

## **Joint Parliamentary Meeting**

Social Cohesion and Demographic Development in a Sustainable Europe

*5-6 December 2011, Brussels*  
European Parliament

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**Rapporteur's remarks to Panel 3** on *Social and equality aspects of employment and demographic trends*

The change in the social mix, resulting from demographic shifts, will lead to the emergence of new ones and intensification of other social phenomena. The panel should allow their identification and assessment of their impact on the (social and regional) cohesion policies as well as on sustainable development.

The challenges we are currently facing include:

- low attractiveness of setting up families and relationships, leading to a decrease in birth rate which calls for an active pro-family and pro-natalist policy,
- higher number of disabled and permanently ill persons which will result in higher demand for professional care services (disturbed balance between the young and the elderly will render informal family care impossible)

- the need to support, increase and use the potential of older people, as well as their integration – in the context of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations
- combating discrimination on grounds of gender or age, in order to ensure equal access to the labour market, and for the elderly – access to services (banking, insurance, healthcare), preventing digital and labour market exclusion of older people.

In relation to these social aspects, I would like to propose the following points for discussion:

1. **Which instruments of pro-family and pro-natalist policies proved effective in reversing the negative demographic trends in EU countries?**

Individual EU countries apply different incentives aimed at strengthening family and relationships to enable combining professional, social and family roles. It would be worthwhile to catalogue them and assess their effectiveness. The panel could then prepare a summary of the most desirable directions for change in the labour market policy, flexible employment of women, especially of older age, professional education of the elderly, promotion of age management in companies etc. It would also be useful to answer the question whether and to what extent the European funds might support the efforts of member states and regions in the field of child care, flexible work time, vocational retraining of older persons etc.

2. **Does the necessity to deal with a higher demand for physiotherapist, medical and nursing services constitute purely a burden on the development policy or could it be perceived from a certain angle as an opportunity?**

During the discussion of this issue it is worth describing how important the market of healthcare, physiotherapy and nursing services has become. The private, social and public sectors employ many people, predominantly women, for the nursing of the elderly. Well-organized nursing services for old people make it possible, especially for women approaching the retirement age, to find employment. Nursing services are expensive. EU countries operate diverse public and insurance support systems to facilitate access to such services. The effectiveness of these systems might be a subject for discussion.

With regard to the innovation policy, the potential for increasing the quality of care by taking advantage of leading-edge technologies: e-medicine, e-monitoring, e-education, physiotherapy advances and abolishing barriers to disabled persons must not go unnoticed.

One should also mention the labour migration of au-pairs and nurses for the elderly within the EU boundaries.

3. **How could the potential of the elderly be employed in the implementation of the European cohesion and development policies**

In this area, it is worth mentioning the greater demand for permanent, vocational and informal education (Universities of the Third Age) as an opportunity to increase and tap the potential of the elderly in the labour market and to overcome exclusion and isolation. There would also be room for comparing national action programs of the running Year of Volunteering and the future year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

4. **How to strengthen the European discrimination prevention policy so that it responds better to demographic shifts and foster cohesion and development?**

Here one should consider the connection between fulfilling the family roles and the discrimination of women in their access to the labour market, and, as a consequence, discrimination in retirement systems. The need for a deeper reflection on to what extent the gender policy contributes to the realisation of family aspirations of women. How can this policy be blended into the implementation of solutions to demographic challenges? Especially older persons experience increasing problems in continuing their careers and returning to the labour market after completing their care obligation to, for example, grandchildren, parents or grandparents. A separate issue is the prevention of discrimination of older persons in access to various services (banking, insurance, educational, medical), the threat of digital exclusion of third-generation people. In the EU, there are numerous good practices for mitigation of discrimination, for improving inter-generational integration and the efficiency of gender policy.