.

### 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?

9) To what extent can immigration mitigate certain negative effects of demographic ageing? The Church Council emphasizes the importance of a good migration policy and the need to an extensive discussion on the EU level. Migrants are, however, not to be seen only as increasing labour; among them are also plenty of ageing persons, whose situation need to be properly taken into account. 10) What policies should be developed for better integrating these migrants, in particular young people? A prerequisite for efficient integration is that public services are extended to the greatest possible extent also to migrants. In Finland, the Church has actively participated in integration activities for migrants. The Church Council agrees with the position of the Finnish government according to which integration activities are also in the future to be carried out according to the Member States' own practices.

## 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?

12) How could Community policies contribute more to combating child poverty and poverty among single – parents families and reducing the risk of poverty and exclusion among young people? A vicious circle of poverty which lasts for generations can be cut off by influencing the development of social exclusion. Schools have also an important task in prevention of exclusion. The Finnish model of universal social security has proven to be efficient in preventing poverty and exclusion. The Church emphasizes a holistic family model which takes into account the specific needs of people living at different stages of life. Supporting a safe growing-up environment for children as well as supporting young people in different educational stages is important, especially regarding those in need of special care and support. As for people in working age, social security without gaps is needed in order to prevent exclusion. For elderly people, care must be guaranteed when needed. 15) What forms of solidarity can be fostered between young people and elderly people? Appreciation for each stage of life and sufficient measures for preventing exclusion is needed for solidarity between generations. The aim of the Church is that different age groups would be aware of their own responsibilities and rights, respecting each others' needs on the basis of equality. In its activities, the Church pays special attention to encountering people at different stages of life by creating meeting places and activities for different age groups. Such activities should be supported also on a EU level. Knowledge of other age groups and interaction between generations increase solidarity. Voluntary activities offer good opportunities for different generations to act together. The Church represents an extensive and diversified voluntary sector. However, voluntary activities of the elderly ought however also in the future to remain truly voluntary, so that old people can at one moment be an active actor and at another moment possibly the object of the care activities.

### 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?

- 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?

21) How can activities employing elderly people in the voluntary sector and the social economy be developed? In Finland, voluntary activities among citizens have long historical traditions. Voluntary activities complement public services and should in the future be developed (see point 15), to complement, but not to replace, public care and services. Voluntary activities should develop activities for different generations, including meeting places. One of the crucial points should in the future be to develop activities for groups dealing with peer support and independent initiatives. In Finland, the Church has invested in developing these activities both regarding work with retarded persons and regarding work with the elderly. The Church Council supports the view of the Finnish government that voluntary work of pensioners should remain truly voluntary. Assistance of individuals should not depend solely on voluntary help.

### **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?

26) 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? Co-operation on the whole EU level is needed in order to increase the appreciation of old age and of work with the elderly, in order to guarantee the future supply of sufficient, good and professional personnel to work with the elderly. 27) 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? In Finland, the municipalities are responsible for arranging services for the elderly. In order to clarify and unify activities and to increase resources, cooperation between different actors should be developed. The Finnish government has made a report on the future and a national pension report in 2005. Both the municipalities and the church have, in cooperation with different sectors, made their own programs for policies relating to work with the elderly. The Church has in cooperation with municipalities and branch organisations developed support structures for people involved in dependent care, such as arranging recreational days and development activities and arranging for substitutes for free days.

### **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?

33) How can European social dialogue contribute to the better management of demographic changes? What role can civil society and civil dialogue with young people play? Extensive discussion and active interaction with different actors is needed to a greater extent both on a national and a EU level. One possible form of interaction could be the model of open coordination and national activities like the National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion. NGOs and churches should also take active part in the discussion regarding demographic change in all stages of coordination. 34) How can demographic change be made an integral part of all the Union's internal and external policies? Demographic change must be taken into account in economic, social, employment and migration policies both on a national and a EU level. The Church Council emphasizes, that demographic change should not only be considered as a problem, but also as a possibility.

### **The Questionnaire**

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met