

Managing demographic change in Europe



The Greens | EFA
in the European Parliament

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Contents

Preface	5
Reconciliation of work, family and private life	7
Are women alone responsible for the falling birth rate?	8
Green strategies for action	12
Challenges of shrinking regions – strengthening the adaptability	15
What are the possible strategies for dealing with shrinking regions?	17
Green strategies for action	21
Immigration and integration as an opportunity	23
What opportunities are presented by the promotion of immigration?	25
Green strategies for action	26
Interviews	27
Hannele Häkkinen, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities	28
Dr. Hubert Krieger, Eurofound - the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	29
Nyeya Yen, GHARWEG	31
Michael Heaney, Donegal County Council	33
European Parliament resolution on the demographic future of Europe	35
Contact	57
Editorial details and legal notice	60



Dear Reader,

The European Commission has declared the challenges of demographic change an important policy action field at European level. Demographic change places a burden on public budgets and thus impedes competitiveness in Europe. Seeking to set new priorities we, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, invited experts and local, national and European actors to a conference at the European Parliament in February 2008 to explore responses to three key questions:

- Are women alone responsible for the falling birth rate?
- What are the possible strategies for dealing with shrinking regions?
- What opportunities are presented by the promotion of immigration?

One of the questions can be answered straight away: women are not to blame for either falling birth rates or regions of net emigration; these are the result of poor framework conditions, and therefore of misguided policies. A rethink and new measures are urgently needed to manage demographic change.

Words must now be followed by action! Instead of lamenting the consequences of demographic change, we must take forward constructive

proposals and develop the elements required to manage it. Inspired and motivated by the conference, we, Jill Evans, Jean Lambert and Elisabeth Schroedter, Members of the European Parliament, incorporated key conclusions from the conference into our parliamentary work – with considerable success: the European Parliament resolution on the demographic future of Europe calls for, among other things, far-reaching reform of family and labour-market policies. Thanks to our initiative, the Committee on Regional Development decided to commission a study on shrinking regions. As a result, a discussion is now taking place in committee on the tendency to write off such regions or – as has been discussed at regional level in the Land of Brandenburg, Germany – to additionally weaken them by giving people financial incentives to move away.

Our strategy is confirmed by the study's conclusion: »The relatively straightforward medium-term predictability of demographic changes at national level, and to a lesser extent at regional and local level too, carries special responsibility for the political decision-makers. [Therefore it is] difficult to forgive the failure to anticipate demographic phenomena«.

Jill Evans, MEP
Jean Lambert, MEP
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Brussels, December 2008

Reconciliation of work, family and private life



Reconciliation of work, family and private life

The falling birth rate is at the heart of the discussion on the challenges of demographic change. This is blamed – not openly, but on the quiet – on women. They are secretly blamed for the negative prognoses. Yet this ignores the fact that people do want to have children but prospective parents – not just women – do not do so because children are increasingly associated with the risk of poverty, as employment prospects are worse for parents, there is a lack of childcare facilities, and family life and career often cannot be reconciled.

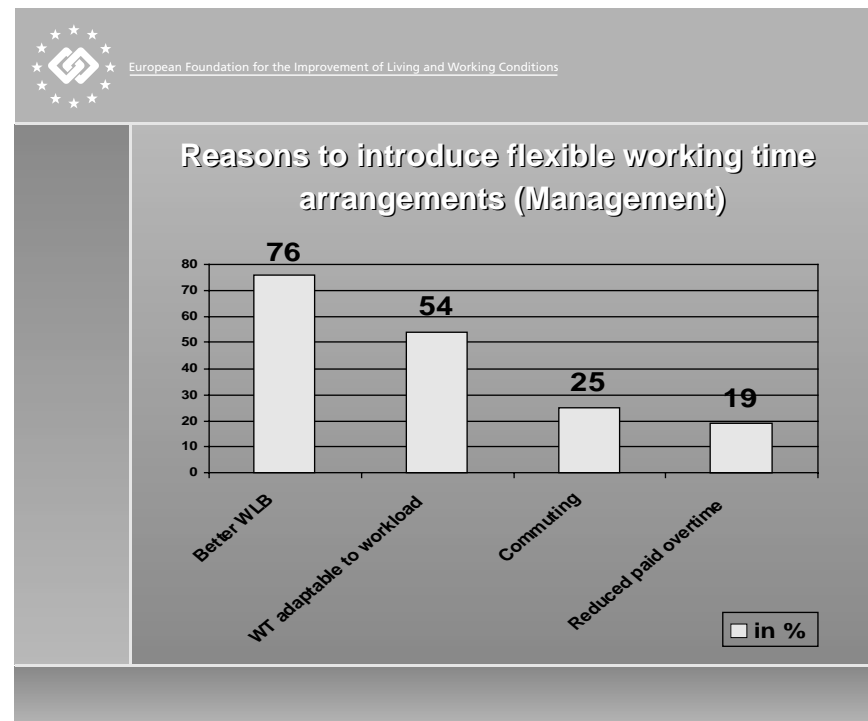
Are women alone responsible for the falling birth rate?

Traditional lifecycle versus work-life balance

The traditional lifecycle pattern divides working life into three stages: education, career or family, and retirement, which come one after another chronologically with no, or hardly any, overlaps. Family life and career progression are mutually exclusive. Nowadays, lifelong learning is called for in addition, as no one can get through their working life any more with just one period of education. This has made it necessary for social structures to enable and promote parallel life stages and other sequences.

Dr Skirbekk of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) takes a different approach. He has worked on establishing a statistical correlation between birth rate and duration of education. His finding that women who leave school earlier are more likely to have children than those who go on to university after leaving school led him to call for shorter periods of education. This would automatically increase the birth rate, in his view. In so doing, however, he not only holds women solely responsible for the falling birth rate but also ignores the structural incompatibility of family with higher-skilled jobs. Yet it is this very incompatibility that often leaves women having to choose between a career and a family. Whether they start working at 22 or 25 makes relatively little difference.

Dr Krieger of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions realised this very fact and put forward suggestions as to how to make the working time of both men and women more flexible in order to improve their work-life balance. In particular, he proposed



Results of an enquiry of the European Foundation concerning working time and time management, slide from the conference presentation by Dr Krieger, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (WLB = Work-Life-Balance, WT = working time)

introducing the option of an »interim pension« – a mid-life break of several years' duration – that could be used to bring up children, provide care or undergo continuing vocational training. In exchange, a worker's retirement age would be raised. Therefore, whilst Dr Skirbekk's approach reinforces the traditional lifecycle pattern and seeks only to influence the duration of the individual stages, Dr Krieger's approach seeks to overcome the limitations of this traditional pattern.

Equal opportunities as the key to demographic change

Whilst childcare and care for the elderly continues to be undertaken largely by women, their opportunities on the labour market and thus their readiness

to start a family will be limited. However, the solution cannot lie in merely facilitating the balancing act between home and career; instead men, too, must be involved in bringing up children and providing care. This was the call made by Treasa Ní Mhurchú of the European Women's Lobby. Thus, she said, sharing the tasks of bringing up children and providing care fairly between men and women and developing tax-funded educational and care facilities were key factors in responding to demographic trends.

In her talk, Catelene Passchier of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) brought together the conclusions of several Eurobarometer surveys under the heading: »What do Europeans think governments should do first to increase the birth rate?«:

1. Reduce unemployment, introduce flexitime, increase childcare facilities
2. Extend family benefits, improve tax systems for families
3. Waive education costs (comprehensively: school, non-school and further-education costs) and provide household allowance
4. Guarantee parental leave and provide sufficient financial support for this.

The European Union can make a decisive contribution to implementing these and similar requirements.

Catelene Passchier named three existing European directives that could be amended or extended. Firstly, she said, the dimension of paid parental leave could be added to the Directive on parental leave (96/34/EC); secondly, the Directive on measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (92/85/EEC) should be updated; and, thirdly, the right to reduced working hours, combined with the right to extend them again, could be incorporated into the Directive on part-time work (97/81/EC). What is crucial is that the choice of flexible working arrangements such as these does not, as before, bring serious disadvantages in terms of salary, the pension payable or further career opportunities. These are the usual consequences when women work part time in order to bring up children or provide care. In addition, it is often the case nowadays that existing flexible arrangements such as working-time accounts are not useable if overtime hours cannot be broken down into fairly large blocks and are paid instead. According to Dr Krieger, this latter fact can be changed by means of »demographic working-time modules« such as those introduced by VW: at the

beginning of their careers, workers can work more in order to accumulate free-time entitlements for later; their salaries remain constant to reflect the average hours worked. In addition, Dr Krieger has appealed for the abolition of the exclusively contribution-based orientation of social security systems, and for the partial decoupling from paid work of pensions payable. This is because tending to the care needs of others should no longer entail financial disadvantages into old age.

Flexible working-time arrangements: a win-win situation

Flexible working-time arrangements have a chance of implementation only if they are designed so as to be advantageous for the company too, or at least not disadvantageous. Dr Krieger proposes that companies impose a ceiling on the percentage of workers wishing to take extended periods of time off, and that this percentage be graduated according to company size. This option should also involve a time frame so as to permit employers to undertake reasonable staff planning. As a rule, workers would have to make certain concessions in exchange for greater flexibility. He believes that increasing the flexibility of working time is possible only if jobs can be allocated more flexibly throughout the workforce. Therefore, the two sides of industry should show the same willingness to negotiate on this as on the raising of the retirement age.

Green strategies for action

»No« to pointing the finger at women

We unequivocally reject the standard argument that women are to blame for the ageing, childless society, pointing out that, instead, significant structural discrimination against women, particularly on the training and labour markets, and the lack of equal opportunities for men and women are a key factor in individual decisions. Therefore, the call for more childcare places does not go at all far enough and cannot redress the imbalance in society on its own.

Correction of life stages and rethink on the work-life balance

In the interests of managing demographic change we call for more comprehensive answers and, above all, a rethink with regard to the social work-life balance: the various, often parallel, life stages need to be rectified and the balance redressed without individual losses being incurred. In specific terms, this means that the various stages of burdening and unburdening a lifecycle, such as periods of gainful employment, education, family, caring, time out, voluntary work and retirement, must be designed intelligently so as to be beneficial to all. Income and time must be distributed appropriately between the sexes in the process, and equal demands placed on men.

Reforming Member States' social security, pension and tax systems

At the same time, the burdens – still less the decision to have children – cannot become an individual social risk, and so a combination of flexibility and security in labour relations and a reform of the welfare state are needed. The social security and pension systems must take risk protection for transitional periods into account and provide fiscal compensation for burdens rather than leaving these in the hands of the individual. Although time quotas, periods of education and sabbatical years require companies to make changes in personnel management, they represent a benefit to companies in the matter of long-term care of professional workers in view of demographic change. In this

regard, it is up to politicians to give family work, periods of education, voluntary work and care of relatives economic recognition as valuable contributions to society. As well as their social security and pension systems, Member States must reform their tax systems and create scope for action that takes account of the requirements of the work-life-balance concept.

Common European guidelines and exchange of experience

We at European level call for Member States to agree, within the framework of open coordination, on common guidelines and principles for action that would then be implemented according to the respective national traditions and customs. A systematic exchange of best practice is required so that everyone can learn from each other's experiences.

Challenges of shrinking regions – strengthening the adaptability



Challenges of shrinking regions – strengthening the adaptability

The impact of demographic change on individual regions differs markedly and necessitates different adjustment strategies depending on whether the region concerned is one of net immigration or of net emigration. It is clear

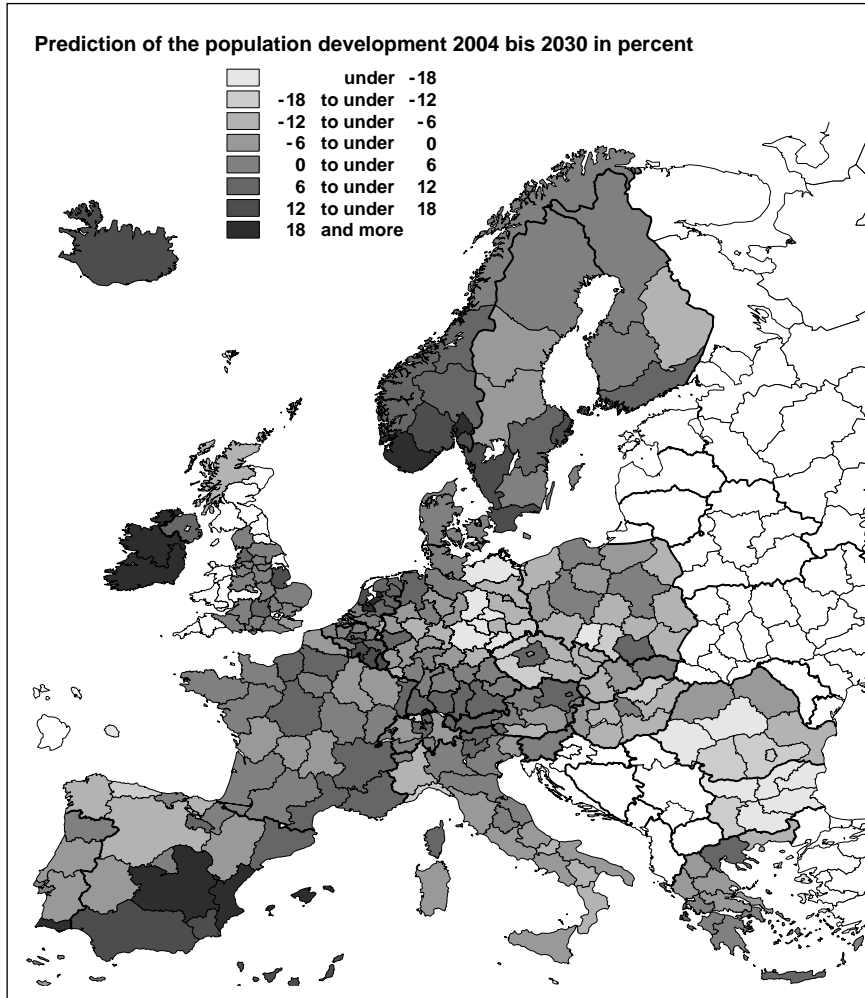
in this regard that quality of life is defined differently in shrinking regions, which are mostly rural regions, than in growth regions and that therefore specific strategies are needed.

What are the possible strategies for dealing with shrinking regions?

Resettlement versus cooperation

In shrinking regions, demographic change is intensified by young people moving away. Yet the EU's Lisbon Strategy, with its focus on the »pentagon« – the area demarcated by the cornerstones London, Hamburg, Munich, Milan and Paris – takes insufficient account of the specific problems of these regions. The *Land* of Brandenburg commissioned the Berlin Institute for Population and Development to carry out a study on demographic change in Brandenburg. In one of his controversial recommendations for action, Dr Klingholz, Director of the Berlin Institute, proposes that the communities themselves decide whether they wish to fund the transport of pupils to a larger school or to keep the local school open. The study favours the former, as »soft« factors such as education increase the attractiveness of shrinking regions as a location. However, if the state withdrew its support, the only option would be a private school. It rejects subsidising highways and infrastructure. Another controversial recommendation is that politicians refrain from artificially halting erosion in certain regions in favour of using the scant resources to encourage people to move away – for example by giving them financial incentives to do so. Dr Klingholz believes that this strategy could also benefit tourism if, for example, a region was turned into a wilderness park in the near future. The long-term consequences of such policy strategies are not reflected in the study, however.

County Donegal in Northern Ireland has pursued a contrasting strategy, attempting to translate the distinctive features of the structurally weak region into competitive advantages. Michael Heaney, Director of Services of the Community, Culture and Enterprise Directorate of Donegal County Council, reported on the success of his region, which had already been written off, in regaining its attractiveness. The example he gave of a relatively low-cost way to keep the region attractive to its own inhabitants was the creation of mobile libraries, which could serve several communities at the same time. Thus only the bus would use petrol, rather than all the individual

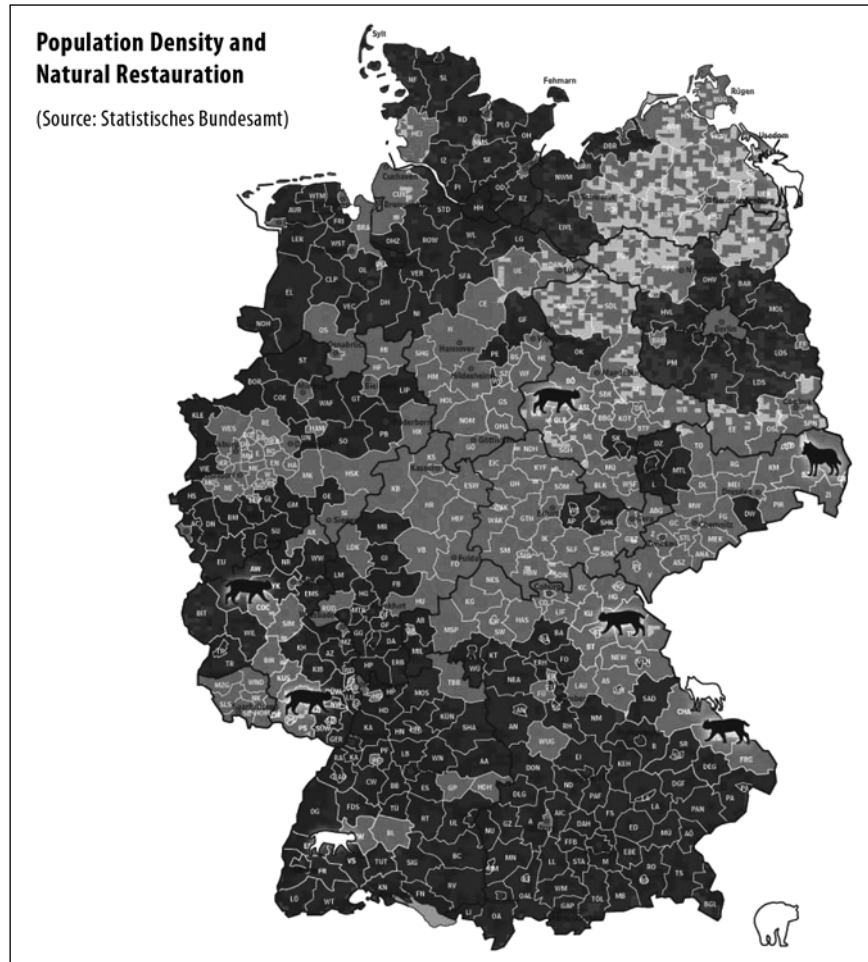


Slide from the conference presentation by Dr Klingholz, Berlin-Institut

purposes of tourism. Targeted investment has been made in projects making use of the region's potential for sustainable nature tourism. The erection of renewable energy installations locally has also produced the necessary income diversification.

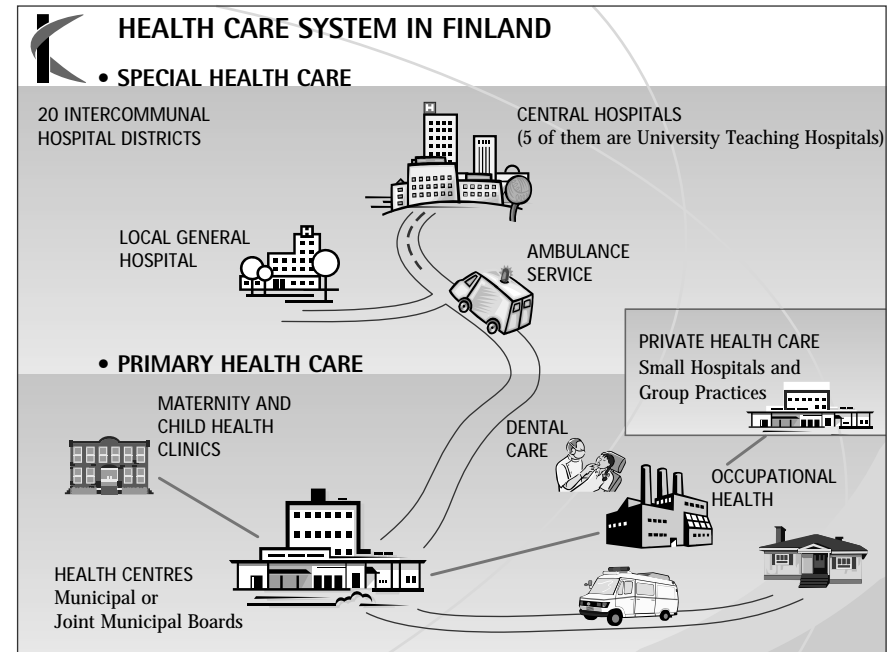
Using modern communication technologies in the healthcare system

Hannele Häkkinen, public health expert and Director of the Brussels Office of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, presented innovative yet astonishingly simple solutions to the problems caused by demographic change, giving the example of the Finnish healthcare system. In sparsely populated areas, this system particularly suffers from the consequences of an ageing population and a lack of doctors. Thus, in the future, home visits are to be helpfully supplemented by video conferences between doctor and patient. There are also self-help centres equipped with simple measuring devices such as blood-pressure monitors for patients'



Slide from the conference presentation by Dr Klingholz, Berlin-Institut

visitors. He said that the precondition for the success of such projects was bringing together political actors at all levels (national, regional, local) and also social actors to make sensible, targeted use of the scant funds. Positive internal developments, inspired crucially by civic participation and commitment, make regions attractive again: tourists visiting Donegal do not find a region emptied of its inhabitants, but rather one where people are taking charge of their own destiny. Despite increased visitor numbers, the region of Donegal considered it important not to exploit nature for the



Slide from the conference presentation by Hannele Häkkinen, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

own use. Mobile fitness centres in buses offer keep-fit facilities in several regions. In addition there are plans to employ travelling doctors, who can serve many communities.

This way state administrations can maintain basic healthcare services successfully even in very sparsely populated regions, even if the range of services has changed and thus flexibility and adaptability is required on the part of the population, too.

Establishment of a European Demography Fund

A quite different solution is proposed by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which calls for a demography fund at European level. This aims above all to achieve solidarity between the regions that benefit from demographic change through immigration and those that lose out through emigration. Rapporteur Olivier Derruine of the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions of Belgium (ACV/CSC) explained that the demography fund would supplement the European Social Fund and the Jessica initiative and would benefit those regions endeavouring to tackle emigration flows. Eligible for support would be projects that helped make it attractive for families to have children there whilst also allowing women to participate in working life, as gainful employment is seen as a factor in people's decision to stay in a region. In specific terms, this would mean investment in educational and care facilities or in modernising even small schools. In view of the particularly precarious situation of shrinking regions, the funds would especially benefit rural areas and those regions whose growth rates were below the national average for two consecutive years and which had a budget deficit. The demography fund would thus counter the Lisbon Strategy's selective preferential treatment of growth regions.

Green strategies for action

We cannot give up on regions!

We unequivocally reject the tendency for politicians to write off shrinking regions, to abdicate the state's responsibility to provide for their basic needs, and to simply give up on them. We particularly condemn incentive schemes aiming to induce people to move away in order to empty regions. The long-term consequences cannot be foreseen and thus cannot be justified.

Independent regional development with a strong civil society

Instead, state administrations must pick up on the impetus provided by civil society and promote approaches to independent regional development whose cornerstones are civic involvement and the development of innovation and creativity. This is because we firmly believe that each and every region – including regions of net emigration – has diverse specific potential that can be tapped to the benefit of its regional prosperity and is thus a factor in economic stability and in people's – including young people's – decision to stay there.

Improving the adaptability of regions

In addition, social networks and the resulting civic commitment and voluntary work in shrinking regions contribute significantly to meeting the needs of the local population. This is why we advocate recognising this civic commitment and supporting the bodies involved as regional policy partners. This sets in motion regional learning processes that enable a region to meet the challenges of demographic change and to improve its adaptability.

Provision of services of general interest in the Member States

Member States must guarantee a high level of services of general interest (for example educational facilities and healthcare services)

in regions of net emigration. There must also be scope for models that are innovative and oriented towards regional needs, whilst the disadvantages of oversized infrastructures should be avoided.

Orienting the Structural Funds towards demographic challenges

Formats are to be developed and implemented at European level that encourage regions and their state and civil-society actors to exchange experiences on the management of demographic change and that showcase examples of best practice. The knowledge gained from this should, as soon as possible, lead to a change in the way the Structural Funds are used to the effect that they can provide sustainable responses to regional demographic challenges.

Immigration and integration as an opportunity



Immigration and integration as an opportunity

Whilst the main problem of rural areas is emigration, metropolitan regions are often the destination for immigration flows, mainly from poorer European countries or other continents. The assessment of immigration varies greatly: from an economic point of view immigrants are chosen to close the labour gap, from a cultural point of view they add to the diversity of our everyday life, and from a political point of view they necessitate strategies to improve their integration.

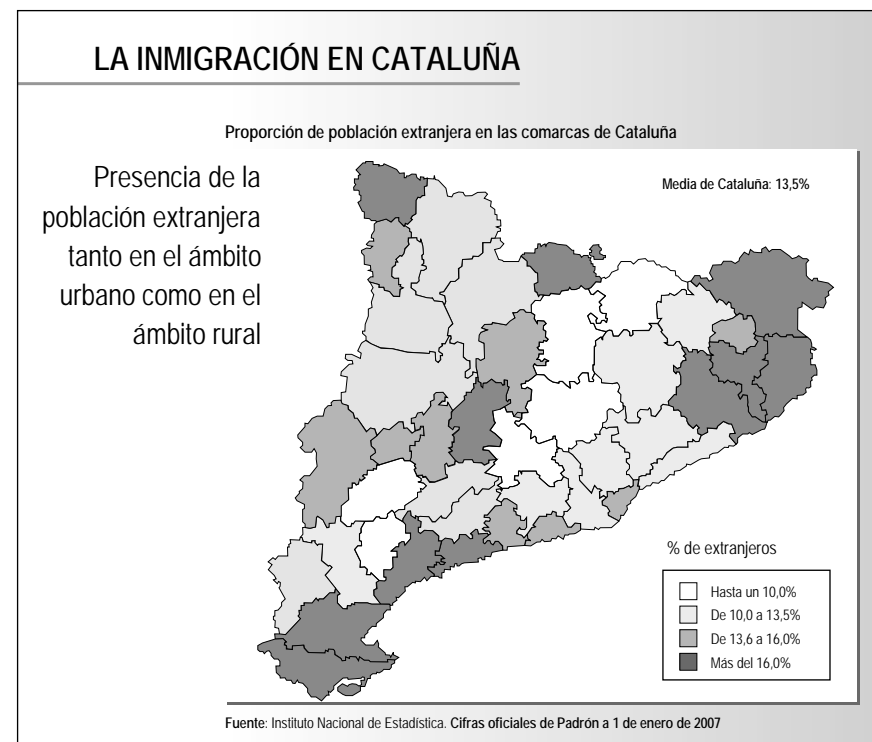
What opportunities are presented by the promotion of immigration?

Immigration brings economic benefits

The fact that, rather than being a problem, immigration actually benefits regions was illustrated by Dr Smallbone of the Small Business Research Centre at Kingston University, London. He stated that the ethnic diversity of the metropolitan region of London has a beneficial effect on the business climate. Asian immigrants, in particular, have a formative influence on the creative sector in London, which includes the music and IT industries. When immigrants start up businesses, this firstly increases economic strength and creates jobs, and secondly potentially contributes to the integration of the various ethnic groups. Examples are when an Asian employer in London takes on British employees, or when the personal contact makes it possible to market a product to a certain ethnic group to which it could not otherwise have been marketed. Dr Smallbone emphasised that the potential offered by immigrants has been far from exhausted. After all, these groups often find it much more difficult to obtain financing for their own business or to make business contacts. Linguistic barriers also play a major role. Therefore, the researcher recommends addressing these difficulties by means of active entrepreneurship policies focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises. Such support is already being offered on a small scale by stakeholder organisations such as GHARWEG. The head of this organisation, Nyeya Yen, showed that offering immigrants initial support immediately after their arrival, in the form of English classes and IT training, helps them clear the initial hurdles on the way to finding a job or to starting up a business.

Integration of and democratic rights for immigrants

Integration and democratic rights do not have to go hand in hand with the granting of national citizenship. A regional model for involving immigrants in the democratic process and the community was presented by Montserrat Solé Aubia, employee of the Catalan Government (Generalitat de Catalunya). This government recently developed the concept of regional citizenship. This is based on the idea that third-country nationals resident in Catalonia be granted at local level all the rights and obligations already granted to EU citizens. The requirements (period of admission and residence status) for obtaining these rights and obligations are much lower than those for naturalisation. Although the right of third-country nationals to vote in local elections in Catalonia is still the objective, this has yet to be



Percentage of foreigners in the regions of Catalonia, slide from the conference presentation by Montserrat Solé Aubia, Generalitat de Catalunya (highest percentage represented in dark-grey)

attained. Nevertheless, in parallel, tangible steps are being taken to integrate immigrants into Catalan society. Thus the Catalan Government is not only continuously increasing funds for integration projects and social housing, but is also currently working on setting up a welcome website in 12 languages. It aims at fostering the commitment of immigrants to their (new) place of residence.

Interviews

Green strategies for action

›Yes‹ to immigration

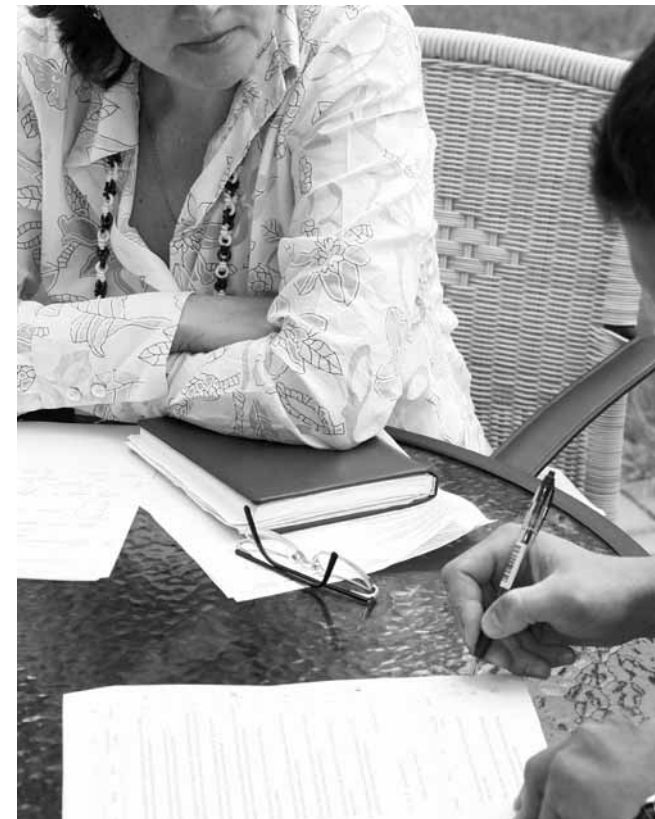
Not only do we believe that immigration creates diversity, but we also know that diversity creates prosperity – another reason for us to support and welcome immigration.

Greater involvement of immigrant associations

In the interests of the successful integration of immigrants, we support the promotion of integration projects that are tailored to the needs of migrants. This means that it must be guaranteed at least that immigrant associations are involved in decisions on measures and in the development and implementation of such measures.

Integration: a two-way street

It is insufficient to speak about integration and demand unilateral commitment to integration from immigrants. Integration is a two-way street that also makes demands of the local population: we must recognise who the people are who come to our countries, what they bring with them and what their hopes are.



Interviews

Interviews were conducted at the European Parliament in Brussels on the margins of the conference of 14 February 2008.

Hannele Häkkinen, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities



The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: Ms Häkkinen, you hail from Finland, a country that has regions with a low population density. This is new as far as my region, Brandenburg, is concerned. It is predicted that some districts of Brandenburg will no longer have any doctors or emergency medical care by 2030. Finland has been faced with such processes for a long time but is not giving up on these regions. What pragmatic solutions have you found in Finland?

Hannele Häkkinen: Taking the example of healthcare services: as you know, Finland has a tax-funded healthcare system. There is an agenda and a budget at national level for the provision of healthcare services. The municipalities are responsible for providing these services.

One way in which these services are provided is via health centres. Doctors and nurses work there at local level, and people go to visit these centres. A structural and service reform is currently under way in Finland, whose impact on healthcare services is that a minimum population of 20 000 must be reached to keep a health centre going. In a health centre itself, responsibility for patients is discharged by dividing work between doctors and nurses.

Finland also has mobile services. This means that a bus travels to the villages to offer consultations and treatment by doctors and nurses.

There is also the possibility of video conferencing, enabling patients to consult a nurse or doctor by video. A further facility is call centres that patients can call to obtain advice, so that they do not need to visit the health centre so often.

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: You avoid long journeys and make use of modern technology. Many thanks for these extremely interesting ideas, Ms Häkkinen.

Interview conducted by Elisabeth Schroedter MEP at the European Parliament in Brussels on 14 February 2008

Dr. Hubert Krieger, Eurofound – the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions



The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: Dr. Krieger, could you explain – just very simply – the concept of life-course approach in the context of work-life balance and the main issues that you feel, are facing us now and the biggest changes we need.

Hubert Krieger: From our point of view it is important by looking at work-life balance issues not only to look at work-life balance issues in a specific phase of life, particularly what is called nowadays the rush hour of life, the phase of life where you have little children and a lot of challenges and stress are on the family. But we think – from a policy perspective and also from the individual perspective – it is important to look at work-life balance issues through the whole life course. The first of all issues which are with people throughout the whole life is for example the care agenda. It is not just the care of young people; it is also the care of elderly people and of family relations for growing up children, because they also need support.

Take life long learning which should go through your whole life and not just through the initial phase. You should regularly improve your capacities. We think from a policy perspective, that it is very important to look at the interrelation of decisions and policy measures you have in one certain phase of life on the whole life course. Take the example of part-time work: What at the end of the day are the long-term effects of part-time work for your career, for your income, for the kind of work you can do? So we ask for a kind of life-course proving and we also think that, for example, when you measure income or income gaps, you have to look not only at a

income gap in a certain phase of life – say between men and women about 20 percent – but an income gap over the whole life course, which may be then 60 percent between men and women, which puts a complete different picture to the challenge.



The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: I think this 60 percent-figure is quite shocking. How important do you think that the issue of equality between men and women is in this whole debate on work-life balance?

H.K.: We think that it is of extreme importance. It is the corner stone of this

debate and of policy making. When we look at countries which have a deeply engraved equal opportunities approach like, for example, the Scandinavian societies, we can see that these countries are doing much better as far as demographic challenges are concerned. They are able to combine full-time work of both partners with high fertility rate, with high-quality care provision. They manage in a much more constructive and much more innovative way than other countries which hold up extreme stereotypes of role-behaviour. Take for example the southern European countries, where we have on the one side extreme long working hours of men and a high percentage of women who are not integrated in the labour market. There is also little possibility of part-time work of women in these countries, very little working time options and policy options for women. So we would think that a change in society, a change of the gender contract plus an appropriate policy means for enabling people to practice equal opportunities are extremely important.

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: You say that a lot of our political leaders in Europe have not been in university – in a student-sense – for 30 or more years. I think this has a lot to do with the whole concept of life-long learning that we discussed so many times in this parliament. What is your approach to life-long learning?

H.K.: I think it is a worrying sign of political decision making – as far as governments are concerned and as far companies are concerned – that major decision makers are out of the knowledge creation systems like universities for 30 to 40 years. I guess that we really have to think from an attitudinal point of view and from a career point of view.

If someone with 50 or 55 goes back to university and comes back then with this new qualification, this person has no chance to get into a position to use this qualification. So I think we are really not serious about it. We have to think about how to make time available, money available to do this and opening up our career path to this, to use these potentials. Because someone who has a lot of life experience and work experience on one side and is able to bring that together with new knowledge which is created in universities can deliver very productive inputs into a company or into policy making.

It is not enough that people do a computer course for one or two days a year and declare this as major contribution to life-long learning. We all know that knowledge really is ageing very quickly in our times. After a very prolonged discussion on the importance of life-long learning, I think there is hardly anyone on the political circle in Europe who disagrees with us. I think now we have to talk about how we put these nice ideas into practice and into reality.

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: There are many challenges facing us. Thank you very much, Dr. Krieger.

*Interview conducted by Jill Evans MEP
at the European Parliament in Brussels on 14 February 2008*

Nyeya Yen, GHARWEG

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: I am here with Nyeya Yen whom I know from London. He was with us for the conference on demographic changes today. Nyeya, you work in an organization called GHARWEG. What are you doing?

Nyeya Yen: GHARWEG is an Advice, Training and Careers Centre, GHARWEG for short is the Ghana Refugee Welfare Group. We were set up in August 1985 by a group of African and Caribbean people. Principally, the first idea was to



help people who faced immigration problems as well as problems with housing and welfare and GHARWEG provided advisory services.

Since we had been set up people started coming to us and asking for help and support on one-to-one basis. Over the years, we recognized that a number of people came to us and wanted us to do more than the one-to-one advices. Since then, for about 15 years now, we are running courses targeted at migrants. The courses are open to everybody – mostly unemployed – but the majority of people who attend the courses are people from African

countries. And over the years, GHARWEG added cultural, employment training activities and development awareness to its work.

Most of the funding comes from the European Union. We have had support from the European Social Fund for quite a number of years now through the Association of London Government, and later on through the London Central Learning and Skills Council. It is not coming to an end and we are doing further efforts to get funding to go on running our English classes, our IT-classes and all the other activities.

We are also engaged in development awareness activities. Currently we work with a London-based organisation called »London Development Association«. The aim of its project is bringing together a number of groups on development issues around the Millenium Development Goals. GHARWEG is only a small group in this project, but GHARWEG specifically works with migrant communities, so we see and know what kind of contributions they can make towards the Millenium Development Goals. As migrants we recognise that we have a contribution to make to this project.

Apart from this we managed to secure a grant from the government department for international development in London through its civil programme. It is a five-year programme and we are partners in the upper east region of Ghana on a civil society project.

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: That means that you have almost a bridging role, haven't you? You help people to understand the UK better, to get better jobs within the UK, to develop their skills, but also still to keep links with peoples' country of origin. How important do you think those links with countries of origin are?

N.Y.: They are very important to us. Even though a lot of migrants came in the sixties and seventies, they are now dying here. This is not easy for them as there is still a link to the country of origin. There is hardly any migrant person, in particular from Africa, who is not dreaming of going back home. Some of us are first-time migrants or second-time migrants who have strong links back to where we are coming from.

Most African countries at present are going through a lot of economic problems. We see our role as contributing – not solving, but at least alleviating or reducing the poverty level. This is the link we are establishing. We work with a number of groups and we try as much as possible to make people aware that they have a role to play in contributing to the countries they originate from.



The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: Thank you very much, Nye-ya.

Interview conducted by Jean Lambert MEP at the European Parliament in Brussels on 14 February 2008

Michael Heaney, Donegal County Council

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: Mr. Heaney, in disadvantaged regions the negative effect of demographic change shows a quite dramatic picture. Ageing of society goes hand in hand with decreasing population. Young people leave the region and the regional development turns into a vicious circle. What do you believe – could shrinking regions escape this vicious circle or turn around the negative trends? What do local people have to do, and which political measures could support this?



Michael Heaney: Well, I think that it is very important to adopt an integrated approach to planning, to developing strategies, to undertaking developments delivering public services. At regional level this integrated approach is extremely important. And it is very important to push the required structures in place to facilitate this integrated approach in order to ensure that you have collaborative structures, that you have all sectors participating with our elected members at local level giving the lead. It is indeed important to give it this democratic mandate. And bringing all

of the other sectors in – be it community or voluntary social partners, the local development sector, all of the state agencies and government departments – and agreeing a short vision for the county and a strategy which can be implemented based very much on local resources. It is imperative that we identify and that we capitalize on the local resources that we have in abundance because maybe this is something we neglected in the past. For regions, such as our region of Donegal and similar peripheral regions, it is essential that the adequate structures are put in place and that there is a focus on sustainable development of local resources.

The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament: Thank you for these very interesting ideas, Mr Heaney.

*Interview conducted by
Elisabeth Schroedter MEP
at the European Parliament
in Brussels on
14 February 2008*



European Parliament resolution on the demographic future of Europe



European Parliament resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe (2007/2156 (INI))¹

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 1997 on the Commission report to the Council and European Parliament on the demographic situation in the European Union (1995)²,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 1998 on the Commission demographic report 1997³,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2000 on the Commission communication Towards a Europe for all ages – promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity⁴,
- having regard to the Commission communication on 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 and 23 March 2005,
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper on Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations (COM(2005)0094),
- having regard to its resolution of 23 March 2006 on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2006 on a European Social Model for the future⁶,
- having regard to the Commission communication on The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity (COM(2006)0571),
- having regard to the Commission communication on Promoting solidarity between the generations (COM(2007)0244),

- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 14 March 2007 on The family and demographic change⁷ and its core proposal that a European pact for the family be signed by Member States,
 - having regard to the Commission Staff Working document on Europe’s demographic future: facts and figures (SEC(2007)0638),
 - 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 Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A6-0024/2008),
- A. whereas demography is the combined result of various factors – birth rate, life expectancy and migratory flows – and whereas the current rates for those factors in the Member States show that by 2050, large-scale demographic changes are to be expected, leading in particular to an ageing of the European population, whose average age could rise from 39 in 2004 to 49 in 2050,
 - B. whereas those demographic changes may, according to Commission estimates, profoundly alter the population structure and the age pyramid, with the number of young people aged between 0 and 14 years falling from 100 million (1975 index) to 66 million in 2050, the population of working age peaking around 2010 at 331 million and gradually diminishing thereafter to some 268 million in 2050, life expectancy increasing by six years for men and five years for women between 2004 and 2050, and the percentage of people aged over 80 climbing from 4,1 percent in 2005 to 11,4 percent in 2050,
 - C. whereas the average European old-age dependency ratio (number of persons aged over 65 divided by the number aged between 14 and 65) will rise from 25 percent in 2004 to 53 percent in 2050,
 - D. whereas, however, the economic dependency ratio (number of economically inactive population, such as pensioners, children and youth in education divided by the number of economically active population at working age) is much more important than the old-age dependency ratio for estimating the costs for society with regard to its non-active population,
 - E. whereas demographic change impacts seriously on public spending, which is expected to increase by 10 percent between 2004 and 2050,

¹ P6_TA(2008)0066

² OJ C 115, 14.4.1997, p. 238.

³ OJ C 104, 6.4.1998, p. 222.

⁴ OJ C 232, 17.8.2001, p. 381.

⁵ OJ C 292E, 1.12.2006, p. 131.

⁶ OJ C 305E, 14.12.2006, p. 141.

⁷ OJ C 161, 13.7.2007, p. 66.

- F. whereas demographic changes should not affect the total size of the European population between until 2050, but will lead to significant regional imbalances, with some areas of the European Union already characterised by large outflows of young people, mainly young women; whereas, similarly, the population of Europe as a proportion of the world's population will fall from 15 percent 100 years ago to 5 percent in 2050; whereas EU regions are very differently affected by these changes: while a disproportionately high number of older people already live in regions with net outward migration, regions with net inward migration have not yet experienced the process of an ageing society because of young people immigrating into the areas,
- G. whereas infertility is one of the causes of demographic decline and whereas it should be recognised as a public health concern and as a social problem affecting both men and women; reminds the Commission of the call for action on infertility and demography made by the Parliament in 2005 and calling upon the Commission to put forward recommendations in this area,
- H. whereas legal immigration is a positive element in the make-up of the European population and is necessary if demographic balance is to be maintained; whereas, however, legal immigration alone is not sufficient to counteract the progressive ageing of the population in the European Union and measures are needed to increase the birth rate of the resident population,
- I. whereas immigration is only a partial and short-term solution to demographic change in Europe, which requires Member State commitments to securing respect for the principle of gender equality in the public and private sectors, protecting maternity, providing social and economic support for families and taking measures to improve the reconciliation of family life with work for men and women,
- J. whereas disability is strongly linked to age and older people are more likely to have an impairment or disability,

General considerations

- 1. Notes with concern the demographic projections until 2050; stresses, however, that 50-year projections are not irreversible predictions but serious warnings to which we must respond today if we are to maintain Europe's competitiveness, the viability of the economy, social cohesion, solidarity between the generations and its social model for tomorrow; considers that the perspective of shrinking populations by 2050 may implicate a lowering of the pressure on the environment and provide an opportunity for sustainable development, which in turn needs proactive policies to adapt spatial planning, housing, transport and other kinds of infrastructures accordingly; recognises the competences of Member States in this regard;

- 2. Recalls, first, that the two chief causes of demographic change – the falling birth rate and the ageing of the population – are the result of progress: increased life expectancy is the direct result of progress in science, hygiene and living standards and women's control over their reproductive lives is the result of their emancipation and goes hand-in-hand with higher levels of education for girls and women's participation in active life and public responsibilities; considers that this should be regarded as an irreversible benefit to humanity;
- 3. Acknowledges that a society that places children at the centre of its policies is the precondition for a healthier birth rate; insists on the need to create a family-friendly environment and to improve living conditions for families and children and for realising families' real aspirations;
- 4. Stresses that the average birth rate in the European Union, which at 1,5 is abnormally low, is not a reflection of women's choice or of European citizens' actual aspirations for creating a family, and may therefore also be linked to the difficulty of reconciling work with family life (lack of child-care infrastructures, social and economic support for families, and jobs for women), the anxiety-inducing social environment (unstable work situation, expensive housing) and a fear of the future (late access to employment for young people and job insecurity);
- 5. Recalls that the use of alcohol and drugs among young people constitutes a risk of public importance and with huge demographic consequences, bringing about, inter alia, a decrease in their ability to work or start a family; thus recommends the establishment of target-oriented framework programmes for the prevention of early alcohol and drug use as well as for overcoming drug and alcohol dependence upon young people;
- 6. Considers that prolonged life expectancy is a positive factor and should be recognised as such; therefore, asks that Member States guarantee that pensioners unable to afford a home, care for themselves or live the end of their lives in dignity do not fall into poverty;
- 7. Encourages comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, since the issue of the demographic future of Europe cannot be separated from the problem of vulnerable groups living on the internal peripheries of society and suffering from severe poverty whose disadvantage is often seen as their own fault, which has an influence not only on children but also on the forthcoming generations;
- 8. Draws attention to the maltreatment and lack of care to which the elderly are exposed within their families or within the institutions in which they are placed; urges Member States and the Commission to do more to uncover the extent of abuse of older people in the European Union; notes it has been estimated that as many as 10 percent of older people experience some form of physical, financial

or mental abuse before they die; calls upon the Commission and the Member States to develop the provision of information, warning systems and penalties for maltreatment of this kind; welcomes the Commission's intention to produce a communication on the abuse of older people in 2008; calls for that communication to be the occasion for drawing up a comprehensive strategy for a large-scale information and action campaign in this field (training of care workers, definition of quality standards, penalties for maltreatment);

9. Regrets that no adequate measures have yet been taken to prepare the European Union for this challenge, which has been foreseeable for a number of years; regrets, in particular, that the Lisbon Strategy objectives and the commitments made at the Barcelona European Council on 15 and 16 March 2002 on child-care, employment for the over 55s, better balancing of family life and work and women's participation in working life have not been met by the great majority of Member States, and that the European Union as a whole remains far from attaining those objectives;
10. Calls on the Member States to seek to provide the high standard of care at affordable prices needed in order to accommodate children and other dependent persons, as laid down in the objectives of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002, in which Member States were called upon, by 2010, to provide childcare for at least 90 percent of children from age three to the start of compulsory schooling and at least 33 percent of children under three; maintains that those measures must be such as to enable parents to adjust their working patterns according to their way of life;
11. Considers that the European Union's objectives should not be confined to complying with the Barcelona objectives on childcare facilities; believes that those facilities should be viewed as universal services, available to all who need them;
12. Highlights the fact that many small businesses are poorly prepared for the challenges of an ageing workforce and may require Member State assistance in this regard;
13. Welcomes the Commission's initiative to continue the discussion on this major challenge; encourages the Commission to support the identification and exchange of good practices at regional and local level and to take this opportunity for innovation in the European Union; supports its integrated approach to the demographic challenge and the five core policy directions leading to a solidarity pact between the generations, between the sexes, and among the regions; points out that, if demographic challenges are to be successfully met, the Member States must implement the Lisbon Strategy effectively and establish close coordination at Member State level between macro-economic and social policies in order to

enable the growth, competitiveness and productivity of the European Union's economic system to meet the challenges posed by an ageing population and to enable the Member States to discharge the obligations incumbent upon them by planning innovative policies in the fields of public finance, health services, services of general interest (SGIs), immigration and integration;

The challenge of demographic renewal

14. Recognises that maternity choices are among the most private decisions men and women take, and must be respected; recognises that, since Member States' birth rates range from 1,25 to 2,0, it is possible to influence birth rate curves favourably through coordinated public policies, by creating a family- and child-friendly material and emotional environment; recognises that, along the lines advocated by the European Economic and Social Committee in its proposed European pact for the family, those measures should be applied over the long term and should provide the necessary framework of stability and protection for parenthood decisions;
15. Calls on the Member States to adopt best practices as regards the length of maternity leave, which varies among the Member States from 14 to 28 weeks, and as regards parental leave, ante-natal care and counselling, a guaranteed income during pregnancy and returning to the same job; similarly, hopes that the Member States will take measures and provide for penalties against domestic violence and abuse;
16. Recalls the discrimination suffered by women regarding working conditions and employers' distrust regarding their desire for motherhood; recalls that women are under-employed in spite of their qualifications and that their income level, which is below the average reference wage is detrimental to their essential economic independence; calls on the Member States duly to implement Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation⁸ and to transpose Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 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 breastfeeding⁹; calls on the Member States to take measures under the Directive 92/85/EEC against employers who discriminate directly or indirectly against women workers wishing to start a family;

⁸ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

⁹ OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1.

17. Calls on the Member States to consider measures to offer specific protection and support to women after the birth of a child, in particular to young single mothers, bearing in mind the growing number of one-parent families, 85 percent of which are headed by women and which are more exposed than others to a serious risk of poverty;
18. Draws attention to the need for public spending on young children and large families, particularly for the provision of childcare facilities and for the protection of single mothers and one-parent families, who are at particular risk of social exclusion, isolation and poverty; stresses that those services are in the general interest and contribute to job creation and the development of the local and regional economy; calls on the Commission to showcase examples of the best practices of certain Member State reasons;
19. Recommends, therefore, combined public-private investment in the childcare sector and the pre-school education system;
20. Stresses that adequate access to services for the care of children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other dependants are essential in order to enable full and equal participation of men and women in the labour market, which will have an impact on the level of informal care available within households;
21. Recalls that social dialogue culminated in agreements on parental leave and part-time work, which were the subject of Council Directives 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave¹⁰ and 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work¹¹; calls on the Member States and the Commission, therefore, to ensure that that legislation is implemented with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity;
22. Calls on the Member States to facilitate the fostering of abused children, orphans and those raised in specialist institutions; calls for a debate at European level on the procedures for the adoption of children from Member States or third countries, and to ensure that national and international rules are respected, and, where necessary, amended, in the interests of the child; calls for the greatest possible vigilance concerning all types of maltreatment and trafficking in human beings;
23. Stresses that family patterns are changing; therefore asks the Commission and the Member States to give serious consideration to this reality when developing and implementing policies;

¹⁰ OJ L 145, 19.6.1996, p. 4.

¹¹ OJ L 14, 20.1.1998, p. 9.

24. Stresses the need to improve EU paternity law; calls upon the Commission to propose specific measures designed to facilitate greater involvement in family life on the part of fathers by enhancing entitlement to paternal leave; calls upon the Commission and the Member States to promote fathers' rights as regards the upbringing and the care of children, particularly in the event of separation or divorce, with a view to developing gender equality in European society;
25. Calls upon the Commission to take into consideration the sensitive issue of infertility, which affects both married and unmarried women and couples;
26. Notes that infertility is a medical condition recognised by World Health Organization that can have severe effects such as depression; points out that infertility is on the increase and now occurs in about 15 percent of couples; calls on the Member States, therefore, to ensure the right of couples to universal access to infertility treatment;
27. Encourages the Member States to identify good practices in favour of families, family benefits systems and social services of general interest (SSGIs) for protecting and helping families; calls on the Member States to provide support targeted specifically at young parents pursuing their training or studies;
28. Calls on the Member States to recognise the social, economic and educational value of informal family work in the form of caring for children and other dependants, while examining the possibility of recognising length of service, social security and pension rights for those who carry out such informal work;
29. Encourages the Member States to implement proactive measures in support of parents, such as additional retirement pension entitlements and tax breaks for company crèches, and to exchange best practices in this area;

The human resources challenge

30. Notes that, faced with an imbalance between the active and non-active population resulting from demographic change, the European Union has substantial scope to increase the employment of women, young people, senior citizens and people with disabilities; maintains that full employment must become a short-term objective in the context of the review of the Lisbon Strategy in 2008;
31. Calls for a reform of current European human resource management which, by under-employing people aged less than 25/30 and people over 55, limits to approximately 30 years the working life of a large part of the population; calls for the promotion of preventative and holistic age management techniques;

32. Calls for a global and qualitative approach to human resources and proposes defining an »active life-cycle«, combining training, lifelong learning and the optimisation of formal and informal knowledge and qualifications, including relating to a person's career, from the beginning to the end of a person's working life;
33. Recognises that the segmentation of the labour market and the increasing prevalence of non-secure forms of work is leading to increased insecurity in old age; considers that Member States need to examine and exchange ideas on best practices as regards maintaining social contributions throughout the life-cycle in order to strengthen security in old age;
34. Considers that the measures envisaged having regard to demographic change must take account of the increase in productivity of all the working population, thus not only the ration of economically active to economically non-active people is significant but also the increase in productivity;
35. Calls for an in-depth dialogue with the social partners, business, academia, non-governmental organisations and the media in order to prepare for these demographic changes; stresses that future productivity gains will depend chiefly on investment in research and development and in technological innovations, and insists on the vital need for companies to anticipate their skills requirements through forward-looking management of jobs and careers and, through investment in lifelong learning, to assist employees in upgrading their skills;
36. Calls for practical initiatives designed to enable older people to work longer if they so wish, so that they can pass on their particular work experience to young people, other workers and employers;
37. Encourages investment in education and training, including the use of new technology, in order to raise the level of basic training for everyone, which will ensure that they are able to adapt in the future and acquire new skills through lifelong learning, as well as the development of measures to help young people with their initial integration into the labour market and older people and vulnerable groups with their reintegration in order to provide genuine career support throughout their working lives;
38. Suggests, on the basis of free collective bargaining or in consultation with works councils – in accordance with traditions of Member States – a cutback as soon as possible in companies resorting to early retirement, and calls on the Member States to promote the role of older workers and encourage their employment; acknowledges, however, that for older workers (those older than the minimum retirement age) who may no longer desire full-time occupation, the feasibility of part-time work, flexible working hours, distance working or job-sharing

might be explored, as an innovative form of gradual retirement and limiting its stressful effects;

39. Considers that the time has come to address the issue of »pensioners' stress«, namely the feelings of dejection, uselessness and nihilism experienced by workers a few days after retirement, when they perceive themselves to be useless, abandoned, alone and without a future;
40. Calls upon the Commission and the Member States to propose incentives which will make it easier for young people to enter the employment market, for example by encouraging workers who have reached retirement age to act as mentors for young workers and by introducing job-sharing and part-time working, with a view to facilitating the hand-over from one generation to the next;
41. Calls for a thorough reform of career management for senior employees, who are currently penalised from the age of 50 by discrimination on recruitment, inadequate access to training, particularly in new technology, the absence of recognition of acquired experience and the rarity of professional advancement; recalls that age bars in relation to skills training are discriminatory and calls on Member States to highlight this to employers and training providers; to that end, calls for the effective transposition and implementation of Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation¹², which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age in training and employment, as soon as possible; considers that beyond the question of access to skills, older workers often need help in the more personal areas related to work such as interview technique, confidence building and curriculum vitae writing, calls on Member States to consider specific employment advice for older workers and to set up more government programmes aimed at employing senior citizens; calls upon the Commission to monitor and take action against Member States in which legislation continues to discriminate on the basis of age or disability;
42. Calls upon the Commission to monitor and take action against Member States in which legislation continues to discriminate on the basis of age and disability, thus infringing the treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which, from 1 January 2009, will be legally binding throughout the European Union, so that the Member States concerned repeal such legislation without delay;
43. Calls on the Commission to collect aggregate statistical data on particular age groups according to the different problems faced and the wide spectrum of discrimination on the grounds of age;

¹² OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

44. Recalls that older people are not a homogenous group; highlights, in particular, that older women and older people from ethnic minorities may face multiple discrimination;
45. Stresses that part-time work is a useful step towards re-entering the labour market; encourages Member States to support particularly smaller firms in the promotion of part-time and flexible working practices; reemphasises the positive value of part-time work for older workers, who may no longer desire full-time occupation;
46. Calls on Member States to promote the role of older workers within the labour market by highlighting the benefits of employing such workers and encouraging employers to adopt flexible working practices which encourage them to engage in the labour market;
47. Asks the Commission to conduct a study based on gender-disaggregated data on tax benefits and existing barriers related to employment with a focus on the ageing population;
48. Urges the Commission and Member States to improve access to learning throughout working life;
49. Recalls that the principle of a statutory retirement age is one of the achievements of the European social model and a guarantee that working life is not compulsorily extended beyond a reasonable limit;
50. Recalls that retirement is a right which each employee may claim from the legal age of retirement as established by each Member State, in consultation with the social partners, with due respect for national traditions;
51. Highlights the massive disparity in average occupational pension between men and women due to career breaks taken to care for children or elderly relatives; calls upon the Member States to take action in order to ensure that taking maternity or parental leave no longer constitutes a penalty when pension entitlements are calculated; urges the Member States to envisage bonuses to be added to pensions on the basis of the number of children raised, and to recognise the role of the carer in society;
52. Calls on the Member States to take the steps required to modernise social security and welfare systems, including pension schemes, in order to make them financially viable and enable them to cope with the effects of population ageing; maintains that special attention should be focused on the situation of elderly women, who are more vulnerable to isolation and poverty;
53. Calls on the Commission to draw up a comparative study by Member State of the different pension and social security schemes for women in order to identify best practices for increasing women's employment and facilitating the combination of family life and work;
54. Urges the Commission and the Member States to focus urgently on employment support for older workers given the planned rise in the state pension age in many Member States;
55. Believes, however, that people over the legal age of retirement today have a better life expectancy and higher quality of life than ever before and that the Member States should, in consultation with the social partners and with due respect for national traditions, promote and not prevent the establishment of rules and conventions enabling the prolongation, voluntarily on the worker's part, of working life after the legal age of retirement established by each Member State; encourages the Commission to continue to conduct comparative studies on the variety of pension schemes in the Member States and the economic and social impact of the reforms envisaged in the Member States;
56. Calls on the Member States to develop measures to enable women to reconcile work and professional advancement with their family obligations and to combat the discrimination and stereotypes which continue to affect them on the labour market and in education; recalls the principle of equality between men and women and the European social model's inviolable principle of equal pay for equal work at the same workplace;
57. Therefore calls for employment law measures finally to end this form of discrimination, especially the gender pay gap, and for the gender perspective to be taken into account in public budgets;
58. Recalls that a good work environment is an important factor for productivity; calls on the Member States to promote actions in the workplace that reduce the risk of harm to ageing workers, including interventions to improve the psychosocial and physical work environment, changes to work content and organisation, improving the general health, well-being, and work ability of workers, and increasing the abilities and professional competence of workers; calls on enterprises to invest in the prevention of accidents at work, occupational health, hygiene and social dialogue;
59. Underlines that it is essential that the workplace be made accessible and thus safe for older workers and workers with disabilities through the provision of reasonable accommodation and special equipment adapted to their individual needs and requirements; also stresses that an accessible environment enables

older people to pursue an autonomous life, hence saving public money spent on institutional care;

- 60. Calls for Member States to introduce the right to ask for flexible or part-time work which applies not only to parents but also to older workers who may in turn have care responsibilities;
- 61. Emphasises the role of the small and medium-sized enterprises as key job generators in the European Union;
- 62. Notes that the service sector is the largest employer of women, immigrants and older workers, calls for the urgent completion of the internal market for services;

The challenge of solidarity between the generations and regions

- 63. Recalls that the principle of solidarity between the generations, a principle of excellence of the European social models, is based on working people covering the replacement incomes and social security and health costs of those who are not working (children, young people, dependants and the elderly); insists that the principle of solidarity should be maintained notwithstanding the foreseeable demographic imbalance;
- 64. Stresses the importance of active intervention by public authorities, in particular through the provision of SSGIs, to help families and young children and also to provide facilities and care for old people and all dependants; calls on the Commission to guarantee the legal security of SSGIs in Community law guaranteeing universal access and the solidarity principle;
- 65. Stresses the importance of sharing of information and best practices among Member States on how health systems can prepare for the increased demand of an ageing population; particularly in light of the fact that an ageing population will have a strong upward impact on public spending on health care, as disability and illness rises sharply at older ages especially amongst the very old (over-80s) which will be the fastest growing segment of the population in the decades to come;
- 66. Calls upon the Member States to take stronger action to combat the non-payment of taxes and social security contributions, in order to ensure that pension schemes are viable; considers that the Member States should introduce active, effective employment policies and urges them to offer flexible schemes and scope for personal choice as regards the timing of retirement (beyond the minimum age) by means of incentive schemes aimed at workers who decide to remain active for longer;

- 67. Points to the huge contribution made by the elderly to social cohesion and the economy as well as to the fact that their active participation in family and inter-generational relationships enhances the redistribution of resources within the family circle; further considers that their voluntary activities should be facilitated and encouraged; considers, finally, that their consumption of goods and of leisure, care and welfare services is an expanding economic sector and a new source of wealth known as 'grey gold'; calls, therefore, on the Member States to promote and develop the economic and social participation of elderly people, paying particular attention to their physical well-being and the quality of their social and financial living conditions;
- 68. Calls on the Member States to promote the role of the elderly in order to maintain solidarity between the generations, and, in combination with partners at local level, to facilitate their participation in voluntary activities of an educational, cultural or entrepreneurial nature;
- 69. Highlights the importance of voluntary work as a pathway for many people re-engaging in the labour market, encourages governments to make it easier for older people to engage in voluntary work whilst receiving benefits;
- 70. Recalls that SSGIs (covering, in particular, care, health and bringing up young children) make it easier for parents to enter the employment market and help to combat poverty, especially in the case of one-parent families; firmly believes such services to be essential if the European Union is to respond to demographic challenges; considers, furthermore, that by creating jobs, SSGIs stimulate local and regional economic development and increase the European Union's competitiveness; from this point of view, considers that services of general economic interest (SGEIs) must be identified and the impact which they have in social and economic terms must be assessed; calls for quality indicators to be established in order to enable progress towards the Barcelona objectives to be measured; points out that SGEIs intended for the elderly and for dependents must receive the same attention and the same treatment;
- 71. Stresses that in declining regions, the voluntary sector and social networks make a significant contribution to meeting the needs of local people but cannot replace the essential role played by the public authorities in providing SSGIs in the regions; considers that this active citizenship must be recognised and the bodies involved supported as regional policy partners; stresses that this sets in motion learning processes that enable a region to meet the challenges of demographic change;
- 72. Encourages the Member States and regional authorities to make use of the Structural Funds to this end and calls on the Commission to support, within the framework of Territorial Cooperation (under Article 7(3) of Council Regu-

lation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund¹³), the exchange of experiences between regions in which the 'silver economy' already plays a major role or where it will do so in future;

73. Calls for a wide-ranging debate on the right to a decent retirement for all as a condition for solvency, dignity and social inclusion of the elderly; recalls the huge contribution older people make to social cohesion through volunteering and caring;
74. Calls on the Member States to enter into a coordinated debate on possible reforms likely to ensure the sustainability of pension and social security systems and, as part of those reforms, to introduce arrangements ensuring that periods of maternity and parental leave taken by women count towards their pension entitlements;
75. Calls on Member States that are not already investigating the relationship between the awarding of pensions and incentives to work, particularly as regards flexible working, to consider this issue in order to remove disincentives to working;
76. Notes that the ageing of European society covers substantial regional inequalities; notes that, as national data on demographic changes mask differing local and regional realities, it is sometimes hard to identify needs for infrastructure and financial transfers from central government; calls on the Commission to help improve the quality and reliability of data and statistics on demographic trends, and calls on the Commission and the Member States further to accelerate the process of freedom of movement for all workers within an enlarged European Union even before 2014;
77. Encourages the Member States to maintain a budgetary balance between revenue and expenditure in the various pension schemes, with due respect for the principle of subsidiarity, and commends the Member States which set aside budgetary appropriations each year for the payment of future pensions;
78. Notes that the impact of demographic change on individual regions is serious and requires different adjustment strategies depending on whether the region concerned is a region of migration or of shrinking population; notes that quality of life is defined differently in regions of shrinking population, which are mostly rural regions, from the way in which it is defined in regions with a growing population, and therefore considers that different support strategies are needed;

79. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into account the generational dimension when considering solidarity between the regions of Europe and the major territorial impacts of the differing demographic trends at work within the European Union; stresses that these impacts are important in terms of housing and infrastructure, particularly in urban areas which are likely to experience higher numbers of elderly people and higher concentrations of immigrant communities; stresses also the specific needs, at local level in regions with ageing populations, for investment in local services so as to take account of the needs of elderly people and enable them to lead an independent life for as long as possible; proposes that the allocation of structural funds and the opportunities offered by the European Social Fund in order to make local social capital available for services should take account of those investment needs; calls for these opportunities to be retained after 2013; points out that regions experiencing net outward migration need to take measures to maintain a natural population mix through investments to promote employment, training and access to public services;
80. Proposes to the Commission that it should promote, as part of territorial cooperation, EU-wide networks in which regional and local authorities and civil society actors can learn from one another about tackling the problems resulting from demographic change;
81. Encourages Member States to promote intergenerational projects, where older people work with younger people to share skills and gain new expertise, calls on the Commission to facilitate the exchange of good practices in this area;
82. Calls on the Member States to assist regions of net emigration by guaranteeing a high level of SGIs (e.g. education including pre-school and child care, welfare and health services, postal services) and accessibility (e.g. of public transport, transport infrastructures and telecommunications networks) and to safeguard economic participation and skills (e.g. through training including methods of lifelong learning and use of and investment in new technologies); calls for the practical framework for fulfilment of these tasks to be adapted to local needs and local actors and to improve their adaptability; draws particular attention to the situation of islands, border areas, mountainous regions and other areas remote from centres of population;
83. Welcomes the proposal for the establishment of a European integration fund; calls on the competent national, regional and local authorities responsible for drawing up and managing cohesion and rural development policy to work even more closely together to encourage people to move to rural regions with a shrinking population, by improving the living and working conditions in those regions;

¹³ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

84. Welcomes the fact that, in its fourth report on social and economic cohesion, the Commission identified the growing demographic imbalance as one of the challenges it faces; awaits with interest the results of the social consultations and the definition of the role of regional policy in combating the adverse effects of demographic change in the next programming period;
85. Reminds Member States of the multiple disadvantages that carers, particular older carers, experience; suggests that more support should be offered to these groups to enable them to overcome multiple obstacles to employment;
86. Considers that in deprived urban districts, suburban and rural areas demographic trends are likely to experience depopulation with a decisive impact on housing and infrastructure;
87. Calls on the Member States to increase the availability of proper housing for families, especially for one-parent families and elderly people, for example by means of ›intergenerational projects‹, in connection with urban development and town planning;
88. Stresses that global demographic imbalances risk accentuating development inequalities and migratory pressures; calls on the Commission and the Member States to include those elements in their immigration policies with a view to co-development;

The challenge of integrated immigration

89. Notes that the use of immigration is, and will continue to be, one of the elements in the European Union's demography and could be a positive contribution from an economic, social and cultural point of view; calls, therefore, on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to develop a clear and reasoned approach to immigration in order to counter xenophobic or racist opinions and attitudes and promote the full and effective integration of migrants into society;
90. Recognises, however, that immigration particularly offers regions experiencing net outward migration the opportunity to stem the negative impact of demographic change, and calls, therefore, on the Member States to recognise the integration of migrants as a strategically important policy measure;
91. Considers that integration policies should be strengthened in the Member States so as to facilitate the establishment of migrants in the European Union; therefore welcomes Council Decision 2007/435/EC of 25 June 2007 establishing the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007 to 2013 as part of the General programme ›Solidarity and Management

of Migration Flows¹⁴ and trusts that it will contribute to facilitating the social and economic integration of migrants in the European Union;

92. Stresses the need for immigration policies to be laid down and to be coordinated among the Member States by ensuring that immigrants enjoy the same living and working conditions; calls upon the Commission to consider a strategy and specific measures relating to economic immigration and to submit them as soon as possible;
93. Stresses the need to improve coordination of the Member States' immigration policies to ensure that immigrants are better integrated into society and into the formal economy and that they receive legal and social security (including pension entitlements); calls on the Member States to fight resolutely against human trafficking and to penalise employers who employ and/or exploit illegal workers; welcomes the European initiative against illegal working and the exploitation and the undignified conditions in which illegal migrants live;
94. Recognises the specific role of cities in this regard, as most immigrants settle in cities, and underlines the need for the Commission and Member States to take into account the impact on cities of immigration policies and to involve them closely in the shaping and implementation of policies related to immigration; notes with interest the ›Integrating Cities' process launched in 2006 by the Commission and EURO CITIES and the Milan Declaration on integration signed on 6 November 2007 to ensure the continuation of dialogue on the implementation of the common basic principles on integration at city level;
95. Emphasises, that legal migration inside the European Union should be advantageous for migrants and should not constitute a disadvantage for the countries of origin; encourages the Member States to improve their integration measures for immigrants;
96. Welcomes the initiative by the Commission and the Member States of taking into account the global dimension of immigration and the consequences of economic migration to the European Union for the development of the migrants' countries of origin; stresses the need to take into account the risk of ›brain drain‹ from the country of origin; calls on the Commission and Member States to develop effective measures, together with the third countries concerned, to counter this phenomenon;
97. Insists that the human dimension of immigration should not disappear beneath strictly economic considerations and that the choice of family integration should remain a possibility for migrants who so wish; calls for close cooperation be-

¹⁴ OJ L 168, 28.6.2007, p. 18.

tween European immigration policies and those on employment, social affairs, education and the regions;

- 98. Recalls that financial remittances from immigrants in Europe constitute a highly significant method of financing the lives of older people in developing countries;
- 99. Points out that immigration policy must be geared to anti-discrimination and aim for a higher degree of legal, social and societal equality, both for migrants already in Europe and those to come in the future;
- 100. Considers that family members accompanying immigrant workers should be given residence permits and, where appropriate, work permits;
- 101. Points to the important role of migrant women and calls on the Member States to accord them the place that they deserve in integration policies and fully to guarantee their rights;
- 102. Calls on the Member States to include on the agenda of a future summit an exchange of views on demographic changes and recognised good practices in fields such as active ageing, young people's employment, family policy and the integration of migrants;
- 103. Welcomes the Commission's undertaking to present a status report every two years in conjunction with the European Demographic Forum; hopes that that report will also assess the impact of policies put in place by the Member States in the areas concerned; endorses the Commission's intention to include every two years in its report a chapter on infertility, as well as a chapter on the European Union's preparations for demographic change; encourages the Commission to set up a system of indicators for monitoring and analysis of demographic developments in the different Member States and in the European Union;
- 104. Notes that the demographic future of Europe creates new problems as regards democratic mechanisms and the channels through which the voice representing the multiplicity of Europe's components can make itself heard and exert influence in political decision-making; considers that the crucial issue in an ageing society is that of the political representation of minors, who represent the common future, and hence the political future, of the community yet currently have no voice and exert no influence on decision-making; considers that, for a variety of reasons, immigrants - both adults and children - cannot easily make themselves heard and that giving a voice and political representation to social groups, in particular minors, that currently have none, is a crucial issue which calls for a thorough, wide-ranging debate;

- 105. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to increase awareness among EU citizens of the demographic challenges in Europe, inter alia by conducting campaigns and pilot projects on the issue;

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- 106. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

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