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Texts adopted

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Provisional edition

[Demographic challenge and solidarity between generations](#)[P7_TA-PROV\(2010\)0400](#)[A7-0268/2010](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2010 on the demographic challenge and solidarity between generations \(2010/2027\(INI\)\)](#)

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)⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 1998 on the Commission demographic report 1997⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2000 on the Commission communication ‘Towards a Europe for all ages – promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity’⁽³⁾,
- 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 generations⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2006 on a European Social Model for the future⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution⁽⁶⁾ on progress made in equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the EU (the transposition of Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC)[2007/2202\(INI\)](#),
- having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008⁽⁸⁾ on promoting social integration and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 April 2009⁽⁹⁾ on the proposal for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation,
- 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 change’⁽¹⁰⁾ and its core proposal that the Member States should sign a ‘European Pact for the Family’,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document on ‘Europe’s demographic future: facts and figures’ (SEC(2007)0638),
- having regard to Cedefop publications on ‘Innovative learning measures for older workers’⁽¹¹⁾, on ‘Working and

ageing. Emerging theories and empirical perspectives⁽¹²⁾, on 'Modernising vocational education and training. Fourth report on vocational education and training research in Europe: Synthesis report'⁽¹³⁾ and on 'Skills supply and demand in Europe. Medium-term forecast up to 2020'⁽¹⁴⁾,

– having regard to the Commission Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society (SEC (2008) 2911),

– having regard to the joint report prepared by the Commission and the Economic Policy Committee (Ageing Working Group) on the '2009 Ageing Report: economic and budgetary projections for the EU-27 Member States' (2008-2060),

– having regard to Articles 25 and 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which explicitly refer to the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life, and their entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in old age⁽¹⁵⁾,

– having regard to Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which explicitly prohibits any discrimination on grounds of age⁽¹⁶⁾,

– having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council directive 2000/43/EC on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008)0426) and Parliament's position thereon⁽¹⁷⁾,

– having regard to Article 2 and Article 3(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation⁽¹⁸⁾,

– having regard to Rule 48 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 Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0268/2010),

A. convinced that a humane society is necessarily based on the principle of justice between the generations,

B. whereas the gender-specific dimension of intergenerational relations needs to be taken into consideration,

C. whereas much more must be done to end the widespread unfair discrimination often faced by older people on the basis of their age alone, both in employment and in access to goods, facilities and services,

D. whereas there are strong links between discrimination against older people on the basis of age, social exclusion and poverty among older people,

E. whereas many older people also have a disability and therefore may be subjected to multiple discrimination,

F. whereas demographic change has impacted strongly on personal and working life, especially in the case of women, while insufficient services, inadequate welfare payments, the slow and difficult nature of integration into the labour market proper, long periods spent in insecure or temporary employment, and lack of support for young couples are among the reasons for young people postponing forming a family and having children,

G. whereas, if the economy and society are to achieve their purposes, they need the experience, input and wealth of ideas of all generations,

H. whereas, according to the Commission's estimates, demographic changes could profoundly change population structure and the age pyramid; whereas, for example, the number of young people aged 0 to 14 would drop from 100 million (1975 index) to 66 million in 2050, the working population would peak at 331 million in about 2010 and thereafter decrease steadily (to about 268 million in 2050), while, with life expectancy rising by 6 years for men and 5 years for women between 2004 and 2050, the number of people over 80 would rise from 4.1 % in 2005 to 11.4 % in 2050,

I. whereas, under the ambitious employment-rate targets in the EU 2020 Strategy, the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 should be increased to 75 % by 2020, while simultaneously facing a demographic challenge,

J. whereas demographic change is manageable and sustainable if it is properly anticipated and taken seriously by

everyone; whereas demographic issue should be addressed with a sense of long-term strategic purpose, and action taken to tackle unfair age-based discrimination,

K. whereas in times of demographic change the role of parents is especially significant, as they are needed both as employees and as (co-)mothers and fathers, whereas the risk of this double burden falling solely on women's shoulders should be prevented,

L. whereas we are now facing a twofold crisis – a high unemployment rate among young people coupled with a question mark over retirement pension funding – and whereas these two phenomena must be dealt with together, working towards a strengthening of social entitlements and greater participation by young people in creating wealth and kick-starting the economy; whereas, as the Committee of the Regions has pointed out (CdR 97/2009), in our ageing society youth must be seen as a valuable resource that is essential to society, and which can and must be put to use in order to achieve social and economic goals,

M. whereas the Member States possess the main instruments for promoting justice between the generations (in the form of pension systems, budget, indebtedness and healthcare provision and complex rehabilitation) and ending unfair discrimination, but the EU can take important initiatives based on monitoring, exchanges of best practice and action programmes, and by monitoring the implementation of EU anti-age discrimination legislation and agreeing important new proposed anti-discrimination legislation which will outlaw age discrimination in the access to goods, facilities and services,

N. whereas the proportion of people aged over 60 in the EU will rise faster than ever before, with the greatest increase expected between the years 2015 and 2035, when this age group will grow by two million each year,

O. whereas age discrimination is undermining intergenerational solidarity; it is forbidden under the Treaty but remains widespread and severely constrains older and younger workers' access to the labour market, social security and certain services,

Principles and aims

1. Regards justice and solidarity between the generations as synonymous and defines justice between the generations as an even, reasonable, conscious intergenerational sharing of advantages and burdens, and views solidarity in general as one of the fundamental values of European cooperation;
2. Argues that functional cooperation between the generations depends on the basic values of freedom, rights and solidarity, justice and selfless support for the next generation, and that it must be informed by mutual respect, shared responsibility and a willingness to accept the fundamental rights that people deserve as human beings and EU citizens and to care for one another, as well as by individual planning for the future, including increased commitment to behaviour based on health prevention;
3. 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 all other kinds of infrastructures accordingly;
4. Recognises that, happily, life expectancy is increasing and that, for more of their lives, people are active and involved in an independent and committed way in the life of society; takes the view that rising life expectancy is a positive development which must not have the effect of reducing employees' rights; recognises also that birth rates in the Member States have remained low for a number of decades, a situation which, if not tackled in a timely manner, will place a heavy burden on rising generations and lead to conflict over burden-sharing; points out that these challenges can be a key driver towards fairer burden-sharing and more inclusive and higher quality social security systems;
5. Takes the view that a policy for justice between the generations must aim to create the necessary bases, rights and tools for conducting an open and frank intergenerational dialogue, with a view to achieving win-win situations and thus also measures leading to fair intergenerational sharing;
6. Considers it important to make clear that older people with and without disabilities and workers approaching retirement age are not a burden on the economy and society and do not constitute an obstacle to modernisation in work processes, but rather – through their experience, their achievements, their knowledge and their greater loyalty to their place of work – a dependable asset and significant added value; considers it important to fight prejudice and discrimination in all its forms and towards all groups of society and to work towards a society where older people are treated equally as human beings with fundamental rights; notes that the EU policy on older people is based on the principle of 'society for all' and that all projected policy measures must therefore serve in every way to reinforce that understanding; is convinced that every opportunity should be offered in all Member States for people of different ages to

participate actively in society, irrespective of their age; points out that young people are the future, meaning that policymakers must take into account the modernisation of society and participation by all;

7. Asks that special attention be paid to the gender perspective when considering demographic challenge and solidarity, as gender relations structure the entire life cycle from birth to old age, influencing access to resources and opportunities and shaping life strategies at every stage;

8. Stresses that European economies faced with demographic challenges need competitive companies resulting from low fiscal and bureaucratic burden and reformed state sector; considers that a competitive and innovative private sector is a key element in creating new job opportunities across generations;

9. Given that civil society, the churches, and charities have a long and unbroken tradition of social support and development action, whether aimed at families or at every category of citizens in need, considers that their involvement in planning and carrying out measures of this kind will help to enhance policies centring on social and intergenerational solidarity, thus giving practical expression to the subsidiarity principle;

10. Notes that as a result of demographic change there is a significant number of older potential volunteers which is a huge untapped resource in our communities; calls on the Commission to promote opportunities for older volunteers, and to develop a Seniors Action Programme for the increasing number of very experienced senior citizens who are willing to volunteer that might run in parallel with and complement the Youth in Action Programme, and furthermore to promote specific programmes for intergenerational volunteering and for mentoring;

Transparency initiative

11. Calls on the Commission and the Council to introduce generational accounting to inform and further develop the Eurostat sustainable development indicators (SDIs) in all the Member States and at EU level, with a view to producing reliable models and forecasts of payment flows and the degree to which each generation will benefit or be burdened;

12. Advocates a compulsory 'generation check' impact assessment to make clear the effects of EU and national legislation on justice between the generations and to permit long-term cost-benefit analysis;

13. Calls on the Commission to present separately the current trends in the rate of dependency, dramatically decreasing fertility and difficulty of access to expensive artificial insemination for the citizens of the Member States (including the relevant labour market regulations), as well as the financial consequences of these procedures, in order to help existing generations plan their life strategy;

14. Asks the European Institute for Gender Equality to monitor and analyse relations among generations, based on indicators by gender and age group;

Education and employment policies

15. Is convinced that open and equitable access to training and work for all age groups must be a core feature of policy-making for justice between the generations and that it lays the foundations for prosperity, independence and sustainability;

16. Taking into account the EU's ageing society, believes that active attempts should be made to bring people on to the labour market and keep them there, applying this approach to all age groups, older people included; considers it essential to strike a balance between giving people a sufficient sense of security and maintaining the motivation to work and earn an income; believes that, to raise skill levels, all groups in society should be guaranteed education of the highest possible standard and better opportunities than hitherto for lifelong learning;

17. Considers that an employment policy which takes into account the situation of older workers implies reflecting on new ways of organising work in companies, facilitating flexible formulas progressively leading to retirement, reducing stress, improving working conditions and promoting anti-discriminatory practices with regard to recruitment and vocational training;

18. Stresses that demographic change faces the European Union with the challenge of managing human resources, which calls for a proactive policy aiming at full employment;

19. Recognises that work means more than just paid employment and that both young and older people contribute substantially, through their work at family and community level, to making our society more humane and improving the stability of services and workplaces, and calls on governments to facilitate and recognise voluntary work, local

community-building, care in the community and family care and to resolve issues of legal responsibility in that regard without delay;

20. Calls on the Member States to take measures to recognise the invisible and informal work in the field of intergenerational solidarity carried out by family members (predominantly women) of all ages to care for older and younger members needing care at a legal, social and economic level (particularly as regards social security, professional status, earnings and equal opportunities for men and women) as outlined in the Report adopted by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality on 8 December 2008;

21. Strongly believes that unfair discrimination on the grounds of age in the workplace is widespread and that more must be done as a priority to combat it, in particular through the effective implementation of the European Employment Equality Directive 2000 in all Member States and by further non legislative measures to ensure that older people are aware of their rights and can access support and legal advice if needed;

22. Acknowledges that older women on the labour market often suffer direct or indirect discrimination and multiple discrimination, a situation which needs to be properly addressed;

23. Notes that in order to be able to access employment, older people need first to be able to get to their place of work and therefore believes it is important that the proposed antidiscrimination directive to outlaw age discrimination in access to goods, facilities and services is agreed and implemented as soon as possible;

24. Believes it is wrong for any older worker to be forced to stop working against their will because of an arbitrarily concluded compulsory retirement age; therefore calls on Member States to look again at the feasibility of scrapping compulsory retirement ages which prevent people who want to carry on working from doing so, while maintaining a pensionable age so that those people who want to retire can do so and still receive their pension and retirement-based benefits;

25. Considers that unbalanced measures to reduce the age of a workforce will result not in a higher level of innovation, as is frequently claimed, but are in reality a way of reducing costs by dismissing experienced and hence highly-paid workers, and are a waste of experience, knowledge and skills, particularly where training older people is better compensated by their remaining longer in the same jobs;

26. Considers that any measures concerning the retirement age should be based on the needs of the persons concerned; considers that there is a need for more flexible retirement provisions which respect the needs of individuals in an ageing workforce and respond to labour market demand; calls on Member States to put priority on developing and improving social security systems to respond to these needs;

27. Deplores the fact that some people's patterns of employment are becoming increasingly uneven and insecure as a result of temporary work and the growth of short-term contracts, in some Member States, without decent wages and social security rights, as well as undeclared work, precarious, marginal employment and unemployment, and that the majority of jobs are difficult for older people to access; recognises that periods spent working, learning, caring or volunteering are complementary and provide valuable experience at all ages; notes that the increase in precarious employment also has an impact on the financial security of the current generation and will thus impose a greater burden on succeeding generations; but points out also that many forms of independent working, self-employment, flexible working, part-time work and different types of temporary work can play an absolutely vital role in helping many older people to increase their income or secure an income, for example if they have caring responsibilities for their immediate family or friends;

28. Is convinced that flexisecurity can contribute to more open, responsive and inclusive labour markets and can ease the transition between the various stages of people's working lives, in particular when it is based on solidarity and shared responsibility between the generations and when it takes the different demands and needs of all age and income groups into account; points out that care must be taken to ensure well-regulated mechanisms to provide appropriate training, monitoring of workers' rights and respect for family life; notes that flexisecurity also involves comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and up-to-date, appropriate and sustainable social security systems;

29. Stresses that career and training security should be fully guaranteed; everyone should be able to have a full and uninterrupted working life, entitling them to a full-rate pension;

30. Emphasises that lifelong learning must be a central aim in all education-related measures and that it is something for which all generations, the public authorities and businesses bear a responsibility; calls on the Member States in consequence to endorse vocational training schemes, especially if they include a period of practical training, sometimes in the form of an apprenticeship;

31. Calls on the EU to pursue an effective policy to ensure that older workers can remain available for work and are not subject to age discrimination;
32. Calls for promoting a culture which provides for the management of ageing in companies, both for the arrival of young people and for the departure of older workers, and tailoring its details, notably by means of possibilities for phased retirement, while taking account of the arduousness of the jobs occupied and the conditions in terms of work, health and safety;
33. Is convinced that optimal management of human resources in the form of initial and lifelong training is the responsibility of economic stakeholders, including occupational groups, who should anticipate their employment and training needs;
34. Points out that, in order to be of the greatest possible benefit to employees, lifelong learning must be attested by diplomas and certificates; draws attention to the need to make the practice of validating prior achievements the norm;
35. Proposes the systematic monitoring and statistical representation of the participation of older workers in life-long learning structures;
36. Proposes that additional incentives be provided for older workers and unemployed persons to participate in life-long learning programmes in order either to strengthen their position or to ensure their successful return to the labour market;
37. Calls for increased involvement of women of all age groups in life-long learning programmes;
38. Notes that, as a result of changing demographics, it is estimated that by 2030 the ratio between active and inactive people will be 2:1; calls on the Commission and Member States to support the future role of family carers by developing policy initiatives that will enable women and men to achieve a balance between professional and caring responsibilities;
39. Stresses that demographic change should not be advanced as a justification for the general dismantling of social entitlements and services but that it is, on the contrary, a challenge for today's society, and that these entitlements and services must be balanced with regard to both active and inactive generations; urges the Member States to simplify social legislation with a view to making it more flexible, more accessible and more comprehensible for employers and employees alike;
40. Considers that the Commission should support the implementation of new initiatives promoting active, healthy and dignified ageing through the existing policy instruments and programmes of the EU;

European Youth Guarantee initiative

41. Emphasises that youth unemployment is one of our most pressing problems because it leads to denial of opportunities, social exclusion, rising social costs and a waste of valuable human resources, all these constituting an important social reason for birth-rate decline and feeding the spiral of lack of justice between generations; underlines the need to reduce the time gaps which arise when young people move from one institution of education to another or before they are employed after graduation; and notes that it is very important to ensure young people's social inclusion, to provide them with the possibility of obtaining suitable employment and to support youth entrepreneurship;
42. Emphasises the need for young people to have long-term prospects, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to take steps to promote learning mobility and quality traineeships for young people, to create more employment opportunities for young people and to ensure that they participate fully in society, to invest in young people and to encourage youth opportunities so that the next generation enjoys its full rights and maintains its dignity;
43. Stresses that youth unemployment, and in particular development disparities between regions, are an obstacle to achieving territorial cohesion;
44. Stresses that the demographic trend will give rise to a shortage of skilled labour, which can be offset to a large extent by qualified female workers; to this end, governments and employers must change their thinking and take measures to adapt framework and employment conditions more closely to the needs of women;
45. Emphasises that particular attention must be paid to the start of young people's careers and to doing everything possible to encourage their successful entry onto the labour market, because an unsuccessful start to a young person's working career could have an impact on the rest of his or her life and on his or her activities on the labour market;
46. Calls on the Council and the Commission to make particular efforts and to devise practical measures – one of which

should be a European Youth Guarantee – to ensure that, after a maximum period of four months' unemployment, young people are offered a job, an apprenticeship, additional training or combined work and training, with the proviso that those concerned support the process of their integration into work through their own efforts;

47. Giving young unemployed workers the advice, the guidance and the aid they require in order to get them back into work (or into work for the first time), and the same for students or future students, so that they can choose their career path in full knowledge of the potential job opportunities;

Fifty-plus employment pact initiative

48. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to ensure that the following aims are achieved under an expanded EU-2020 strategy:

- (i) securing full employment among the population aged over 50 up to the legal retirement age and achieving the minimum of 55 % employment;
- (ii) eliminating incentives e.g. for early retirement, which damage social security systems, distribute burdens unequally and are therefore not sustainable;
- (iii) combating age discrimination;
- (iv) setting country-specific targets for access to training and lifelong learning for older workers, broken down by age group and gender, thus increasing the proportion of people of all generations in initial and further training; and facilitating access to training for older workers by the setting up of incentives/bonuses by employers for older workers who decide to continue their education after the age of 50;
- (v) combating age-based discrimination in the workplace and training and developing incentives for workers over the age of 60 to remain available for work, so that they can pass on their knowledge and experience to subsequent generations, which will require the Member States to adopt appropriate legislation designed to promote the recruitment of such people by companies;
- (vi) supporting the (re)integration, based on a new approach of complex rehabilitation that takes equal account of the biological and physical environment, of older people who become disabled, rather than classifying them as 'disabled';

Age Management initiative

49. Argues that older people's employability also depends on initiatives in the fields of health, the level of income and contributions in cash and in kind in comparison to pension and other retirement benefits, further training, working-time patterns, autonomy and individual choice for workers, better work-life balance, job satisfaction and management behaviour, as well as a guarantee of reasonable accommodation, consistent with the provisions of Directive 2000/78/EC, and in the field of accessibility, and that such initiatives should be devised jointly by the social partners, where applicable, for all employees and promoted by the Commission and Member States;

50. Considers that the Member States should encourage companies to introduce age management strategies that will enhance their competitiveness by harnessing the experience and specific qualities of older workers;

51. Suggests to the social partners, employers and the Member States that they guarantee workers aged over 50 the possibility of being promoted until the end of their careers;

Intergenerational tandem initiative

52. Calls for specific initiatives to promote mixed-age teams for work processes and suggests that companies taking such initiatives should be supported and that outstanding projects should receive recognition, highlighting how the varying distribution of generations increases competitiveness and harmonious growth;

53. Proposes that specific initiatives be taken to create a new entrepreneurial culture for the management of human resources, so as to bring about a switch towards employing older workers with linkage to Corporate Social Responsibility;

54. Is convinced that Member States could increase the effectiveness of public job centres for older unemployed persons, including the options of social/charity work;

'Guaranteeing a decent pension' initiative

55. Is convinced that the right to retire is a right that any employee is entitled to claim after the legal retirement age set by each Member State in consultation with the social partners and in accordance with national practices; considers that, should they decide not to extend their working lives beyond the national retirement age, this must not affect their pension rights or other social rights;

56. Calls on the Council and the Member States to conduct an impartial review of upper age-limits for certain jobs and posts and for eligibility for funding and concluding insurance policies, no later than 2012, and to do away with such limits; calls on the Council and the Member States to look at the difficulty experienced by older people in accessing credit;

'Active Ageing' initiative

57. Calls on the Commission to conduct a review of activities related to healthy ageing and to present an action plan in 2011 for:

- enhancing older people's dignity, health, quality of life, and autonomy,
- allowing them equal access to health care regardless of income,
- highlighting in particular the health risks for people who suddenly cease being active, and
- emphasising prevention of health problems, which requires the Member States to support healthy lifestyles and take appropriate measures to reduce smoking, alcohol misuse, obesity and other major health risks;

58. Welcomes the fact that many voluntary organisations have declared 29 April a day of 'Solidarity between Generations', and calls on the Commission to develop a proposal for 2012 as the 'European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations' which will highlight the contribution that older people make to society and afford opportunities to get younger and older people working together;

59. Considers that the Member States should make active ageing one of the priorities for the coming years; points out that this includes, in particular, the creation of suitable framework conditions for mobilising the potential of older persons and the development of innovative approaches for activities, as well as appropriate training for supporting services' staff;

60. Considers that active ageing should be regarded from the wider perspective of sustainable employability of women and men throughout their working lives and that encouraging older workers to stay in employment requires notably the improvement of working conditions to safeguard their health and safety or the adaptation of work places to their health status and needs, fighting age and gender discrimination, updating their skills by providing appropriate access to lifelong learning and training and the review, when necessary, of tax and benefit systems to ensure that there are effective incentives for working longer;

61. Considers that the Member States and the EC should use all the possibilities offered by the Open Method of Coordination, the Employment Strategy and other Community instruments and programmes, including the financial support of the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund, to foster active ageing;

62. Considers that the Member States and the EC should use existing advisory and policy committees, including the Social Protection Committee, the Employment Committee, the Economic Policy Committee and the Group of Experts on Demographic Issues, to maintain active ageing high on the EU's and Member States' policy agenda;

63. Calls on the Council and the Member States to take rapid measures to guarantee decent pensions for all, which must not in any circumstances lie below the poverty level;

64. Calls on the Commission to draw up a study on the effectiveness and benefits of the active participation of older workers in the labour market, with regard to the sustainability of social protection systems, the promotion of productivity and growth and measures to combat social exclusion;

Reconciliation policies

65. Emphasises that in order to avoid a disproportionate burden on women because of an increased demand for care in an ageing society, labour and care should be rendered compatible for both men and women in all Member States and equally distributed between women and men; emphasises too that this requires the provision of affordable, high-quality care, better education and child care, paternity leave and the promotion of part-time work among men;

66. Stresses the fact that elderly people often play an important role in the family by taking care of children, with the provision of childcare during school holidays and after school, which constitutes a high value in general as well as representing a significant economic value;

67. Recognises the need for action to improve the arrangements governing not only maternity leave but also paternity leave and parental leave for working fathers;

68. Notes the need for EU-wide measures to increase birth rates, without which it will not be possible to deal with the problems of an ageing Europe;

69. Encourages the Member States to enter into permanent long-term commitments to the family, including entitlement to additional allowances for parents, especially additional measures to support single mothers, and tax or social relief for crèches and for voluntary, cooperative and charitable organisations; likewise, encourages exchanges of proven good practice through the European Alliance for Families and other relevant platforms and organisations; calls on the Member States to implement systems of incentives enabling workers to take full-time or part-time leave to care for their children and find their acquired rights intact when they return to the company;

70. Calls on the Member States to reduce the burden on those who care for older people or people with disabilities and – in order to enable carers to take up employment – to set up integrated care systems;

71. Advocates the right to part-time work, flexible working places, working hours adapted to the needs of workers, and appropriate arrangements regarding maternity, pregnancy, parental leave, child benefits, job sharing and home working, while retaining high levels of social security as measures that contribute to compatibility between care responsibilities and work;

72. Considers it essential to encourage intergenerational solidarity, especially in the context of the gender dimension, by means of targeted tax policies, measures to encourage active ageing, housing policy and the creation of integrated networks of services for children, old people and disabled and dependent people, with a view to impacting favourably on the work-life balance;

73. Underlines the fact that reconciling work and family life is possible only if unpaid care duties are divided more equally between women and men and if accessible and affordable good-quality care services for families are provided; calls on the Member States to ensure accessible, affordable, flexible and high-quality services, and in particular access to childcare facilities, aiming to ensure conditions for the provision of 50 % of necessary care for children aged up to three years and 100 % of care for three-to-six-year-olds, as well as improved access to care for other dependents and adequate leave arrangements for both mothers and fathers;

74. Points out that many older people may have little or no family to rely upon and calls on Member States to do more to seek to exchange best practice in terms of policies, to ensure that older people can remain independent for as long as possible and that if support services are needed they are available and personalised to the individual;

75. Notes that, if the conditions for reconciling professional, family and private life are absent from the labour market, there will be no encouragement for the various services to families to be broadened, and the birth-rate will fall, greatly exacerbating the ageing of European society;

76. Calls on undertakings and governments to establish high-quality advice and support facilities for family members who provide for or take care of their older relatives and to make it possible for them to have the care they provide calculated as contributions to their own pension entitlements and to receive adequate financial compensation; considers that care provided by family members must not be abused as a means of making savings;

Economic and growth policies

77. Takes the view that tapping into new markets in the 'silver economy' offers a major opportunity for improving competitiveness and innovative potential and for boosting growth and employment and for increasing volunteering; believes that by opposing proposed antidiscrimination legislation on the grounds of age, many umbrella business organisations have failed to spot this opportunity;

78. Considers that one means of tackling the digital divide – a phenomenon that particularly affects women, especially

older women, and leads to professional and social exclusion – would be for schools to organise experimental IT literacy initiatives;

79. Believes that the agreement of strong new antidiscrimination legislation in the access to goods and services will offer a major opportunity for economic growth and employment, as the barriers faced by older people to certain services and goods are dismantled; calls for an end to any unreasonable or unfair blanket bans on goods and services based on age alone, which many older people face when trying to purchase insurance, holidays or car rentals, for example;

80. Calls on the Member States to put in place framework conditions, and particularly to take innovative and barrier-free measures, that reflect differing regional conditions in this regard;

81. Calls for action closer to the ground, for example by creating 'regional' or 'territorial' or 'local' employment councils, bringing together political decision-makers and social partners;

82. Considers that the Member States should take strong measures to discourage the black and grey economy fields occupied by an 'unregulated' labour force, which are adversely affecting the EU labour market, rather than just promoting measures aiming to protect their internal labour force; points out that countering undeclared work by means of measures/sanctions vis-à-vis the employers and/or intermediaries really does act as a deterrent;

83. Calls for efforts to improve the fight against illegal labour, notably by increasing the human and other resources available to the control bodies (factory inspectorate services, labour courts, etc);

Pension and budgetary policies

84. Calls attention to the fact that social security systems face major challenges and that Member States should be carrying out ambitious structural reforms and searching for new ways of sustainable financing of health care and pensions;

85. Considers, given that rapid population ageing is becoming a worldwide problem, posing challenges for the Member States' health care and welfare systems that will have to be met within the next few years, that the Commission should assume a coordinating role in working out solutions regarding health and care services for older people and in disseminating best practice in Member States;

86. Calls for more to be done to ensure that older people know what their rights and obligations are with regard to social security systems and pensions and that this information is provided in a simple and accessible format;

87. Emphasises that it is a human right to enjoy a decent livelihood and that people who have worked all their lives must not fall victim to the economic crisis;

88. Stresses that the gender pay gap between men and women – currently 17 % in the EU 27 – must be addressed, as it has consequences in the form of lower income from the birth of the first child and, ultimately, lower pensions and a higher rate of poverty among older women;

89. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to re-examine welfare systems where they still entail considerable inequalities between men's and women's pension levels, and to consider the options of introducing corrective factors taking account of the gaps in contributions arising from temporary employment or maternal responsibilities;

90. Emphasises the need to take account of the practice in all Member States in this area of social policy because national pension systems differ between the Member States;

91. Emphasises that decreasing the expected and continually increasing burden on future generations is a fundamental priority, given the dramatic increase in the proportion of people over 80 (the very elderly);

92. Notes the impact of the global recession on public finances and the wider economy; in addition, considers that an ageing population coupled with a declining birth-rate within Europe represents a fundamental demographic change which will require reform of the welfare and fiscal systems of Europe, including pension systems, providing good care for older generations whilst avoiding the accumulation of a debt burden for younger generations; encourages reform of the stability and growth pact, so that Member States can fulfil their obligation to make their pension systems more sustainable;

93. Notes that numerous issues relating to demographic change in society fall exclusively within the competence of the Member States and that there is no general Community competence for establishing European rules to address

demographic change; recognises the need for each Member State to take action to ensure its public finances are sustainable and can adequately manage demographic change;

94. Notes that in recent years various ways of intergenerational accounting, projecting the development of public debt in the next decades and the implicit costs to future generations, have been used which highlight sustainability gap indicators, for example the required primary balance, which represents the structural budget balance needed to ensure the sustainability of public finances;

95. Calls on the Commission to provide continuous intergenerational accounting, including estimates on future debt burdens and sustainability gaps in public finances of the Member States, and to make the results publicly available in a way that is easily accessible and understandable;

96. Notes that the current debt projections are alarming and will pile up huge debt burdens on future generations, and therefore calls on the Member States to cut their structural primary deficits and move towards a sustainable debt ratio;

97. Recommends that the Member States put forward measures to increase general productivity and especially productivity in the provision of welfare services, including health services and care for the elderly;

98. Notes that if all the increased years of life expectancy were healthy rather than sick, the sustainability gap of public finances would be 1.5 % of GDP smaller according to some calculations and hence considers that it is of the utmost importance to prevent health problems and to treat them at an earlier stage;

99. Is concerned at the failure of many Member States to reform their pension systems; calls on the Commission to present an analysis of the situation in all Member States, highlighting the long-term risks for each Member State;

100. Emphasises the need for Member States to increase participation in the labour market through flexible working hours, promotion of part-time work and working from home;

101. Encourages Member States to support all families within their tax and benefits systems and to promote the provision of childcare services to families with small children;

102. Encourages Member States to remove all disincentives, particularly in relation to tax and pensions, for older people to continue working beyond retirement age, and encourages effective support mechanisms and incentives, since the impact of ageing depends on the employment rate and the average amount of working hours;

103. Takes the view that, given demographic trends, there is great potential for developing sustainable and decent jobs in the area of social and healthcare services;

Migration policies

104. Takes the view that migration combined with successful integration, including economic integration, can be one of the ways of coping with demographic change and that too many people from a migrant background do not yet feel that they belong in the Member States where they live, in part because of the discrimination they face;

105. Is convinced that open and sincere debate is essential in order to discuss different immigration policies, admission conditions for immigrants and their economic perspectives, the problems of illegal immigration, the growing unemployment rate among immigrants due to the current economic crisis, and effective measures to avoid the social and cultural isolation of newcomers;

106. Calls attention to the fact that elder people have a natural lower social mobility and adaptability to new environments, although higher integration skills;

107. Is convinced that a sense of identification in accordance with democratic traditions and fundamental constitutional values, participation based on equal opportunities and responsibility are prerequisites for successful integration, that integration can work only where immigrants are prepared to adapt and locals are receptive, and that solidarity between generations is complemented by solidarity between cultures, which implies the removal of prejudices about different cultures;

108. Believes that the creation of a climate among the population of the host country which accepts immigrants depends directly on proper and comprehensive information and the creation of a culture against xenophobia;

109. Is convinced that active ageing should imply full societal participation and inclusion in participatory democratic

decision-making processes;

Health and Care policies

110. Calls attention to the severe regional imbalances apparent in terms of demographic change, and the fact that it sets in train processes of migration away from rural and peripheral regions, with the result that structural transformations in social and health care must be envisaged, funding must be made available for them, and an intensive exchange of best practices and those which support developments and services based on modern information and communications technologies must be undertaken;

111. Considers that home services for the elderly could be promoted and organised by encouraging autonomous and cooperative forms of activity, on the basis of agreements with local authorities and the introduction of dedicated vouchers for families;

112. Calls on the Member States and the Commission, given that the population is ageing across the board, to pursue every form of cooperation with a view to devising sustainable financing systems for care provision so as to ensure that the necessary care services will be available;

113. Notes that there is considerable evidence of discrimination against older people in health care; points out that older patients are less likely than younger patients to receive all of the necessary treatments they require due to discrimination on the basis of their age alone; considers that such differential medical treatment and care can have significant effects on the health outcomes of older people;

114. Points out that demographic change and the consequences thereof have a different effect on the western and eastern parts of the EU and that a common policy ensuring balanced growth and sustainable regional development is needed;

115. Calls on the Member States to assist regions of net emigration by guaranteeing a high level of services of general interest (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 the 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;

116. Calls on the Member States to give consideration to regulated labour migration (immigration from third countries into the EU);

117. Emphasises that, irrespective of their income level, age or social status or the degree of health risk they face, people must receive affordable, high-quality medical treatment and care and if this is to be achieved proposed new EU antidiscrimination legislation must be adopted as soon as possible which includes access to health services;

118. Welcomes the EU-funded Predict project ('Increasing the participation of the elderly in clinical trials'), which seeks to discover why discrimination against older people in clinical trials persists; takes the view that older people should be provided with drugs that have been tested for efficacy and safety for their age group;

119. Recognises what has been achieved by the Member States in the field of care for older people, but calls on them to bring greater attention than hitherto to bear on the enforcement of, and compliance with, quality criteria for service provision; believes that Member States and the Commission should improve cooperation as regards the supervision of care services and that, to that end, the Member States could consider setting up a network of national care contact points, that could be used both at national level and within the EU to obtain information about the care services available and their quality and to lodge complaints about service quality;

120. Calls for a Green Paper to be produced by the Commission on abuse of the elderly and safeguarding older people in the community and in care homes;

121. Calls, through the open method of communication, for an exchange of information and best practice between Member States on the provision of long-term care for older people and, in particular, measures to safeguard older people in the community and in care homes and to tackle abuse of the elderly;

122. Recognises that a large number of women migrants are engaged in caring for the elderly and proposes, on the one hand, that Member States intensify controls to curb the phenomenon of undeclared work in this particular sector and, on the other, measures to facilitate access by these workers to the relevant training courses, as part of life-long learning, in

order to ensure high quality care;

123. Calls on Member States to address the issues faced by family carers – including the right to choose freely whether they want to be a carer, the option to combine caring with paid employment, and access to social security schemes and old age pensions – in order to avoid impoverishment as a direct result of caring;

124. Stresses the importance of individually based social security and pension rights recognising unpaid caring work;

125. Takes the view that an EU-wide code of conduct for the provision of long-term care, outlining minimum guidelines and service outcomes, needs to be drawn up and to be adopted by Parliament and the Council;

Involvement in society

126. Takes the view that every individual should have the opportunity to become engaged with society; stresses, nevertheless, that social engagement must always remain a voluntary commitment;

127. Stresses that in view of the demographic trend the guiding principle of an active civil society is gaining ever greater weight, making it necessary to reappraise the relationship between citizens and the state in the exercise of duties in society;

128. Takes the view that the provision of care requires a high level of skill and an exceptional degree of responsibility on the part of the carer, which must be duly recognised in social and financial terms; and considers that this is the only way of ensuring that quality standards can be maintained in the long term and sufficient numbers of well trained and motivated carers can be recruited;

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

(1) OJ C 115, 14.4.1997, p. 238.

(2) OJ C 104, 6.4.1998, p. 222.

(3) OJ C 232, 17.8.2001, p. 381.

(4) OJ C 292E, 1.12.2006, p. 131.

(5) OJ C 305E, 14.12.2006, p. 141.

(6) Texts adopted, **P6_TA(2008)0212**.

(7) Texts adopted, **P6_TA(2008)0066**.

(8) Texts adopted, **P6_TA(2008)0467**.

(9) . Texts adopted, **P6_TA(2009)0211**.

(10) OJ C 161, 13.7.2007, p. 66.

(11) Cedefop Panorama Series, 159. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2008.

(12) Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

(13) Cedefop Reference Series. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2009.

(14) Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

(15) OJ C 303, 14.12.2007, p. 1.

(16) OJ C 303, 14.12.2007, p. 1.

(17) OJ C 137 E, 27.5.2010, p. 68.

(18) OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

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