

# 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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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 Consortium Board of the Generations and Gender Programme. Chair: John Hobcraft (University of York, UK) Members: Francesco Billari (Università Bocconi, Milan, Italy) Helge Brunborg (Statistics Norway) Christoph Bühler (Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany) Jenny Gierveld (Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, The Hague) Francois Héran (Institut national d'études démographiques, Paris, France) Jan M. Hoem (Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany) Jacques Légaré University of Montreal, Canada) Arnaud Regnier-Loilier (Institut national d'études démographiques, Paris, France) Sange de Silva (Statistics Canada) Zsolt Spéder (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest) Martin Spielauer (Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany) Andres Vikat (UN Economic Commission for Europe)	
Country where your organisation is based <span style="float: right;">International organisation</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>In our opinion, the EU should make efforts to respond to the challenges the demographic developments pose to its member countries, because of the important implications of these developments across all spheres of society. Statistical systems currently allow monitoring demographic developments all over Europe, and regular overviews on basic indicators on demographic processes have proven to be very useful for understanding the trends. However, they would only allow us to know about the past and present. While maintaining and enhancing analyses of aggregate demographic trends, the EU should notably increase its efforts towards understanding the underlying forces behind those trends to be able to have some bearing on future developments in a desired way.</p>	

## 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?

### 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?

## 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?

- 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?

### 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?

To be able to take knowledge-based action and move towards answers for the many questions in this questionnaire, the EU should promote analyses aiming at explanation of demographic processes. These analyses should address behavioural mechanisms on the micro level of individuals and households, be interdisciplinary, cover the wide range of different European societies and be oriented towards the needs of policy-making. Analyzing micro-level demographic choices is pre-dominantly seen as the main route to improve our understanding of the underlying causal processes of demographic change. However, demographic choices are not only determined by characteristics of the individuals directly involved in it, but also by the various contexts in which they act. Much of the information on these contexts is available and needs to be adequately integrated into analysis programmes focusing on demographic behaviour. The determinants of demographic behaviour range across a broad variety of domains. When taken separately, single disciplinary perspectives on each of these domains are insufficient to explain demographic behaviour. A clearer overall picture of family relationships would emerge by integrating the approaches of several disciplinary perspectives, including demography, sociology, economics, political science, psychology and epidemiology towards a common goal of better understanding of demographic choices. In the Europe of today, the socially and politically constructed concept of gender is a central organizing principle of all social relationships. This includes the relationships between women and men, the relationships between generations, the organization of families, networks of people, education, work, as well as preferences and values. Better understanding of the impact of gendered social systems on demographic behaviour is one of the most important avenues that can directly lead to developing policy measures to influence Europe's demographic situation and improve Europeans' quality of life. The Green Paper demonstrates many common features in the demographic development of EU countries. In parallel with the common features, there are also pertinent differences in long-term demographic development, in the ways these societies are organised, in their cultural characteristics and in the various policies relevant to the family relationships. All this has impact on the development of family relationships in the recent past, present and the future. Disentangling the causes of the differences in demographic reactions requires comparable data from many countries that represent a considerable variety of demographic, social, welfare, and cultural regimes. Knowing about Europe's current demographic prospects and about the long time it takes for changes in fertility to influence the labour force and the size of future generations, the EU should consolidate efforts towards developing sustainable demographic policies to influence its demographic future. Among other things, this requires openness towards supporting existing co-

operation programmes designed for enhancing the knowledge base for such policies. The Generations and Gender Programme developed by a consortium of leading centres of demographic analysis and statistical offices has a very good potential to meet these needs of the EU. This Programme comprises two main elements, a Generations and Gender Survey that covers the broad range of influences on demographic behaviour outlined above in a triennial prospective panel study, and a related Contextual Database that covers national and regional trends and policies on these issues. The Programme has been adopted in a number of Member States and Accession Countries, but lacks secure funding. The Consortium Board would warmly welcome collaboration with the European Commission in the future development of the Generations and Gender Programme.

### **The Questionnaire**

How did you perceive this questionnaire? Expectations met