

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

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Privacy statement	
Personal Data	
Do you consent to the publication of your personal data/data relating to your organisation with the publication of your replies to the consultation?	No, references to the personal data should remain anonymous
Name	***
E-mail address	***
Are you replying as an individual or an organisation?	Individual
Gender	Female
Age	40-54
Country of residence	IE - Ireland
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 discussion should take place at the European level, but it should be strongly encouraged on the level of individual member states as well. The objectives should be to secure the role of the family in society as well as to make the work place more adaptable to the needs of parents (especially mothers) and the elderly. The greatest areas of focus should be on the family and raising children, reproductive health, and the elderly.</p>	
1. The challenges of European demography	
1.1. The challenge of a low birth rate	
<p><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></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?

*A better work/life balance will bring greater creativity, innovation, and productivity. More balanced, emotionally healthy, and thus BETTER workers will help to alleviate some of the problems of needing MORE workers. *Task distribution is important in making it easier for women to have children and work. Making task distribution more equal is something that may be more effectively dealt with by media images and advertising than by specific policy. *Benefits shouldn't be linked to task distribution. The COUPLE should decide which parent will take leave. However, parental leave should be paid up to a certain length of time. *Rather than focusing on child care structures, the priority should be to aiding stay-at-home mothers or fathers. Their work in the home should be seen as WORK because parents are doing the work a child care provider would have to do otherwise and furthermore, they are raising a child that will be a long-term economic benefit to society. Making the family a priority will bring long-term demographic solutions, as children who grow up seeing a strong commitment to children will be more likely to raise children of their own. *The work place needs to become more flexible for parents. Leaving one's career for a long or short period of time need not be a huge detriment to advancement. Support should be given to updating the skills of stay-at-home parents. Furthermore, at-home, part-time, and volunteer work should all be seen as important economic contributions and should be encouraged. Giving people the time they desire to take care of their children while still allowing them to contribute to the work force is an important step in creating economic and family solutions. *Tax incentives should be offered for having children because, as stated, children go on to contribute to the economy and children help to take care of their ageing parents. *I'd like to add that an important aspect of this topic is that many who want children are physically incapable of doing so. 1. Marriage and childbirth are increasingly put off and waiting until the later years of life to have children results in the ability to have fewer children. 2. The wide-spread use of birth-control as well as the prevalence of chemicals and new technologies in our society all contributes to infertility. This issue of infertility should also be addressed.

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?

If immigration is considered part of the solution to demographic change, it is important to take into consideration the nature of European immigration. Workers coming into different Member States of the European Union are often highly educated and are looking for immediate benefits; they aren't expecting to do menial labour in the hope that their children will have a better future. If immigration is considered part of the solution to demographic change, we must look closely at the upward mobility of society. It must be possible for immigrants to get ahead in the work force. Also, we must ensure that immigrants will be able to integrate within society and that the social upheavals that sometimes come from social change are taken into account. Housing is an important solution to integration. Decent and affordable housing must be available so that rather than being pushed into the poorest areas of the city, immigrants are able to interact within society. Furthermore, language education should be provided for all ages. Finally, legislation and money towards combating discrimination is an important step towards economic progress for immigrants as well as alleviating the problems that come to society when integrating people.

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?

*Young and elderly people can work together to care for one another. This will be especially true within the framework of the home. There needs to be dialogue as well as a greater social push for people to look after one another - especially family members. In this way, even those who are young or elderly can take on the role of caretaker. While they may not get paid for doing so, they will in actuality be making a financial contribution to society.

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?

*The elderly should be allowed to work so long as they are capable, but they shouldn't be forced to stay in the workforce for a longer period of time. Flexible retirement should also become a more available alternative. *Many of the elderly - regardless of whether they still want to work or not - are willing and able to contribute to society. They should be given that opportunity within family life (caring for young and other elderly) and within the volunteer sector. Furthermore, these non-paid activities should be regarded as important contributions to society and to the economy.

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?

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 EU should promote analyses of demographic change as well as its impact. Financial instruments

should be used to promote family-friendly policies and campaigns and to give incentives to those who have children. *Paid parental leave, flexible work hours, and support/encouraging of non-traditional work (in the home, part-time, volunteer) are all areas that should receive policy and financial attention. *Social dialogue can contribute to strengthening the family and promoting successful immigration. Young people need to know the expectations that may be placed on them (raising children, working harder, and paying for other people's pensions): They need to have their say as to what they are willing to do, what they expect of the workplace, and how much they are prepared to give to society.

The Questionnaire

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met