



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Active Ageing

***3019th EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY HEALTH and CONSUMER
AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 7 June 2010***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

"RECALLING:

1. that Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union states that the Union shall promote solidarity between generations;
2. that under Article 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Council and the European Parliament can adopt measures to enhance cooperation among Member States in order to promote social protection, excluding any harmonization of the Member States' laws and regulations;
3. that, under Article 156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Commission will foster the cooperation among the Member States and facilitate the coordination of actions in the field of social policy;
4. that Europe is experiencing significant demographic change, as was stressed by the Commission in its communications on "The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity" of 12 October 2006 and on "Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the European Union" of 21 April 2009;
5. that the population aged 60 and above will increase at a much faster speed than ever before in the European Union and that the largest increase is expected to occur during the period 2015-35 when the population aged 60 and above will be increasing by 2 million people every year.

P R E S S

6. the Madrid International Action Plan on Ageing, as adopted in April 2002 in the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing,¹ which recognises that persons, as they age, should enjoy active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies as a main development objective;
7. the Berlin Ministerial Declaration of 11 September 2002 "A Society for all ages in the UNECE Region"², which underlined that older people make an essential contribution to society and thus need to be enabled to participate fully in all aspects of life through mainstreaming ageing in all policy fields;
8. the León Ministerial Declaration of 8 November 2007 "A Society for all ages: challenges and opportunities", which establishes that, in order to promote participation of older people, it is important to have a favourable environment which supports active ageing, life-long learning and access to information and communication technologies, as well as volunteering and civic action³.
9. the Council Resolution on "Opportunities and challenges of demographic change in Europe: the contribution of older people to economic and social development" (as adopted in February 2007), which highlighted the need to strengthen older persons' resources and potential for active participation in society as a whole;
10. the Commission White Paper "Together for Health: A strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013", which highlighted the need to enhance good health throughout the lifespan in a ageing Europe;
11. the 2009 European Commission Ageing Report "Economic and budgetary projections for the EU-27 Member States (2008-2060)";
12. the Council Conclusions on Common Principles of Flexicurity of 5 December 2007, which underlined that flexicurity should promote more open, responsive and inclusive labour markets and that flexicurity involves also comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and modern, adequate and sustainable social protection systems.
13. the outcomes of the "Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies Conference", held during the Slovenian Presidency on 27-29 April 2008, which stressed the importance of intergenerational solidarity as a means to accomplish a cohesive society based on new forms of interchange between generations and called for a European Year on this issue;
14. the outcomes of the conference "Employing older people within the European Union: a future for Europeans of all ages", organized during the French Presidency on 24 November 2008;

¹ United Nations Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002 A/CONF.179/9.

² <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/397/51/PDF/N0239751.pdf?OpenElement>
 United Nations, Economic and Social Council – Economic Commission for Europe – ECE/AC.23/2002/3Rev.2; 11 September 2002.

³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council-Economic Commission for Europe- ECE/AC.30/2007/2 23 January 2008.

15. the outcomes of the conference "The Dignity and Hazard of the Elderly", held during the Czech Presidency on 25 and 26 May 2009, and the outcomes of the conference on "Healthy and Dignified Ageing", held during the Swedish Presidency on 15 and 16 September 2009, which emphasized the need for increasing intersectoral cooperation, especially between the health and social sectors, both at the EU level and between and within the Member States, in order to promote active, healthy and dignified ageing in the EU, and according to which the Member States have a lot to learn from each other;
16. the Council Conclusions on "Equal Opportunities for women and men: active and dignified ageing" (2009), which recognize that, throughout the EU, older women and men face serious challenges relating to a number of cross-cutting issues, as they seek to live active lives and to age with dignity;
17. the Council Conclusions on "Healthy and dignified ageing" (2009) which invite the Member States to make the issue of healthy and dignified ageing one of the priorities for the coming years and invite the Commission to support actions to foster healthy and dignified ageing and to adopt, if appropriate, in 2011, an action plan outlining further activities which would promote their dignity, health and quality of life.
18. the Commission Communication on "Solidarity in health: Reducing health inequalities in the EU", which sets out steps that the Commission will take to help to address health inequalities;
19. that, according to the 18-month programme of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies, these three Presidencies will focus on supporting various initiatives in the context of the ageing society, and thus conduct preparatory work with a view to a European Year for Active Ageing in 2012;
20. the results from the Opening Conference on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion held during the Spanish Presidency on 21 January 2010, which emphasised the vulnerability of older persons facing social exclusion and poverty;
21. that mobilising the full potential of older people is a key response to demographic change which should, however, be seen as part of a comprehensive strategy covering the five policy areas highlighted in the Commission Communication on the demographic future of Europe. This Communication stressed the importance of better conditions for Europe's demographic renewal, the need to raise employment levels and to boost productivity, the potential of legal immigration and the importance of sound public finances;
22. that achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy through a comprehensive policy mix, including action at the level of the European Union and national, regional and local levels, will both make a central contribution to addressing the challenges of population ageing and making the most of the opportunities to enhance the quality of life of all EU citizens.

ACKNOWLEDGES

23. that Europe's future economic competitiveness and prosperity depends crucially on its ability to fully utilize its labour resources, including through the extension of employment periods over the life course and through the adoption of appropriate policies to reconcile work, family and private life. As many Europeans live longer and healthier lives, enabling and encouraging older workers to remain on the labour market is an important contribution to intergenerational solidarity;
24. that rising average life expectancy combined with low birth rates, imply a changing balance between younger and older people, a shift that is currently accelerated by the fact that the large baby-boom cohorts are reaching their retirement age;
25. that rising average life expectancy represents an achievement of our societies but that the demographic changes also present a challenge to sustainable public finances, and in particular to sustainable financing of pensions, healthcare and of long-term care since the costs in all Member States are expected to rise as a result of the growing number of older persons in our societies;
26. that older people provide much help to other members of society and that enabling them to remain active and independent must become a priority to allow for sustainable management of the effects of ageing on both the economy and society;
27. that older people have a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience that should allow them to make useful contributions to society, thus strengthening solidarity between generations and the development of civil society;
28. that this contribution is not only of a purely economic nature, but includes social and cultural commitment as well as support for relatives;
29. that, in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy, which set the goal of achieving an employment rate of older workers of 50% by 2010, the Member States have reversed the trend to earlier retirement so that the EU-27 employment rate of people aged 55-64 has increased from 36,9% in 2000 to 46,2% in the third quarter of 2009;
30. that older men and women are a heterogeneous group with different abilities and needs depending on individuals' age, educational attainment, specific social, cultural and economic circumstances and health status, and that this diversity and its implications for gender equality must be taken into account when mobilising the potential of older women and men or addressing their needs in a spirit of social cohesion and solidarity between the generations;

EMPHASISES

31. that Europe's best chance for addressing the challenges of population ageing depends on making full use of the potential of older people, which will require the promotion of active ageing;
32. that men and women can face unacceptable discrimination on the grounds of age, and thus the promotion and implementation of equal opportunities policies should constitute an integral part of an active ageing strategy;

33. that active ageing and the mobilisation of the potential of older persons will be crucial for preserving solidarity between the generations: it should allow inclusion and participation for all in accordance with their needs, interests and capacities;
34. that active ageing means creating opportunities for staying longer on the labour market, for contributing to society through unpaid work in the community as volunteers or passing on their skills to younger people, and in their extended families, and for living autonomously and in dignity for as much and as long as possible;
35. that the continued participation of older workers, both women and men, in employment can make a valuable contribution to improving the performance and productivity of the economy which in turn is of benefit to all parts of society;
36. that active ageing is to be regarded from the wider perspective of sustainable employability of women and men throughout the whole working life and that encouraging older workers to stay in employment requires notably the improvement of working conditions to safeguard their health and safety or the adaptation of work places to their health status and needs, fighting age and gender discrimination, updating their skills by providing appropriate access to lifelong learning and training and the review, when necessary, of tax and benefit systems to ensure that there are effective incentives for working longer;
37. that the huge potential that older people represent for society as volunteers or informal carers should be better mobilised by promoting a culture which values voluntary work and by providing the right framework and opportunities;
38. that the growing proportion of older people in Europe makes it more important than ever to promote healthier ageing as well as efficiency and quality of healthcare and social care services. Leading an active social life with physical activity and proper nutrition from an early age is an important prerequisite for healthy ageing with gains for the individual and society through delayed illness and disability. Healthier ageing and more efficient and accessible healthcare and social care services, including preventive measures, will lead to reduced costs for care that could to a significant extent offset the financial impact of demographic ageing in the health and social sectors;
39. that illness prevention policies must focus on keeping personal autonomy and dignity, retarding the manifestation of disability risks and delaying dependency, thus reducing the need for long term care;
40. that many older people will nevertheless have to cope with health impairments and that their ability to lead an active and autonomous life will very much depend on the environment in which they live and on the social support and services available to them;
41. that progress in ensuring better conditions for active ageing depends on the information and mobilisation and on action of stakeholders at all levels, including public authorities, social partners and civil society organisations;
42. that, in particular, Governments alone cannot take forward employment policies for older people; thus cooperation with the social partners and support of business to promote the employment of older people are necessary;

43. that it is necessary to exchange views, experiences and good practices at EU, national and local levels on policies and initiatives to promote active ageing in order to better mobilise the potential of older people and to eliminate obstacles to active ageing;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES

44. to highlight the benefits and opportunities that the economic and social participation of older women and men would provide to society, in particular by ensuring that the people now entering their late fifties and sixties face good opportunities for employment, active participation in society and healthy living;
45. to encourage companies to introduce age management strategies that will enhance their competitiveness by harnessing the experience and specific qualities of older workers;
46. to facilitate the growth of the "silver economy" which, by catering to the needs of the growing number of older people, creates new business and career opportunities for people of all ages;
47. to strengthen intergenerational solidarity as one of the most important aspects to enhance social cohesion and the development of a participatory culture where women and men of all ages take part;
48. to make active ageing one of the priorities for the coming years. This includes, in particular, the creation of suitable framework conditions for mobilising the potential of older persons and the development of innovative approaches for activities as well as appropriate training for supporting services' staff;
49. to further develop active ageing policies through specific activities and by committing to specific objectives in the context of a European Year for Active Ageing⁴;
50. to raise the employment rates of older workers by improving working conditions, investing in life-long learning and removing employment obstacles, including those linked to discrimination. This should be achieved, where appropriate, in cooperation with the social partners;
51. to promote access of older persons to education and to information and communication technologies that will allow them to remain active and fully involved in society;
52. to promote volunteer initiatives as well as initiatives designed for intergenerational exchange for both women and men and volunteer activities of older persons;
53. to ensure that health and social services cooperate and focus more on health promotion, including early intervention, to facilitate active, autonomous and dignified ageing;
54. to encourage regional and local authorities, the social partners and other stakeholders to commit to active ageing related objectives and launch initiatives to achieve these objectives;

⁴ MT: scrutiny reservation.

INVITES THE COMMISSION

55. to present at the 2010 European Demography Forum a strategic framework for promoting active ageing in which new initiatives and partnerships supporting active, healthy and dignified ageing at all levels can be encouraged and publicised;
56. to pursue the preparation of a European Year for Active Ageing in 2012, during which the benefits of active ageing and its contribution to solidarity between generations can be highlighted and promising initiatives in support of active ageing at all levels can be publicised;
57. to foster initiatives for the exchange of information and good practices between the Member States and stakeholders on how to promote active ageing, thereby promoting closer cooperation among the Member States;
58. to support the implementation of new initiatives promoting active, healthy and dignified ageing through the existing policy instruments and programmes of the EU.

INVITES MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION

59. to develop common principles for active ageing which would help public authorities and stakeholders at all levels to pursue active ageing policies, while taking into account the growing diversity of older people;
 60. to develop and conduct activities for raising awareness of the importance of active ageing and the need to mobilise the full potential of older people for their own and society's benefit;
 61. to use all the possibilities offered by the Open Method of Coordination, the Employment Strategy and other Community instruments and programmes, including the financial support of Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund, to foster active ageing;
 62. to use existing advisory and policy committees, including the Social Protection Committee, the Employment Committee, the Economic Policy Committee, the Group of Experts on Demographic Issues, to maintain active ageing high on the EU's and Member States' policy agenda."
-