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Demographic change in Europe - An Overview

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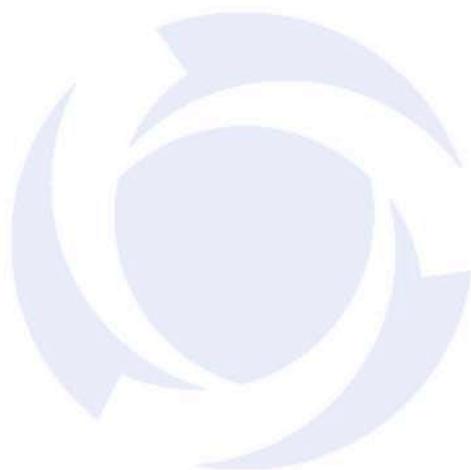
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Table of Contents

1	Introduction to the subject	2
1.1	Definition of “demographic change”	2
1.2	The impact of “demographic change” in Europe	3
2	Bodies responsible for demography in the EU	5
3	EU programmes and initiatives	10
4	The European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012)	12
5	Summary	14
6	Bibliography	15
7	Annex	16
	<i>Overview of relevant commission documents on the subject of demographic change.....</i>	<i>16</i>



1 Introduction to the subject

The states of Europe face new challenges: The composition of the European population's age structure will change substantially in the near future. This "demographic change" will also require urgent social policy developments.

1.1 Definition of "demographic change"

The concept of "demographic change" describes a population's age structure adjusting to changes in living conditions. Consequently, changes in the composition of a society's age structure are the result of social shifts. (*cf.* theory of first and second demographic transition¹)

The population pyramids of the EU show that the first two decades after the Second World War had especially high birth rates. Since the 1970s, demographers have observed negative trends in the population structure in Europe. The lower birth rates in the recent past and present come with increasing life expectancy for Europeans. Ongoing low birth rates lead to an ageing of societies if mortality rates remain low. Consequently, half of the population growth between 2005 and 2050 in Europe will be due not to births, but rather the fact that increasingly more people are living longer and longer. (EU KOM 2008:7). Furthermore, the "baby boomer" generation of the post-war period is now passing the threshold to retirement and highlights the turning point in the demographic development (EU KOM 2009a: 122).

If one speaks today of the challenge of or the adjustment to "demographic change," then this usually means the challenges or adjustments that come with an ageing society.

¹ In the age of industrialisation (end of the 18th century), the living conditions of people in Europe increasingly rose along with the population. The theory of the "first demographic transition" (coined by Notestein 1945, *cf.* Bähr 1997) explains the resultant increase in the birth rate and decrease in mortality rates as a reaction to the improvement in hygiene and medical care. The concept of the "second demographic transition" explains the rapid decline in birth rates during the 1970s in Europe as well as the ongoing stagnation of birth rates at a low level in some countries of Europe since then as a product of socio-cultural shifts (*cf.* Van de Kaa 1987). Changes in values and non-traditional forms of life have led to many people postponing or less frequently realising e.g. their desire for children.

1.2 The impact of “demographic change” in Europe

Although the degree and speed of the population ageing in individual regions of Europe differ substantially, the consequences have an impact on the entire European Union:

- The ageing population will have a major impact on the **productivity** and **economic growth** of the EU states:

“Economic growth rates are set to decline with the ageing of the population, mainly owing to the reduction in the working-age population.” (EU KOM 2006: 5)

Experts from EUROSTAT predict that there will be 48 million fewer people living in the European Union between the age of 15 and 64 in 2050 (as compared to 2009). Instead, there will be 58 million more people over 65 years (EU KOM 2008: 8).²

The number of people over 65 years in proportion to the number of working age people (between 15 and 64) will change substantially.³ According to the 2008 EUROPOP study, the age dependency ratio in the EU-27 will increase from 0.25 in 2008 to 0.50 in 2050. The study shows that in 2008 every person over 65 had four people at a working age in Europe. In 2050, however, only two salary-earners will work for each representative of the generation over 65. (EU-KOM 2009a: 73)

- The increasing number of elderly people that make use of services in the **social security systems** of the EU states will also bring about great demands:

“As a consequence of ageing populations, the need for public provision of age-related transfers and services will increase. The fiscal impact of ageing is therefore projected to be substantial in almost all Member States.” (EU COM 2009b: 4).

In particular, the **expenses for pensions, health care and long-term care** will increase tremendously: *“Overall, on the basis of current policies, age-related public expenditure is projected to increase on average by about 4¾ percentage points of GDP by 2060 in the EU and by more than 5 percentage points in the euro area ...” (EU KOM 2009b: 4).* However, from region to region, population ageing will have a very different impact on the budgets of the respective member states. The countries that will see the sharpest rise in public expenditures are anticipated to be Luxembourg, Greece, Slovenia, Cypress, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Ireland. The Federal Republic of Germany falls in the middle of the states, according to the experts of the commission (EU KOM 2009b: 6).

² Population development depends on three factors: birth and mortality rates and net migration. Since migration movements in particular are very hard to predict, it is also difficult to forecast the population development of Europe. The 2004 EUROPOP study comes to the conclusion that the population in the European Union (EU-27) will begin to shrink as of 2025. (EU COM European Commission (2008: 8)

³ The age dependency ratio identifies the number of economically dependent “older” people for every 100 people of working age in a population.

Furthermore, it can be anticipated that government budgets will also incur higher future expenses in the area of education since these are necessary as investments for future productivity growth (EU KOM 2009b: 5).

Despite the substantial regional differences in population development and their impact, demographic change in various areas will have extensive consequences for the societies of the member states. Therefore, the increasing ageing of the population also requires social-political adjustments in areas that are anchored partially in a national and partially in a supranational area of responsibility. "Demographic Change" is therefore to be understood as a mainstream issue that must be considered among others in the areas of pension and employment policies, city and regional planning, family policies, education policies (e.g. in the areas of: life-long learning, education, continuing education and qualification) as well as immigration and integration policies.

2 Bodies responsible for demography in the EU

Overcoming the approaching challenges is a collective goal of the member states in the European Union.

In the documents from 2005 and 2006, the European Commission identified goals that should contribute to positively addressing the impact of an ageing population. The countries in the European Union have been called upon to develop policies that

- encourage demographic rejuvenation through **better conditions for families** and the reconciliation of work and family life.
- make the work more valued and thus facilitate **more employment and a longer, active life** of high quality,
- increase productivity and economic performance through **investments in education and research**,
- promote the **inclusion and integration of migrants**,
- ensure the **future sustainability of public finances** and thus guarantee social security and an appropriate balance between generations (guarantee of sustainable public finances for appropriate pensions, medical care and long-term care).⁴

In the European Union, various actors are addressing the subject of “handling demographic change.” The following is a list of the actors that are addressing the subject on the European level.

European Commission

- The European Commission has dealt with the impact of demographic change for a long time.⁵
- With its 2005 **Green Paper “Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations”**, the European Commission again initiated an intensive discussion about demographic change on the European level. The reactions were summarised by the commission in a communication. In that **communication, “The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity”**, the commission provides a series of recommendations on how to handle the demographic challenge. The commission also announced concrete measures and initiatives in its communication **“Promoting solidarity between generations,”** and some of them were presented in the so-called “reconciliation package” on 3 October 2008.

⁴ cf. EU COM (2006) 571 final

⁵ In 1999, the commission prepared the **communication “Towards a Europe for all Ages - Promoting Prosperity and Intergenerational Solidarity** (EU COM (1999) 221 final) and the 2002 **communication “Europe's response to World Ageing”** (EU COM (2002) 143 final).

- Since 2006, the commission has prepared a biannual **report on the demographic situation in Europe** and holds a **demography forum** that serves the exchange between member states, interest groups and experts from all of Europe. Furthermore, the **European Alliance for Families** was formed in 2007 to promote family-friendly measures. It supports the EU countries in the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience and thus facilitates greater collaboration. As part of the European Alliance for Families, **an expert group on demographic issues** was set up to advise the commission and provide support for the preparation of the demography forum. The group serves all EU countries as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and proven procedures in the areas of active ageing, family policy and elderly people in need of care. Furthermore, the commission organises regular seminars and meetings in the area of demography.⁶
- The commission's working paper "**Regions 2020**" from 2008 names regional-specific challenges for demographic change in Europe.
- In its Ageing Report from 2009 "Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU", the commission describes other contributions to overcoming demographic change. The EU commission sees support possibilities particularly in the areas of coordinating and exchanging proven concepts to promote synergies and reduce negative transfer effects.
- The current work programme for the commission for 2010 – 2014 (EU COM (2010) 135 final) is planning among others a green paper on retirement for June 2010, as well as a communication on youth employment.⁷

European Parliament

- The European Parliament is also working intensively on the consequences of demographic change. The subject is reflected in various policy fields and is the object of countless reports, above all, in the European Parliament's **Committee for Employment and Social Affairs**.⁸
- With the **report on demographic challenges and the solidarity between generations** (INI/2005/2147) (rapporteur: Bushill Matthews, EVP), the parliament has called upon the commission to emphasise the significance of demographic change and the inherent challenges as a comprehensive issue.

⁶cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=502&langId=en>

⁷cf. http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010_en.pdf

The report recommends including the subject in all policy activities of the union by mainstreaming it.

- In 2008, the parliament presented the **Report on the demographic future of Europe** (INI/2007/2156) (rapporteur: Françoise Castex, SPE).
- At the present time, the employment committee is preparing at its own initiative a report on the subject of “**Demographic change and solidarity between generations**” (INI/2010/2027) (author: Thomas Mann, EVP)⁹.
- In the meeting of the employment committee on 28 April 2010, the committee addressed the subject of “**Long term care for older people**” in an adopted resolution (rapporteur: Elizabeth Lynne, ALDE).
- The subject of demographic change is particularly relevant for the following **groups in the European Parliament which consist of members from different political groups (“intergroups”)**
 - **Intergroup on Family, Protection of Childhood and Solidarity between the Generations:** The Slovakian delegate Anna Záborská (EPP) has been the chairman of the working group since March 2010. Deputy chairman Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), Silvia Costa (S&D) and Csaba Sógor (EPP).¹⁰
 - **Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity:** The working group has existed since 1982. In December 2009, it recommenced its work: Co-chairs are Milan Cabrnock (ECR), Kinga Göncz (S&D), Christina Gutierrez-Cortines (EPP), Jean Lambert (Green), Elizabeth Lynne (ALDE), Claude Moraes (S&D), Lambert van Nistelrooij (EPP).¹¹ In March 2010, the working group composed a letter to Commission President Barroso to advocate the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012).¹²

Council of the European Union

- In the “**Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)**,” the ministers for employment, social security, consumer protection, health and equal opportunity meet roughly four times a year. The council meetings offer

⁸ Chairwoman of the committee is currently Pervenche Berès (S&D)

⁹ cf. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5841342> (Abruf 21.Juni 2011)

¹⁰ cf. <http://coface-eu.org/en/Newsletter/2010/ndeg3-March-2010/Family-Intergroup/>

¹¹ cf. . List of members: http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/pdf_MEPs_support.pdf

¹² cf. <http://www.age-platform.eu/en/activities/989-the-intergroup-co-chairs-call-pdt-barroso-to-ensure-the-european-year-on-active-ageing-and-intergenerational-solidarity-in-2012>

member states a platform for a continuous dialogue and for the exchange of information and results from actual practice in their own countries. In November 2009, the council came to conclusions on the subject of “**Healthy and dignified ageing**”, (15955/09 SOC 692 SAN 312).

- The council's work is prepared in the **Employment Committee** and in the **Social Protection Committee**.¹³
- The **EU presidencies, which succeed each other**, will also shed light on the subject of demographic change from various perspectives. After a conference in Dublin on the subject of “families, change and social policy” in 2004, there was e.g. a conference during the Austrian presidency that took place in February 2006 under the title “demographic challenges: family needs partnership.” In the first trio of council presidencies (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia), the German presidency in 2007 managed to establish the European alliance for families. Slovenia organised a conference on the subject of “solidarity between generations for coherent and sustainable societies.” Under the Spanish presidency, a conference was held on the subject of “active and healthy ageing” on 29 and 30 April 2010 in **Logroño, Spain**¹⁴.

¹³ The work programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2010 shows that one of the main responsibilities this year will be in connection with the Committee for Economic Policy with regard to the sustainability and appropriateness of the pension systems. Likewise, the committee will address the subject of “ageing in health and dignity” and conduct a peer review seminar. (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=758&langId=en>).

¹⁴ The conference's programme:

http://www.imserso.es/imserso_06/el_imserso/relaciones_internacionales/rel_intern_europa/conferencia_envejecimiento_activo_saludable/index.htm

European Economic and Social Committee

Select statements and conferences on the subject of demography¹⁵:

- Statement on the subject of “**relationships between generations**” from December 2004 (SOC/174), (rapporteur: Jean-Michel Bloch-Lainé).
- **Statement** of the European Economic and Social Committee on the subject of “**The family and demographic development**” (SOC/245) from the year 2007, (rapporteur: Stéphane Buffetaut)¹⁶.
- The European Economic and Social Committee organised a European Citizens' Forum in 2008 addressing the subject of “**Towards a Europe of Solidarity Youth, Intergenerational Solidarity and Tomorrow's Europe**”, which took place in June 2008 in Polish Breslau.¹⁷ In October 2008, the European Economic and Social Committee organised a follow-up seminar “**Europe of Solidarity: Our challenge for tomorrow**” in Brussels.
- Opinion on the subject of „Taking into account the needs of elderly” in **September 2008 (SOC/308)**, (rapporteur: Renate Heinisch)
- In March 2010, a statement is being prepared on the subject of “**The impact of demographic change on health and welfare systems**” (SOC/367), (rapporteur: Renate Heinisch).

¹⁵ Particularly the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESO) addresses the area of demographic change; President of the SOC Section is Liela Kurki. cf. http://eesc.europa.eu/sections/soc/index_en.asp?id=1010socen

¹⁶ cf.

¹⁷ cf. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/08/50&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

3 EU programmes and initiatives

There are countless programmes for handling demographic change on the level of the European Union. In the following, we present a selection of programmes on the EU level.

GRUNDTVIG – Programme for life-long learning

The GRUNDTVIG programme runs as an individual programme within the EU programme for life-long learning (LLP). The GRUNDTVIG-CAMPAIGN was started in 2000 (formerly as part of the programme Socrates II). The goal is to support the European dimension of life-long learning.

“Launched in 2000, Grundtvig aims to provide adults with more ways to improve their knowledge and skills, facilitate their personal development and boost their employment prospects. It also helps to tackle problems associated with Europe’s ageing population”.¹⁸

GRUNDTVIG is designed for all adults and all areas of adult education. The implementation of GRUNDTVIG in Europe predominantly benefits senior citizens.

It includes all levels and sectors of adult education and all forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal. The measures however should support people that have no basic education or qualifications. The programme - running from 2007-2010 - supports the mobility of learners e.g. as part of exchange projects – so-called “European Assistantships”.¹⁹

ICT programme: Projects with a focus on “Information and communication technologies (ICT)”

During its current term of 2007-2013, the EU’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is promoting various projects that focus on ICT applications to provide solutions for people with special needs – i.e. the use of ICT by older people.²⁰

Here are two sample projects:

OASIS

The project OASIS aims to develop a European-wide IT system that offers an innovative and open reference architecture for the affordable networking of new and existing services from all areas of older people’s lives. OASIS stands for an innovative system that seamlessly networks and provides interoperable use of content from different services and ontologies. More than a dozen types of service are linked to each other with relevance for older people.²¹

¹⁸ cf. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc86_en.htm

¹⁹ cf. ;

²⁰ cf. http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/programme/challenge7-ageing_en.html

²¹ More information available at: <http://www.oasis-project.eu/>

KSERA ('Knowledge service robots for ageing')

The KSERA project addresses the development of an intelligent robot that operates similar to the "smart home." The goal is to develop a robot that helps chronically sick, older people to make the "right decisions." The robot e.g. provides support in taking medication and other processes in the daily life of the chronically sick.²²

²² *cf.*

4 The European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012)

At the conference “Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies” which took place in Brdo in April 2008 under the Slovenian Council Presidency,²³ it was recommended that the European Union declare a European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It should contribute to strengthening solidarity by increasing people’s understanding of the contribution that older people can make to society and by preparing innovative measures that facilitate the mobilisation of baby boomers’ full potential. As a result, in the spring of 2008, EU-commissioner **Špidla** announced the European Commission's plan to recommend a "European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity"²⁴ for 2012 and initiated public consultation. The term concluded at the end of July 2009. A total of 136 contributions were received. From the present answers, a comprehensive report shall be prepared and an announcement of the results is scheduled for the beginning of 2010²⁵.

In his speech at a meeting of the high-level expert group on demographic issues, Commissioner Andor declared in February 2010 his desire to embed the European Year in a **multi-annual strategy of active ageing**. Possible focal points²⁶:

- Labour market openings for older employees and ambitious goals with regard to their employment rates
- Strong incentives in the pension systems for remaining in the labour market (goal: reduction of age-related poverty risk)
- Retaining good health and obtaining further education, which corresponds to the labour market’s requirements, up to retirement
- Greater reconcilability of work and care responsibilities
- Creation of better opportunities for volunteer work
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle, among others by adjusting the living environment
- Elimination of inequalities in active and healthy ageing through access to jobs and health services

A current alliance of 13 NGOs campaigns for the European Year for “Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations”.²⁷ *For this year’s European Day of Solidarity between*

²³ cf.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/651&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

²⁴ In 1993 there was a “European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations.” (cf. Tippelmann 2009)

²⁵ cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=502&langId=en&newsId=560&furtherNews=yes12>

²⁶ cf. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/andor/headlines/speeches/docs/al_demographics_2010_02_22.pdf

Generations, a conference on the subject of “Active and healthy ageing” will be taking place in **Logroño**, Spain, under the Spanish Council Presidency.²⁸ The planned workshops are on: healthy ageing, life-long learning, active working life, social participation and solidarity between generations.²⁹

The commission's proposal for the European Year 2012 went to parliament during the Belgian council presidency; at the present moment, there is however no information (*cf.* Toppelmann 2009).

²⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en>

²⁸ The conference's programme:

http://www.imserso.es/imserso_06/el_imserso/relaciones_internacionales/rel_intern_europa/conferencia_envejecimiento_activo_saludable/index.htm

²⁹ At the first “European Day of Solidarity between Generations” on 29 April 2009, an alliance of six European NGOs initiated a campaign for solidarity between generations and held events in all member states (*cf.* Toppelmann 2009).

5 Summary

In 1993, in its policy statement, the EU Council took notice of the fact that "demographic trends, and the ageing of the population in particular, constitute one of the major challenges for social policies." (Official Journal C343 from 21.12.1993). In particular, since the appearance of the green paper in 2005, the subject of "demographic change" has been discussed more on the European level and thus as a field of activity for EU institutions (see overview of documents in annex). In the commission's 2006 communication, concrete areas of activity were named in which the member states could actively address the challenges of demographic change.

Accentuated by the current discussion about the social consequences of the economic crisis, the focus is currently on the development of solutions both for elderly and younger people since they are the ones particularly affected by the crisis. New flexible forms in the transition from education to employment life and employment life to retirement ("measures for active ageing"), measures for bridging interruptions and reintegration measures and a reform of the social systems that account for the impact on all generations are necessary in all member states. (*cf.* Tippelmann 2009)

The discussion about greater "reconciliation of work and family life" will continue to be of central significance on the European level. Furthermore, it will remain important that people are sensitized particularly to the challenges in the care area, but also to the contributions of the elderly as providers of informal aid in the family context and as part of volunteer work. (ibid)

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7 Annex

Overview of relevant commission documents on the subject of demographic change

Green paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations" – EU COM(2005) 94.

Commission Communication "The demographic future of Europe – From challenge to opportunity" – EU COM(2006) 571.

Commission Communication "Promoting solidarity between the generations" - EU COM(2007) 244.

Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society
Commission Communication "Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU (2009 Ageing Report)" - EU COM(2009) 180 final.