

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

FINAL
A6-0041/2006

24.2.2006

REPORT

on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations
(2005/2147(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: Philip Bushill-Matthews

Draftswoman (*) : Edite Estrela, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender
Equality

(*) Enhanced cooperation between committees - Rule 47 of the Rules of
Procedure

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION	3
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY*	16
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY	23
PROCEDURE	26

(*) Enhanced cooperation between committees - Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations (2005/2147(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution on the Commission's report on the demographic situation in the European Union (1995)¹,
 - having regard to its resolution on the Commission demographic report 1997²,
 - having regard to its resolution on the Commission communication "Towards a Europe for all ages - promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity"³,
 - having regard to the Commission communication "Europe's response to World Ageing Promoting economic and social progress in an ageing world - A contribution of the European Commission to the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing" (COM(2002)0143),
 - having regard to the European Youth Pact adopted by the Brussels European Council of 22-23 March 2005,
 - having regard to the Commission's Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations" (COM(2005)0094),
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0041/2006),
- A. whereas demographic change, which is partly attributable to increased life expectancy, should not be treated just as a problem, but also represents a positive challenge to societies to engage people in all age groups and to offer opportunities which previously did not exist,
- B. whereas the Lisbon Strategy underlines the need for increased participation by women in the employment market in order to achieve the Lisbon objectives of full employment with high quality jobs,
- C. whereas Directive 92/85/EEC introduces measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding,

¹ OJ C 115, 14.4.1997, p 238.

² OJ C 104, 6.4.1997, p. 222.

³ OJ C 232, 17.8.2001, p. 381.

1. Welcomes the Commission Communication on the Green Paper “Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations”;
2. Welcomes the fact that, in presenting its Green Paper entitled 'Confronting demographic change - a new solidarity between the generations' (COM(2005)0094), the Commission has addressed at European level one of the key political and social challenges; stresses, at the same time, that numerous issues relating to demographic change in society fall exclusively within the sphere of competence of the Member States and that, therefore, there is no general Community competence for establishing European rules in this area;
3. Regrets that the Commission Green Paper does not systematically incorporate the gender perspective at either the macro or micro level of analysis, although this is essential to develop comprehensive reflections and actions;
4. Considers that demographic change and its impact on society are crucially important for the future of the Member States and of the Union; therefore calls on the Commission to acknowledge demographic change as a horizontal task and to take it into account in an appropriate manner, in the form of mainstreaming, in all the Union's activities;
5. Observes that demographic change plus low economic growth/continuing high unemployment will increase these challenges exponentially over time; concludes, therefore, that growth should be increased and high unemployment should be reduced in order to counter the adverse consequences of demographic change;
6. Is surprised that the Green Paper makes only passing reference to the healthcare aspects of demographic change; emphasises that, because of an ageing population, the demand for health and long-term care services increases qualitatively and quantitatively; is convinced that investment in measures for the prevention of long-term illness is important for coming to terms with the human and financial aspects of demographic change; states that the longer people are in a position to enjoy healthy lives, the longer they can remain active and work;
7. Agrees that, with lowering rates of reproduction, economic growth can be maintained only through measures aimed at higher employment, innovation and increased productivity, as well as by modernising social protection;
8. Advocates, in view of the marked change in demographic circumstances, a new solidarity across the generations and the further development of the existing social models in the European Union, the main objective of which should be to ensure participation in society, social security and social solidarity for all, and to encourage the potential of all generations;
9. Recognises that different Member States are grappling with common challenges in this area, and are exploring different solutions with varying degrees of success; considers that there are no single One-Size-Fits-All “right” answers, especially in a Union of 25 or more member States; stresses that the need for a varied approach in tackling demographic challenges is further increased by the significant disparities experienced

- in the different regions and sub-regions; such disparities will require imaginative, non-uniform approaches;
10. Regrets that the Green Paper does not highlight the importance of reproductive and sexual health in demographic changes; points out that infertility, and particularly male infertility, is on the rise, especially in highly industrialized areas, and that in some European countries up to 15% of couples are now infertile, chemical pollution being one of the causes of infertility;
 11. Regrets that the Green Paper does not give consideration to the growing number of single-parent families, 85% of which are headed by women and most of which are subject to a higher risk of poverty and should therefore be given special support;
 12. Is concerned at increasing poverty and neglect in many Member States, which are particularly affecting children; proposes that innovative projects should be implemented, particularly in urban areas with problems associated with poverty and neglect, which provide points of contact for children as a matter of priority; calls for the parents also to be involved in these projects so that they become aware of their responsibility for the welfare of their children; stresses the importance of an extensive system of telephone hotlines for children;
 13. Considers that it would be interesting to conduct a survey on the average level of maintenance and the actual payment of such maintenance in the EU Member States, as well as practices as regards the sharing of pension and social security entitlements;
 14. Notes the experience of Member States in which there exists a 'guaranteed minimum income';
 15. Is concerned about the difference in healthcare systems in the Member States, regions and social groups; states that the difference in healthcare (low life expectancy, widespread chronic illness, illness caused by living conditions), along with a low birth rate and emigration, can lead to a further increase in regional disparities and to a vicious circle which is difficult to break; asks the Member States to notify their differences in healthcare so as to achieve, with help from the Commission, a systematic exchange of best practice and to overcome this issue effectively;
 16. Calls on the Member States to acknowledge demographic change as a common challenge and to decide on a more intensive exchange of views at the Spring European Council about the effects of demographic change and on proven practices, especially in areas such as active ageing, family living conditions and the balance between working life and family life;
 17. Believes that all Member States can learn more from each other by exchanging best practices more vigorously, particularly with those Scandinavian countries where a high participation of men and women in the labour market is coupled with some of the highest fertility rates in Europe and where the availability of free or affordable childcare facilities, parental leave opportunities and the rules on maternity leave are contributory factors in the high participation of women in the labour market;

18. Welcomes the fact that the European Union, through measures aimed at improving the framework conditions, wishes to support the Member States in reducing the discrepancy between the number of children parents wish for (2.3) and the actual number of children (1.5) they have;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to undertake and disseminate studies on population change in the individual Member States, taking account of the causes and the likely short-term consequences thereof;
20. Suggests that when comparing best practice regarding female labour market participation, comparisons are sought from, other countries;
21. Stresses that creating favourable conditions for couples to have the number of children they wish is one of the conditions for the existence and development of any society, given the social and economic challenges resulting from the declining birth rate, and that action should therefore be taken to support motherhood and fatherhood;
22. Considers that the decision by many women or couples to limit or delay having a child or children may not be their preference, but a preference forced upon them by the challenge of reconciling work, private and family life; considers that it is not just in the interests of parents to enable them to have the number of children they want and when they want them, but also in the interests of society as a whole given the declining birth-rate in Europe at present; urges therefore that State sources support the establishment and operation of crèches and day nurseries and looking after older persons who require care; stresses that adequate access to services for the care of children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other dependants is essential in order to enable full and equal participation of men and women in the labour market;
23. Urges the Member States to promote tax measures to encourage a higher birth rate and draws attention to the fact that women, in particular young single mothers, should be guaranteed special protection and support following the birth of a child;
24. Calls on the Member States to adopt measures to permit the creation of high-quality and affordable daycare facilities for children and other dependent persons, so as to help reconcile family life and work;
25. Calls on Member States to study the costs and benefits of unpaid, voluntary and unstable work undertaken by young people as a means of entering the labour market; points to the possible links between such activities and low fertility levels through reduced access to housing and reduced stability; calls on private companies to review their policies in this regard;
26. Considers that gender equality and combating discrimination against women at the workplace, both at the level of employment and being entrusted with responsibilities, and at the level of pay, could and should play a crucial role in the creation of families, supporting them and, at the same time, reducing the birth shortage in Europe;
27. Considers that many parents' ability to take an active part in the labour market is dependent on the possibility of obtaining good, reliable care for children, the sick and

- the elderly at a price affordable for all regardless of income; calls on the Member States to ensure the provision of such services;
28. Calls on Member States to do more to identify and overcome all obstacles to promoting families, including obstacles outside the workplace, by taking such measures as:
- i) permitting more flexibility at work, recognising workers' needs, so that they can better adapt their working time to their family and shopping requirements.
 - ii) improving the limited access to the housing market, for example by promoting easier access for mortgage finance so that more people can become property-owners and thereby gain their independence earlier;
 - iii) producing family-friendlier tax policies;
 - iv) promoting wider and more accessible childcare and dependent-care facilities;
 - v) promoting thriving local schools;
 - vi) improving compatibility of school hours with working hours, at the same time promoting flexibility in working time and combating a long hours culture
 - vii) the continued promotion of equality at the workplace
 - viii) renewed efforts to promote equality at home, a fairer division of household and family obligations and the elimination of stereotypes through public information and awareness campaigns;
29. Calls on the Member States to increase the availability of proper housing for families, especially for one-parent families and elderly people, for example 'inter-generational projects', in connection with urban development and town planning;³⁰. Calls for the modernisation and development of national social security systems, especially in the field of day care for children and dependent persons while recognising that this area is a Member State competence; notes that single parent families and lone elderly women are particularly endangered by social exclusion, isolation and impoverishment and hence particular attention should be devoted to improving the standard of living and social participation of this expanding section of the population when considering such reform;
31. Wishes to see the Member States work towards cutting red tape associated with measures to support families with regard to childcare;
32. Stresses that, despite the progress made by the Member States in terms of raising the rate of women's employment, other forms of discrimination linked to women's employment are persisting or becoming more marked; calls, in this context, especially, for Member States to implement properly Council Directive [75/117/EEC](#) of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the

- application of the principle of equal pay for men and women¹; stresses that the pay gap between men and women and the fact that women continue to fill low-paid jobs for which they are overqualified diminish the necessary financial independence of women, which is closely linked to the decision to have children; recommends that the Member States encourage the development of female employment and women's access to quality jobs and to equal treatment as regards pay;
33. Calls on the Member States to adopt measures aimed at setting up high-quality, affordable childcare facilities and facilities for care of other dependent persons in accordance with the objectives set by the 2002 Barcelona European Council, in which it was stated that, by 2010, Member States should provide childcare for at least 90% of children between the age of 3 and mandatory school age, and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age; emphasises that these measures should enable women to adjust their participation in the job market to their rhythm of life;; and furthermore, calls on the Member States to put forward similar targets for facilities for care for the elderly and people with disabilities; and furthermore, calls on the Member States to put forward similar targets for facilities for care for the elderly and people with disabilities;
 34. Considers that demographic change will require new and enhanced educational and social infrastructure for young and elderly people alike, including increased facilities for life-long learning, childcare, nursing care and care for the elderly; points out the need for enhanced social infrastructures designed to promote old people's vitality and reintegrate them more actively into societal life; 35. Stresses that, in many Member States, there is the significant risk of public finance commitments becoming unsustainable in the long term, illustrating the urgent need for reform; underlines the vital importance that EU decision-makers take into account the financial impact of new and existing social legislation;
 36. Calls on the Member States to promote the quality of jobs and of the working environment so as to facilitate the implementation of lifelong professional training, enabling women and men to meet both their family obligations and labour market demands;
 37. Calls on the Member States to identify equality of the sexes and a balance between work and private life as government priorities;
 38. Notes that mounting social security costs will require dynamic economic growth to finance them; points out that this can occur only if innovation is encouraged; observes that fiscal methods such as increasing taxes to fund social security are less sustainable in the long-term given the falling tax base and higher dependency ratio as well as the urgent need to stimulate entrepreneurship in Europe; highlights therefore the need for a holistic policy approach when considering social security reform;
 39. Believes that we need to develop beyond the concept of a 'welfare state', whereby the primary responsibility for welfare lies with the state, and more towards a 'welfare

¹ OJ L 45, 19.2.1975, p. 19.

- society' in which all stakeholders recognise that they too have responsibilities for looking after each other and that these responsibilities can be mutually reinforcing;
40. Submits that the improvement of work-life balance for individuals should be a perpetual priority for governments; considers that this balance can be threatened by rising unemployment and increasing individual workloads; points out that more flexible working hours for women and men, provided they result from a free choice and are not imposed under economic pressure, can help them combine work and family life more successfully; concludes that this should require governments to be enabling individuals to make genuinely free choices rather than making such choices on their behalf;
 41. Calls on the Commission to consult both sides of industry on the issue of a better balance between working life and family life;
 42. Considers that the business case for making work places more family-friendly should be made more strongly; recommends that Member States should establish guidelines for companies wishing to adopt such measures, taking into account the particular challenges for SMEs;
 43. Calls on the Member States to implement rules establishing paid maternity/paternity leave following the birth of a child and to promote the use of the right to parental leave shared equitably between women and men; urges the Member States, to this end, to combat the economic, social and cultural prejudices associated with the right of parental leave for men; calls on the Commission to revise Directive 96/34/EC on parental leave¹; considers that parental leave, with a simultaneous guarantee of job retention, should be taken up by both fathers and mothers; advocates a system of incentives which will encourage partners to share parental leave, and recompense for the costs associated with bringing up children; calls on the Commission to consult both sides of industry on possible changes to the reforms concerning parental leave which were introduced in 1996, the purpose of which might be to extend the minimum period of three months to six;
 44. Reminds Member States of the third principle of the European Charter for Small Enterprises, namely that small enterprises could be exempted from certain regulatory obligations; calls on Member States as well as the Commission to translate this principle into action;
 45. Cannot stress strongly enough the importance of access to education, skills development, technology and life long learning opportunities plus the promotion of a training culture that encourages participation by people of all ages, particularly those entering and re-entering the job market; stresses that real qualifications such as technical and language skills should be given higher priority to optimise individual mobility, adaptability and employability as well as self-fulfilment; stresses the importance of preventive early-school leaving interventions and the need to look at alternative means of assessment for access to further training; specifically highlights the need for training for older people in areas such as information technology to

¹ OJ L 10, 16.1.1998, p. 24.

- remove obstacles to their ongoing participation in the labour market; encourages the development of special education methods for older people to this end;
46. Calls on the Member States, therefore, to give older workers, in particular, the opportunity to pursue professional training programmes, so as to ensure that they may play an active part in the world of work until they reach retirement age; invites the Commission, in this connection, to approve the operational programmes for the ESF only if they include a specific element relating to training measures for old people;
 47. Advocates the conclusion of partnership agreements between governments and both sides of industry in accordance with national custom and practice to promote the employment of older workers through measures to combat age discrimination, more flexible working time and measures to reintegrate older workers who are unemployed;
 48. Considers that European companies, especially in view of the need to protect those social groups most at risk (including old people, persons with disabilities and, in particular, young parents), to improve workplace safety and to promote forms of work organisation that can help extend accessibility, have a vital role to play in actively promoting and implementing equal opportunities, particularly in regard to family policy and combating discrimination on grounds of age, gender and family status; adds that companies should shoulder their Corporate Social responsibility and embrace the challenges associated with an ageing population by such initiatives as the promotion of flexible working hours and part-time work, for example especially in regard to parents, prospective parents and older workers;
 49. Endorses the Commission initiative for a framework directive to implement Article 13 of the EC Treaty (2001/C 80/01);
 50. Concludes that the business case for retaining older workers needs to be made more strongly considering the potential of this group; considers that the emphasis should be to encourage and enable people to work longer, and that employers should be led to realise that this is in the interest of both parties; considers that healthy older people should represent a positive resource for society rather than an economic threat; considers that more emphasis to the positive outcome of the 1993 European Year of the Elderly should be given;
 51. Appeals to companies to offer more flexible working time arrangements which take account of the different stages of life and open up, develop and design job opportunities consistent with the needs of parents and older workers, in particular;
 52. Takes the view that the social partners should ensure that there is an adaptable labour market in order to create more flexible jobs, which ensures that there is a possibility of a place and a use for everyone on the labour market;
 53. Notes that, given the mobility of European workers and the centralisation of the labour markets, it is now necessary not only to improve mutual understanding of the different social security systems, but also to ensure a smooth passage between one national system and another, in a form that applies to public, private and other forms of insurance;

54. Highlights the importance of knowledge-capture from retiring employees, particularly in the public sector where, in France for example, 50% percent of the public workforce will be eligible for retirement in the next ten years; urges Member States to encourage both the private and public sector to adopt proactive measures to avoid the loss of valuable experience and insight such as the mentoring of those entering the labour market, phased retirement and the implementation of lifelong-learning programmes; calls on Member States to afford special assistance to SMEs in this regard;
55. Believes that particular attention should be paid to the oldest age-group (i.e. the over-80s), 25% of whom are not self-sufficient, and calls on the Commission to submit a proposal aimed at achieving a reduction in that percentage by means of collective and individual measures and tackling the problems of state welfare provision and health and social services for those who are not self-sufficient;
56. Recognises however that labour-intensive professions such as roofing, construction and farming face greater challenges in harnessing the productive capacity of older workers and encouraging young recruits; encourages Member States to develop good practice for these professions so as to avoid staff shortages and skills loss;
57. Encourages Member States and private companies to decouple higher ages and automatically higher wage levels, recognising that some pre-retirement people, while appreciating some income, may not require the same level of salary or working hours as during their earlier years; highlights the importance of more flexible working opportunities, such as part-time working, in later years as a potential solution;
58. Encourages Member States to remove all disincentives for older people to continue working, particularly in relation to tax and pensions, and to explore possibilities for retirement age workers to withdraw part of their pension whilst continuing to receiving income from employment;
59. Points out that elderly people can play a positive role in providing child care, and that conversely younger generations often have to play a role in providing care for dependants; calls on Member States and employers to show that they recognise this more fully;
60. Observes that in some cases, such as anti-age-discrimination legislation, the law can on occasion be counter-productive in that it can discourage or even prevent companies taking on older workers; asks that Member States investigate more thoroughly the impact and application of such legislation in order to assess whether such measures are having the desired effect; urges that the spirit as well as the letter of such anti-discrimination legislation is observed;
61. Highlights that an ageing EU population is likely to lead to an increasing proportion of people having a disability; notes the persistent high levels of unemployment among this group; calls on governments and companies to facilitate such people into work by example;
62. Regrets that 'active ageing' is almost exclusively defined in the Lisbon strategy in

- terms of paid employment, whereas the concept should be applied more broadly to include unpaid activities such as work in civic, political and other voluntary organisations; recognises that such active engagement in society in unpaid work requires an adequate income from other sources; recognises that 'active ageing' is closely bound up with raising the retirement age and considers such a move to be one possible response to demographic change;
63. Recognises that pension systems are a Member State competence; considers however that with regards pension entitlements, workers in the public and private sector should be treated equally rather than those from one sector receiving preferential treatment; considers that steps must also be taken to promote phased and flexible retirement, taking account of increased life expectancy and better public health; recognises that as people are living longer they can also work longer and calls on governments to consider financial incentives to encourage people to do so;
 64. Believes that all Member States can learn more from each other by exchanging best practices more vigorously with regards pensions reform; good examples include the reform of the Hungarian pension system, which is based on three pillars, where partial privatisation guarantees better sustainability, or the care payment, which also gives rise to a pension entitlement and which entails a family member's looking after a person who is in need of care in return for a payment from the State;
 65. Stresses, in view of demographic developments, the crucial importance of strong, financially viable social security systems, in particular pensions systems which promote appropriate, sustainable pensions, and health systems which are based on the principles of solidarity, fairness and universality, so as to improve access for all citizens to appropriate high-quality care in the event of sickness or a need for care; calls on the Member States to take the necessary measures to modernise pensions systems, so as to guarantee their financial and social viability and enable them to cope with the impact of the ageing population;
 66. Believes that reforms of national pension systems should not just concentrate on making such systems financially sustainable, but should also help make the lives of the elderly more financially sustainable;
 67. Recognises however that it is difficult for state-funded pensions to fulfil people's income needs in retirement: considers that greater importance and energy should be committed by Member States to develop appropriate supplementary pension systems and to encourage personal savings;
 68. Considers that national state-funded pensions, at whatever level determined by Member States, should be available equally to all as an entitlement and as such should not be subject to means-testing;
 69. Recalls that owners of small enterprises are subject to demographic change in the same way as employed workers; is alarmed that in the next 10 years a third of European small business owners will retire and encourages all actors to promote entrepreneurialism not only to capture the skills and knowledge of this group but also

- to offset the negative consequences for growth;
70. Considers that immigration policies which seek to promote the sustainable economic, social and legal integration of migrants are vital in order to achieve a balance between the respective rights and responsibilities of migrants and host societies, and that admission mechanisms for third country nationals must be managed effectively and transparently; prerequisites of the integration process are equal treatment through the elimination of all discrimination against migrants and their offspring and a close alignment with employment and social affairs policies; such policies should be encouraged in a bid to alleviate certain democratic challenges; recognises however that immigration in itself will not resolve all the problems associated with demographic change and also creates its own challenges;
 71. Notes that in the regions of Eastern Europe there is huge migratory outflow of young women, and that a responsible economic and employment policy and the targeted deployment of European Structural Funds under the existing provisions for gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the interests of women are therefore needed there;
 72. Recognises that management of immigration is a Member State competence; considers that greater efforts should be focused on education and skills development specifically for immigrants and ethnic communities;
 73. Considers that the proportion of ethnic minority people amongst those elderly requiring long term care is increasing substantially in some Member States; considers moreover that it should not be assumed that migrants and their offspring will prefer to return to their country of origin, particularly in old age, or where their offspring have been raised within the EU; adds that although the availability of quality childcare and elderly care is important to all ethnic groups, particularly for all women, it impacts on each ethnic groups differently and due attention should be paid to this in planning these services; stresses that anti-discrimination and equal treatment in the provision of such services is also key; recommends that more attention is paid to this aspect, particularly as regards comparing best practice;
 74. Notes that not enough attention has been paid hitherto to the integration of migrants, which is reflected, in part, in the low level of educational success and the continuing marginalisation of these new fellow-citizens; therefore calls on the Member States to step up their measures to promote integration, especially for migrants who have been living in the Union for some time;
 75. Emphasises the important role played by migrant women, and calls on the Member States to give them the place they deserve in their integration policies and to guarantee them all their rights; highlights the trend towards undocumented migrant women increasingly being employed as domestic workers to care for dependent persons; notes that this group may be subject to exploitation and calls on Member States to address this issue;
 76. Points out that immigrants arriving in their thirties and forties may well have no pension provision; calls on Member States to seek out best practice in dealing with this

- situation so as to avoid even greater pressure on pension systems;
77. Reminds Member States that demographic change also applies to Least Developed Countries, which likewise face challenges associated with ageing populations poverty and the unequal distribution of income as well as a burgeoning problem of youth unemployment; would encourage Member State governments and the EU to consider this factor when formulating aid and cooperation programmes;
 78. Points out that policies which give immigration priority to skilled workers in order to strengthen EU economies also generate the direct opposite result of weakening the economies of those countries from whence such skilled immigrants have come: considers that Member States should recognise their responsibilities in this regard;
 79. Urges Member States to improve the provision of services of general interest in rural areas, thereby allowing older people to continue to live independently for longer, reducing the demand on health systems and social security systems and avoiding a culture of premature dependence.
 80. Notes that care services must be safeguarded in the Member States as a result of demographic change, and calls for an enhanced exchange of good practice in this area; calls for care services to be protected as services of general interest and therefore calls on the Commission to incorporate such protection into the Green Paper on social services;
 81. Stresses the importance of sharing of information and best practice among Member States on how health systems can prepare for the increased demands placed on them by an ageing population;
 82. Recommends that the Member States implement policies to prevent the risks of exclusion, with particular reference to exclusion from school and becoming homeless, and points to the importance of giving priority to all measures aimed at maintaining family solidarity, in particular with regard to protecting the rights of children, while also respecting their parents' rights;
 83. Stresses the importance of providing cultural and leisure activities aimed at the older generation in recognition of the opportunities presented by the silver economy;
 84. Recommends that more attention be paid to standardising the different assumptions used by different Member States in supplying information to EUROSTAT so that best practice can be more validly compared and also embraced;
 85. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the 7th Research Framework Programme for matters relating to demographic trends, support for the family and strengthening health;
 86. Within the context of the Community programme PROGRESS, calls on the Commission to carry out appropriate studies, analyses and peer reviews relating to demographic change and its impact on society and on the relevant policy areas;

87. Concludes that while the EU should continue to compare and contrast Member State performances, experiences and best practice in terms of dealing with the various challenges of demographic change, existing EU institutions are adequate for this purpose and no additional EU structures are required;
88. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States.

25.1.2006

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY*

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on demographic challenges and solidarity between generations
(2005/2147(INI))

Draftswoman (*): Edite Estrela

(*): Enhanced cooperation between committees – Rule 47

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the Lisbon Strategy underlines the need for increased participation by women in the employment market in order to achieve the established objectives,
- B. whereas in most Member States there is a strong correlation between high female employment rates and high birth rates and between low female employment rates and low birth rates,
- C. whereas a skilled female work force is essential for economic growth in the EU Member States in that it can restore a balance between the number of those employed and those unemployed, thus dealing with the problem of funding pensions and thereby contributing to solidarity between generations,
- D. having noted with interest the initiatives launched in a number of Member States with a view to 'supporting parents' in order better to protect children against the new threats in society, in particular as regards the use of the internet, the rise in consumption of cannabis and other drugs among adolescents, the circulation of particularly degrading pornographic documents and increasing violence,
- E. having regard to the problems relating to the presence in a family of one or more children

suffering from learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, attention deficit with or without hyperactivity) or disabilities and having regard to the various practices observed in the Member States to assist such children and their parents,

- F. having regard to Directive 92/85/CEE on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding,
1. Welcomes the fact that, in presenting its Green Paper entitled 'Confronting demographic change - a new solidarity between the generations' (COM(2005)0094), the Commission has addressed at European level one of the key political and social challenges; stresses, at the same time, that numerous issues relating to demographic change in society fall exclusively within the sphere of competence of the Member States and that, therefore, there is no general Community competence for establishing European rules in this area;
 2. Regrets that the Commission Green Paper does not systematically incorporate the gender perspective at either the macro or micro level of analysis, although this is essential to develop comprehensive reflections and actions;
 3. Criticises the Commission for discriminating against elderly people in its Green Paper,
 4. Calls on the Member States to combat the prejudice and stereotypes underlying structural gender inequalities and which prevent both full participation by women in all spheres of society and more active participation of men in family life;
 5. Regrets that the Green paper does not highlight the importance of reproductive and sexual health in demographic changes;
 6. Calls on the Member States to review their tax systems and to implement tax rates based on individual rights, and recommends the development of child and family-friendly social security systems and the reimbursement of, inter alia, expenses for child care, as well as reduced VAT rates for all children's products;
 7. Stresses that, despite the progress made by the Member States in terms of raising the rate of women's employment, other forms of discrimination linked to women's employment are persisting or becoming more marked; calls, in this context, especially, for Member States to implement properly Council Directive [75/117/EEC](#) of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women;
 8. Stresses that the pay gap between men and women and the fact that women continue to fill low-paid jobs for which they are overqualified diminish the necessary financial independence of women, which is closely linked to the decision to have children;
 9. Points out that flexible working hours for women and men, provided they result from a free choice and are not imposed, can help them combine work and family life more successfully, guaranteeing in all circumstances quality jobs, with rights and equal pay, while avoiding having to completely abandon their career or work part-time;

10. Recommends that the Member States encourage the development of female employment and women's access to quality jobs and to equal treatment as regards pay;
11. Stresses that creating favourable conditions for couples to have the number of children they wish is one of the conditions for the existence and development of any society, given the social and economic challenges resulting from the declining birth rate, and that action should therefore be taken to support motherhood and fatherhood;
12. Urges the Member States to promote tax measures to encourage a higher birth rate and draws attention to the fact that women, in particular young single mothers, should be guaranteed special protection and support following the birth of a child;
13. Points out that infertility, and particularly male infertility, is on the rise, especially in highly industrialized areas, and that in some European countries up to 15% of couples are now infertile, chemical pollution being one of the causes of infertility;
14. Refers to the fact that many parents suffer from unintended childlessness; calls in this context on the Member States to drop upper-age limits for those seeking to adopt so that older people can become legally eligible for adoption, stresses that maturity can be an advantage when caring for children that may have led troubled lives;
15. Calls on the Member States to increase the availability of proper housing for families, especially for one-parent families and elderly people, for example 'inter-generational projects', in connection with urban development and town planning;
16. Stresses that flexible working hours for women should not have an adverse effect on the quality of the jobs created or that of the child care services provided, which is a guarantee of women's professional development;
17. Encourages the Member States to take measures to enable men to be more fully involved in the policies aimed at combining family life and work more successfully and in structures conducive to achieving a balance between the two as well as to organise awareness-raising campaigns to encourage a more balanced division of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women;
18. Calls on the Member States to promote the quality of jobs and of the working environment so as to facilitate the implementation of lifelong professional training enabling women and men to meet both their family obligations and labour market demands;
19. Calls on the Member States to make provision for more flexible arrangements in the workplace which reconcile the needs of female and male employees with family obligations and the needs of employers, guaranteeing women's rights in all circumstances;
20. Requests that the Commission further develop its approach towards human-centred work organisation, innovative working time arrangements and innovative personnel policies;
21. Calls on the Member States to adopt measures aimed at setting up high-quality, affordable childcare facilities and facilities for care of other dependent persons in accordance with the objectives set by the 2002 Barcelona European Council, in which it was stated that, by

2010, Member States should provide childcare for at least 90% of children between the age of 3 and mandatory school age, and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age; emphasises that these measures should enable women to adjust their participation in the job market to their rhythm of life;

22. Is concerned at increasing poverty and neglect in many Member States, which is particularly affecting children; proposes that innovative projects should be carried out, particularly in urban areas with problems associated with poverty and neglect, which provide points of contact for children as a matter of priority; calls for the parents also to be involved in these projects so that they become aware of their responsibility for the welfare of their children; stresses the importance of an extensive system of telephone hotlines for children;
23. Welcomes the exchange of best practice between the Member States via the open coordination method; points to the efficiency of successful demographic policies in EU Member States where high female participation in the job market, already ahead of the Lisbon objectives, goes hand in hand with some of the highest birth rates in the European Union; notes, on the other hand, that the EU Member States with the lowest female employment rates are also those with the lowest birth rates;
24. Urges the Member States, when creating conditions to increase participation in the labour market, inter alia to take account of the following elements: the wage differential between men and women, the tax system, including for the self-employed, terms of employment and the division between men and women of tasks within the family and the household and in caring for others;
25. Calls on the Member States to identify equality of the sexes and a balance between work and private life as government priorities;
26. Emphasises the important role played by migrant women, and calls on the Member States to give them the place they deserve in their integration policies and to guarantee them all their rights;
27. Regrets that the Green Paper does not give consideration to the growing number of single-parent families, 85% of which are headed by women and most of which are subject to a higher risk of poverty and should therefore be given special support;
28. Considers that it would be interesting to conduct a survey on the average level of maintenance and the actual payment of such maintenance in the EU Member States, as well as practices as regards the sharing of pension and social security entitlements;
29. Notes the experience of Member States in which there exists a 'guaranteed minimum income';
30. Encourages the Member States to base their action on best practice as regards employment policies from a gender perspective;
31. Calls on the Member States to implement rules establishing paid maternity/paternity leave following the birth of a child and to promote the use of the right to parental leave shared

equitably between women and men; urges the Member States, to this end, to combat the economic, social and cultural prejudices associated with the right of parental leave for men; calls on the Commission to revise Directive 96/34/EC on parental leave;

32. Calls on the Member States to resolve the problems which remain following the transposition of Directive 92/85/CEE and to base their action, in cooperation with the social partners, on best practice as regards the length of maternity leave, which ranges from 14 weeks in some Member States to 28 in others, the compulsory period within this leave, the remuneration paid during this period and the entitlement of the women concerned to return to a job; calls also on the Member States to base their action on best practice as regards paternity leave and parental leave for both women and for men;
33. Calls on the Member States to take the necessary measures to modernise social protection systems, and in particular pensions, so as to guarantee their financial and social viability and enable them to cope with the impact of the ageing population;
34. Encourages the Member States to organise awareness-raising campaigns on demographic issues as well as child-friendly awareness-raising campaigns that recognise the joy and pleasure that children can bring to parents and society and study cultural aspects affecting population levels and female employment;
35. Recommends that the Member States implement social policies aimed at allowing everyone access to the care their state of health requires, especially in the case of disabled and dependent persons;
36. Encourages the Member States to publicise best practice as regards remedying learning disabilities (e.g. supplying schools with computers for dyslexic children) and assistance to be provided for disabled children;
37. Recommends that the Member States implement policies to prevent the risks of exclusion, with particular reference to exclusion from school and becoming homeless, and points to the importance of giving priority to all measures aimed at maintaining family solidarity, in particular with regard to protecting the rights of children, while also respecting their parents' rights;
38. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give higher priority to combating the new dangers in society, in particular those due to improper use of the internet by children and adolescents, increasing consumption of cannabis and other drugs by adolescents and even children, including at school, the increasing dissemination of pornographic materials among such categories of young people and the rise in violence; calls on them also to disseminate the results of best practice in these areas;
39. Reminds the Member States of the commitments they have made and which were approved by the European Council in Barcelona in 2002 to remove the obstacles to equal participation of women and men on the labour market and to set up childcare facilities before 2010 for children between the age of three and that of compulsory schooling; calls on the Member States to put forward similar objectives with regard to care facilities for elderly and dependent persons and the disabled;

40. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study on the impact on demographic trends of the taxation systems applied in the Member States.

PROCEDURE

Title	Demographic challenges and solidarity between generations
Procedure number	2005/2147(INI)
Committee responsible	EMPL
Committee asked for its opinion Date announced in plenary	FEMM 8.9.2005
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary	yes 8.9.2005
Draftsman Date appointed	Edite Estrela 7.9.2005
Discussed in committee	28.11.2005 24.1.2006
Date adopted	24.1.2006
Result of final vote	for: 28 against: 2 abstentions: 0
Members present for the final vote	Edit Bauer, Edite Estrela, Věra Flasarová, Claire Gibault, Lissy Gröner, Zita Gurmai, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Urszula Krupa, Pia Elda Locatelli, Doris Pack, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Teresa Riera Madurell, Raúl Romeva i Rueda, Amalia Sartori, Konrad Szymański, Corien Wortmann-Kool, Anna Záborská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Katerina Batzeli, Anna Hedh, Mary Honeyball, Elisabeth Jeggle, Karin Jöns, Christa Kläß, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Maria Martens, Zita Pleštinská, Zuzana Roithová, Heide Rühle, Bernadette Vergnaud
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Miroslav Mikolášik

25.1.2006

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations
(2005/2147(INI))

Draftsman: Thomas Ulmer

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that the European Union, through measures aimed at improving the framework conditions, wishes to support the Member States in reducing the discrepancy between the number of children parents wish for (2.3) and the actual number of children (1.5) they have;
2. Is surprised that the Green Paper makes only passing reference to the healthcare aspects of demographic change; emphasises that, because of an ageing population, the demand for health and long-term care services increases qualitatively and quantitatively; is convinced that investment in measures for the prevention of long-term illness is important for coming to terms with the human and financial aspects of demographic change; states that the longer people are in a position to enjoy healthy lives, the longer they can remain active and work;
3. Is surprised at the Green Paper's failure to mention the increasing frequency of new family structures, especially single-parent families, of which 85% are headed by women, or the fact that these families, while more liable to the risk of poverty, have greater problems of access to health care;
4. Stresses the need to ensure specific post-birth protection and support for women and especially young single mothers;
5. Agrees that, with lowering rates of reproduction, economic growth can be maintained

only through measures aimed at higher employment, innovation and increased productivity, as well as by modernising social protection;

6. Is concerned about the difference in healthcare systems in the Member States, regions and social groups; states that the difference in healthcare (low life expectancy, widespread chronic illness, illness caused by living conditions), along with a low birth rate and emigration, can lead to a further increase in regional disparities and to a vicious circle which is difficult to break; asks the Member States to notify their differences in healthcare so as to achieve, with help from the Commission, a systematic exchange of best practice and to overcome this issue effectively;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to undertake and disseminate studies on population change in the individual Member States, taking account of the causes and the likely short-term consequences thereof;
8. Welcomes the exchange of best practices among the Member States by means of the open method of coordination, and draws attention to the sound management of demographic change achieved by the Nordic countries, where the high participation of women in the labour market is accompanied by higher birth-rates; believes the Commission should undertake a study to evaluate the correlation between these two trends;
9. Calls on the Member States to adopt measures to permit the creation of high-quality and affordable day facilities for children and other dependent persons, so as to help reconcile family life and work;
10. Criticises the implicit and unreflective assumption in the Green Paper that a decline in population would have exclusively negative consequences on the established social system; thus wishes the following questions to be addressed:
 - (a) the extent to which the negative consequences of a population decline may be addressed by innovation, higher rates of employment and modernisation of social protection,
 - (b) whether there may also be positive aspects to the decline in population, for example in issues relating to the environment, traffic congestion and land development, etc.,
 - (c) whether a 'Pareto optimum' may be developed for a long-term optimal population size for Europe;
11. Calls on the Commission to develop scenarios for the social integration of the ever-increasing group of ageing citizens, as well as their changing needs;
12. Urges the Commission and the Member States to organise campaigns on population issues in the EU in order to raise public awareness of the adverse consequences of the low birth-rate notably for economic growth and the sustainability of welfare systems.

PROCEDURE

Title	Demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations	
Procedure number	2005/2147(INI)	
Committee responsible	EMPL	
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	ENVI 12.7.2005	
Draftsman Date appointed	Thomas Ulmer 12.7.2005	
Discussed in committee	28.11.2005	24.1.2006
Date adopted	24.1.2006	
Result of final vote	+: 37 -: 1 0: 0	
Members present for the final vote	Irena Belohorská, Johannes Blokland, John Bowis, Frederika Brepoels, Dorette Corbey, Mojca Drčar Murko, Edite Estrela, Anne Ferreira, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Gyula Hegyi, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Kläß, Peter Liese, Jules Maaten, Linda McAvan, Riitta Myller, Miroslav Ouzký, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Guido Sacconi, Karin Scheele, Carl Schlyter, Richard Seeber, Jonas Sjöstedt, Antonios Trakatellis, Evangelia Tzampazi, Thomas Ulmer, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund	
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jutta D. Haug, Jolanta Dičkutė, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Renate Sommer	
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote		

PROCEDURE

Title	Demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations	
Procedure number	2005/2147(INI)	
Basis in Rules of Procedure	Rule 45	
Committee responsible Date authorisation announced in plenary	EMPL 8.9.2005	
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	FEMM 8.9.2005	DEVE 8.9.2005
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision		
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary	Yes 8.9.2005	
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Philip Bushill-Matthews 20.4.2005	
Previous rapporteur(s)		
Discussed in committee	26.1.2006	21.2.2006
Date adopted	22.2.2006	
Result of final vote	for:	34
	against:	6
	abstentions:	0
Members present for the final vote	Jan Andersson, Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, Emine Bozkurt, Iles Braghetto, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnoch, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Luigi Cocilovo, Jean Louis Cottigny, Proinsias De Rossa, Harald Ettl, Richard Falbr, Ilda Figueiredo, Joel Hasse Ferreira, Roger Helmer, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Ona Juknevičienė, Sepp Kusstatscher, Jean Lambert, Raymond Langendries, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Ana Mato Adrover, Maria Matsouka, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Pier Antonio Panzeri, José Albino Silva Peneda, Kathy Sinnott, Gabriele Zimmer.	
Substitutes present for the final vote	Elspeth Attwooll, Edit Bauer, Mihael Brejc, Agnes Schierhuber, Elisabeth Schroedter.	
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote		
Date tabled – A6	24.2.2006	A6-0041/2006