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REPORT

on demographic change and its consequences for the future cohesion policy of
the EU
(2010/2157(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Kerstin Westphal

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on demographic change and its consequences for the future cohesion policy of the EU (2010/2157(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to DG REGIO's Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, in particular pages 230 to 234,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Fifth Cohesion Report: the future of cohesion policy (COM(2010)0642) and the accompanying document (SEC(2010)1348),
 - having regard to the DG REGIO working document entitled 'Regions 2020: an Assessment of Future Challenges for EU Regions' of November 2008 (background document to Commission staff working document SEC(2008)2868),
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2010 on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe²,
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 10 May 2007 entitled 'Promoting solidarity between the generations' (COM(2007)0244),
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 March 2006 on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations³,
 - having regard to the Commission Communication of 12 October 2006 entitled 'The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity' (COM(2006)0571),
 - having regard to the Green Paper of 16 March 2005 entitled 'Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations' (COM(2005)0094),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0350/2011),
- A. whereas demographic change in the EU and worldwide is a fact and dealing with it constitutes one of the core tasks for the future, and whereas the EU population is the

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0400.

² OJ C 184E, 6.8.2009, p. 75.

³ OJ C 292E, 1.12.2006, p. 11.

oldest in the world;

- B. whereas demographic change is characterised by population ageing and substantial migration flows both from third countries into the EU and within the EU from east to west and from rural to urban areas;
- C. whereas demographic change is creating new tasks for some regions in particular, but, instead of being viewed purely as a threat, it should also be seen as an opportunity;
- D. whereas the study entitled 'Regions 2020' by the Commission's DG Regio has identified demographic change as a central challenge;
- E. whereas demographic change affects rural and urban areas in equal measure, with implications, inter alia, for the provision of good infrastructure and services,
- F. whereas, although meeting the full range of demographic challenges is principally the task of the Member States, the regions must be proactive, for which they need European-level support,
- G. whereas, under the 2007-2013 operational programmes, the Member States have earmarked EUR 30 billion in Structural Fund resources for measures linked to demographic change, and whereas regional and local authorities are central to the process of addressing this change, so that regional policy will be a key instrument among the EU's means of action,

General

1. Considers that the rising life expectancy in Europe is to be welcomed; believes that the public is often aware only of the dangers and not of the opportunities inherent in demographic change;
2. Considers that all opportunities should be carefully examined and exploited in an appropriate manner, including with the support provided by the cohesion policy instruments;
3. Believes that the impact of demographic change varies substantially from region to region, depending on whether it is rapid or slow and whether the region concerned is a region of net immigration or of shrinking population and therefore requires a different adjustment strategy, and must be tackled in a coordinated way by all European, national and regional authorities; notes that in regions of shrinking population, particularly rural regions, quality of life is defined differently from the way it is in regions with a growing population, and therefore considers that different support strategies are needed; takes the view that workforce migration accentuates the effects of demographic change and that population ageing is only part of the picture;
4. Considers that the ERDF and ESF can contribute to the task of addressing the challenges stemming from demographic change in the EU, namely the increase in the number of older people and the decline in the young population; advocates the use of ERDF funds to support the adaptation of housing to the needs of the elderly in order to guarantee a high

quality of life for an ageing society; calls on the Member States and the regions to use the funding available under the ERDF and ESF to support young families;

5. Considers that a political framework for gender equality can help us to face demographic challenges; requests, therefore, that the issue of gender equality should be considered in all debates on demographic issues;
6. Considers that the current worsening demographic situation in at least some Member States will stimulate discussions regarding pension-systems reform in the near future;

Structural policy reforms

7. Calls on the Member States and regions to consider the divergent development levels of the regions and also demographic indicators, for example the dependency ratio, when allocating and distributing EU structural funds and when defining impact indicators; points out that globally the EU has the highest proportion of elderly people among its population; believes that the Commission should also propose ways of addressing demographic change on a Europe-wide basis; considers it essential in terms of both access to infrastructure and services and environmental protection to assess not only workforce migration, but also the need to guarantee the conditions that keep people in their own regions, in order to avoid population concentration in certain urban areas;
8. Believes that joint solutions and synergies can be found by implementing EU policies, including where demographic change is concerned; calls on the Commission to include demographic change as a horizontal objective in the future cohesion policy; calls, further, on the Commission to insist that this issue is taken into account when concluding investment partnerships with Member States;
9. Encourages the Member States and regions to pay greater heed than in the past to demographic change and its effects, making measures to tackle it a horizontal objective in the shaping of the national strategic framework programmes (or any corresponding document) and in their operational programmes; considers, in that connection, that the flagship measures in the EU2020 strategy, including the active and healthy ageing partnership, could be directly linked to the preferences of the partners in these programmes;
10. Calls for proactive measures to prevent the negative consequences of demographic change and increase technical assistance to the regions suffering the most from depopulation and ageing, in order to ensure that they retain their absorption capacity and the ability to benefit from the Structural Funds;
11. Believes that public and private actors in Europe will have the opportunity to play a pioneering role in responding to the challenges posed by demographic change and ageing, employing social innovations and other means; points out that the costs generated by ageing will in future account for an ever increasing proportion of public and private investment alike; realises that the field is one offering growing potential to the business world and for innovations;
12. Highlights the fact that demographic change, especially population ageing, has a clear

impact on the provision of social infrastructure, such as pension systems, nursing care and healthcare, with regional authorities having to meet changing demand from various population groups;

13. Calls for future ESF rules that are simpler to manage and therefore enable small organisations to benefit more from funding and develop and manage innovative social projects; calls on the Commission, under the future ESF, to increase funding for transnational pilot projects at EU level which address social and employment issues, in order to facilitate innovative regional, cross-border and macro-regional cooperation and so meet common challenges arising from demographic change;

Urban development/infrastructure

14. Encourages the regions to use the Structural Funds to help address demographic challenges and to improve access to social and administrative services, including in small and remote towns and villages, by promoting the specific potential of each region and strengthening the factors that make people want to stay;
15. Calls on the Commission to create more flexible conditions in order to promote cross-financing between ERDF and ESF when devising and implementing integrated urban development plans/strategies;
16. Believes that, if depopulation is to be prevented, then child- and family-friendly towns and cities need to be developed and adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and with restricted mobility; considers that one feature of this design is that wherever possible distances between workplaces, housing and recreational areas should not be excessive; calls on the regions to ensure, in the field of urban planning, that residential, commercial and green areas alternate and are developed in a balanced and harmonious way and that connections with suburban areas earmarked as new residential areas are improved; urges, in addition, that teleworking opportunities should be developed further;
17. Notes that small towns in regions of net emigration have a particularly important role to play as service centres; calls for this anchor function to be taken into account in the future Structural Funds, in particular by improving the coordination of the EAFRD with the ERDF and the ESF; notes that rural depopulation has negative knock-on effects on urban areas and that economically and socially vibrant rural areas constitute a public good, which should be recognised in the form of an adequately resourced rural development programme; calls on the Member States, regions and municipalities to provide a comprehensive and functioning service network for their citizens of all ages in order to prevent rural exodus and depopulation;
18. Points out that ERDF funds can also be used to prevent the social exclusion of the elderly, for example by establishing dedicated infrastructure and services for the elderly and ensuring accessibility for all;
19. Considers that, in areas with a dwindling population, financial support should be provided for adaptation strategies; believes that urban and regional planning must take greater account of changing infrastructure uses, including by revitalising and restructuring inner cities, an area where cooperation with private partners is also

important; notes that one of the priorities for urban policy should be to develop elderly-friendly towns and cities; calls for urban tourism potential and heritage objectives to be acknowledged and developed, as these present opportunities to attract new residents into areas at risk of depopulation;

20. Calls on the regions to develop innovative concepts for local public transport in order to address, among other things, the challenge of dwindling passenger numbers, particularly in rural areas; calls on the Commission to provide financial support for these types of project;

The elderly, children and families

21. Advocates that loans with low interest rates which could support the adaptation of housing to the needs of the elderly could be given priority under the ERDF; proposes offering the opportunity for financial resources to be provided under certain conditions for sheltered housing complexes and multi-generational housing, with a view to preventing the isolation of the elderly and harnessing their creative potential, in order to guarantee a better quality of life for an ageing society;
22. Encourages the Member States to bring welfare and healthcare benefits into line with the needs of everyone, especially families and children, and provide funding to ensure the availability of care at home and universal healthcare for elderly people, irrespective of their income, age and social status, so as to prevent the depopulation of rural areas and peripheral regions;
23. Considers that public investment in health and care systems is important for social cohesion in Europe; calls on the Member States to ensure good healthcare provision in rural areas as well, for example through the provision of regional medical care gateway clinics and health services which make it possible to combat ‘medical desertification’, and, in border regions, through closer cross-border cooperation between clinics and between stakeholders, and by considering the possibility of using the Structural Funds to promote additional measures in the field of telemedicine and care and to support active ageing; calls on the Commission to find innovative ways of providing financial support for these actions;
24. Warns of the danger of specific regional problems affecting the provision of services of general interest, in particular a lack of skilled workers in care-related professions in certain regions; believes that these regions should develop specific regional responses to the needs and difficulties of service provision, and use ESF funds to train care workers in order to ensure that a high quality of care is guaranteed and that new jobs are created, including through retraining programmes for the unemployed; points out that this makes a direct contribution to the EU2020 objective of creating more jobs;
25. Stresses the importance of creating conditions which enable people to achieve a work/family/private life balance and, for example, of providing, where feasible, universally available, reliable, all-day childcare facilities of high quality for children of all ages, including facilities and opportunities for pre-school-learning, in order to prevent depopulation; recognises, at the same time, the valuable role played by extended families

in taking care of children;

26. Regards it as important that enough affordable housing space should be available for families, so that family and working life can be reconciled more effectively, because support for young families can help to increase the birth rate in Member States;

Migration/integration

27. Emphasises that the migration might give rise to certain integration problems;
28. Points out that the migration of qualified workforce from the new to the old Member States is one of the biggest demographic problems facing the new Member States and is having a negative impact on the age structure of their population; emphasises, further, that migration also concerns healthcare professionals and hence endangers the sustainability of the healthcare system in regions which are less developed;
29. Recognises, however, that migration offers, in particular to regions experiencing net outflows, 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;
30. Calls on the Member States to agree on a common strategy on legal migration, not least since Europe is, especially in certain given sectors, reliant upon the migration of skilled workers (both between the Member States and from outside the EU, particularly those bordering the Union) for demographic reasons; considers that the Member States must seek to ensure that skilled workers are retained, in order to contribute to the balanced development of the regions and to alleviate the effects of demographic change;
31. Proposes that more funding should be provided for the integration of immigrants in order to dispel prejudices, and that training and communal events to encourage exchanges could be promoted;

Employment

32. Calls on the Commission to gear the ESF in such a way that account is taken of people at all stages of life and to ensure that more use is made of professional and voluntary potential in meeting the challenges of demographic change; notes that the experience and know-how of older people should be utilised, for example for coaching projects, to facilitate generational changeover, and that appropriate solutions are required for this purpose; takes the view that intergenerational communication offers an opportunity that should be seized;
33. Believes that the regions should use ESF funds in a decisive manner to combat youth unemployment in order to ensure the social integration of young people and give them the opportunity to take up a suitable profession; points out that this could be achieved, for example, by supporting training measures for and entrepreneurship among young people;
34. Believes that support should continue to be given with a view to raising the female

employment rate; calls, therefore, for more women to be given access to skilled jobs and lifelong learning programmes, provided that the qualifications obtained correspond to the needs of the labour market; recommends that the Member States develop systems for encouraging employees to participate in special projects to help them reconcile work and family life;

35. Stresses that, for European regions facing demographic challenges, establishing an environment conducive to a competitive and innovative private sector is central to creating new employment opportunities across all generations;

Analysis/best practice

36. Considers that demographic developments in the regions should be statistically measured; calls on the Commission to submit proposals to make local, regional and national databases on demographic development comparable, so that data can be evaluated at European level and that the exchanges of best practices between States, regions and localities can be fostered;
37. Calls on the Commission to improve the Demographic Vulnerability Index and calculate it every five years in order to show which regions in Europe are particularly vulnerable to demographic change; urges the Commission to devise pilot procedures with a view to charting the practices applied in the regions with the most exacting requirements;
38. Calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to enhance cooperation with local and regional stakeholders on issues connected with demographic change; considers that in border regions this cooperation must also tie in with the wishes and scope for cross-border initiatives; suggests that training programmes be developed in this field in order to create a better understanding and awareness of the issues involved; urges the regions to exchange best practices relating to the challenges linked to ageing;
39. 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;
40. Asks the Commission to find ways of reshaping the idea of an Erasmus programme for local and regional elected representatives in an appropriate form and to explain its idea for a summer or winter school in greater detail, so that representatives from the European regions can exchange good experience and approaches to solutions on demographic matters;
41. Calls on the Commission to produce a compilation of best practices, analyse them and share them with Member States and the regions so that they can be used as an example in devising policy to meet demographic challenges;
42. Calls on Member States and regions to exchange experience, best practices and new approaches to preventing the negative consequences of demographic change;

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43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. Demographic change – an opportunity, not a threat

Demographic change in the EU is a fact and handling it constitutes one of the core tasks for the future. Europe's population is ageing: it has the oldest population and the lowest population growth rate in the world. In most Member States, the birth rate is below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman (and continues to fall in some cases), while life expectancy is rising. There is a 50% probability that a girl born in Germany in 2010 will reach the age of 100. Demographic change is therefore rightly considered to be the major trend of the 21st century, as it will drastically change the political, social, societal and economic situation in Europe.

Many people consider that demographic change is a problem. In the rapporteur's view, this is short-sighted: we should see the opportunities which these developments bring for Europe. The problem is not demographic change itself, but politics' and society's hesitation in addressing the change.

The rapporteur is of the opinion that demographic change is producing new challenges in many regions of the EU. For this reason, demographic developments must be studied at regional level in particular, where very different developments become apparent. In many rural areas, demographic change means that younger people are moving away, but affluent urban areas are benefiting from people moving in. Conurbations such as London have to face an influx of population, whilst people in regions such as the new German federal states, western Poland or northern Spain are moving away. The population will fall by more than 10% in some 20 regions in Europe.

2. Demographic change and EU regional policy

Not all regions have realised that demographic change can bring both risks and opportunities. The range of different challenges means that each region and each urban area needs its own strategy. In principle, this is the Member States' responsibility, but the rapporteur is convinced that the regions must be proactive and that, at the same time, they need guidance and prospects for the future.

In the conclusions to the Fifth Cohesion Report¹, the Commission stresses the importance of demographic change. The communication issued by the Commission on promoting solidarity between the regions also states that the rights of each generation must be protected. Children and young people must have a place in society – and this calls for support for their families, the establishment and maintenance of high-quality care and educational facilities, professional training and employment prospects. The generations in the middle need support as they care for and raise their children, but also as they care for the older generation. Older people need help if they are to play an active and independent part in life in their society.

¹ COM(2010)642, p. 230 and following.

Member States and regions can draw on the structural funds to develop tailor-made strategies. Projects on successfully managing demographic change can be co-financed under the European structural policy. In their operational programmes for the 2007-2013 programming period, the Member States have allocated some EUR 30 billion (8.5 % of structural fund appropriations) to measures in this field. Regional policy is therefore a key instrument in tackling demographic change.

3. Needs and issues identified in this report

The rapporteur is conscious of the fact that demographic change is an issue that affects many sectors¹. Nonetheless, she believes that structural policy in particular should also take up the huge challenges posed by demographic change. She sees the following six main focuses:

1. The structural funds must be better adapted to the challenges of demographic change. The Commission should see this change as a core priority for Europe's development. At the same time, Member States and regions should pay greater heed than in the past to the issue as a horizontal priority in their operational programmes. Demographic indicators should be used for the regional distribution of structural funds.
2. The rapporteur considers that both rural areas and urban areas face major challenges with regard to infrastructure. Depopulation and the social exclusion of the elderly need to be prevented, and urban planning must adapt. Structural funds can help here. Cities and municipalities must be attractive to their residents, including by means of child- and family-friendly infrastructure and good local public transport.
3. Above all, demographic change affects the elderly, children and families. Regional policy can do a lot for these segments of society, for example through EFRD funds for loans with low interest rates so people can make their housing suitable for the elderly, or through the promotion of multi-generational housing. Universally available healthcare provision, sufficient care staff and free all-day childcare facilities are indispensable and can be supported by the cohesion policy.
4. Europe will, for demographic reasons, remain dependent on migration for skilled labour². The Blue Card should only be the first step towards a European migration strategy. At the same time, it should be noted that the success with which migrants integrate varies. In this area, the cohesion policy can play a supporting role, for example by funding training or events (such as the German-Turkish Economic Centre in Mannheim).
5. Increasing the female employment rate is a core issue for handling demographic change. Youth unemployment must also be reduced. With regard to the elderly, it is important to use their know-how and skills (for example for coaching projects). There must be no age discrimination on the employment market. The Member States can use ESF funds for all these

¹ See also 2010/2027(INI) from EMPL.

² Germany, for example, will need 30 000 to 50 000 skilled workers per year for the next 15 years (cf. Federal Employment Agency, *Perspektive 2025 - Fachkräfte für Deutschland*, Nuremberg 2011, p. 36 and following).

measures.

6. The rapporteur feels that, in order to find answers to the challenges posed by demographic change, it is important to obtain adequate statistics. Secondly, coordination between the authorities concerned at all levels must be improved and best practice examples must be exchanged.

If we shape demographic change and find answers both at European level and at national and regional level, it will not be a threat but an opportunity for Europe.

19.4.2011

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

for the Committee on Regional Development

on demographic change and its consequences for the future cohesion policy of the EU
(2010/2157(INI))

Rapporteur: Sari Essayah

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that demographic projections concerning old-age dependency ratios indicate increasing polarisation between regions, as by 2020 there will be 40 regions where the ratio is at least 25% above the EU average, creating serious challenges not just to pension and healthcare systems, but also with regard to care of the elderly, the adequacy and training of the workforce, and many other social issues;
2. Notes that the ageing of European society disguises substantial regional inequalities; notes that, as national data on demographic change mask differing local realities, it is sometimes hard to identify needs in terms of 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;
3. Notes that longer life expectancy, reduced fertility levels and migration have given rise to demographic change, with significant territorial variation across Europe and vast differences between Member States, between regions and between cities, sometimes also within cities;
4. Considers that prolonged life expectancy is a positive factor and should be seen as such; therefore asks the EU to ensure that Member States guarantee that pensioners, especially those at risk of poverty, unable to afford a home or to care for themselves, do not fall into poverty;

5. Considers that the recent economic and financial crisis has worsened the situation with regard to demographic trends in Europe, making it more difficult to find a solution to the problem;
6. Recognises, however, that migration offers, in particular to regions experiencing net outflows, 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;
7. Notes that addressing demographic change will be important if the EU 2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are to be achieved; in this context, ageing should be seen as an opportunity and not as a burden, with structural funding provided to offer possibilities to Member States, regions and cities;
8. Highlights the fact that demographic change, especially population ageing, has a clear impact on the provision of social infrastructure, such as pension systems, nursing care and healthcare, with regional authorities having to meet changing demand from various population groups;
9. Considers that there should be indicators which complement GDP as criteria for the allocation of funds under future EU cohesion policy, most importantly from the point of view of demographic change the old-age dependency ratio; stresses, however, the importance of other social indicators in this respect, too, and notes that many important indicators are listed in the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on the report on ‘GDP and beyond – measuring progress in a changing world’ (2010/2088(INI)) as a way of responding to the challenges of Europe more effectively;
10. 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, than in regions with a growing population, and therefore considers that different support strategies are needed;
11. Stresses that the European Social Fund (ESF) should be regarded as an essential resource to support training opportunities to increase employment and improve career reorientation and the social inclusion of women, young people and senior citizens; calls for the ESF's full potential to be used in this area;
12. Notes that all regions, including regions of net emigration, have specific potential in a variety of fields; calls on the Member States, within their policy framework, to prioritise strategies that allow such regions to exploit their own development potential to the full, since experience shows that this can stimulate local and regional economic and social actors, thereby making regions with net outward migration more attractive again and reversing migration trends; notes the ESF's importance in this context, and calls for integrated programmes at regional level so that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the ESF work better together and in conjunction with the common agricultural policy and environmental policy, thereby making it possible to meet the needs of rural areas effectively, and considers that all cohesion policy measures should have a results-oriented focus on sustainable development, poverty eradication, competitiveness,

employment and other EU 2020 Strategy targets; calls for cohesion policy to be conditional on results and to set measurable targets and outcome indicators so as to make ongoing evaluation possible; calls for evaluation and scrutiny of the results achieved through the allocation of ESF funding;

13. Within the framework of the ESF, calls for improvements in the working conditions and employment possibilities of older people and for incentives to continue working for longer than at present, calls for further training to be organised for employees, in order to meet the changing needs of working life, and urges that support be provided for older entrepreneurs;
14. Considers that ESF funding should be used to support the development of care services, including long-term care for the elderly, as a new potential growth sector for the services market and as an opportunity to achieve higher employment rates, particularly among women carers;
15. Proposes that greater use should be made of the opportunities offered by the ESF in order to make local social capital available for local services close to people, so as to take account of the particular needs of elderly people and enable them to lead an independent life for as long as possible; points out, in addition, that regions experiencing net outward migration need to take measures to maintain a natural population mix as far as possible, in particular, by guaranteeing childcare provision, attractive educational infrastructure and universal access to other services of general interest;
16. Calls for the creation of favourable conditions for businesses, particularly SMEs, through the introduction and adaptation of innovative products and processes;
17. Takes the view that interactive links should be encouraged between research institutions and representatives of the business world;
18. Takes the view that peripheral regions ought not to exist in Europe in social and economic terms, and that to this end various policies and measures should be implemented, such as a policy which encourages young people to remain in or move to the peripheries and enables people living there to survive; notes that in regions with net outward migration innovative and decentralised social infrastructure concepts, together with a high degree of active citizenship, improve the quality of life and are factors which strengthen economic stability, also among young people; considers that regional economies and structures should be renewed in advance in preparation for coping with the impact of the ageing of the population and that those regions where population ageing will be most rapid could be used as testing grounds for experimenting with and funding innovative solutions to regional problems caused by rapid demographic change, bearing in mind that new social and services-related innovations are needed in many areas, for example:
 - reconciliation of family life and work, including financial and adequate infrastructure support, as well as recognition of care work;
 - supporting the employment of older persons by means of greater flexibility in employment relations,

- halting marginalisation of the regions and developing regions which are lagging behind,
- ensuring the adequate, universal provision of high-quality basic services of general interest, including care services for the elderly, as universal access to social services is a fundamental right and the principle of solidarity must be maintained, also when addressing demographic imbalances;
- increasing productivity in healthcare and care for the elderly by using ICTs,
- keeping the ageing population healthy, active and capable of living at home and mobilising the potential of older workers, entrepreneurs and volunteers, by promoting their employability, training and education; safeguarding the economic participation and skills development (e.g. through training) of an ageing population by means of a thorough reform of career management for senior employees aged 50 and above, who are currently often penalised through discrimination in recruitment procedures, inadequate access to training, including in new skills and technologies, and the failure to recognise the value of experience,
- the Member States should take practical steps to ensure healthy ageing by: guaranteeing equal access for everyone to basic healthcare and improving the quality and safety of medical treatment;
- responding to the phases of deterioration in the condition of elderly people, while providing relevant education, skills and training to ensure that older persons do not suffer social exclusion and that vulnerable groups, such as migrants, the disabled and the elderly, can participate in training courses to improve their access to ICTs;
- encouraging inward migration in order to meet regional labour market needs, since highly skilled migrants might be vital for some sectors of the regional economy;

19. Welcomes in this context the Commission's proposal for a Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, which could provide the coordination needed to develop the above innovations; calls for the cohesion budget to be made more flexible than at present, so that new ideas and approaches can be tried and risk-taking and experimentation encouraged;

20. Notes that, during the current programming period, regional and structural policy is based on fund-centred programmes, and considers that during the next programming period Structural Fund measures should be combined in a single programme document at the appropriate regional level;

21. 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 such 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 regions;

22. Recommends, therefore, combined public-private investment in the childcare sector and

the pre-school education system;

23. Stresses that adequate access to services for the care of children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other dependants is essential in order to enable men and women to participate fully and equally in the labour market; points out that this will have an impact on the level of informal care available;
24. Stresses the importance of active intervention by public authorities, in particular through the provision of social services of general interest (SSGIs), to help families and young children and also to provide facilities and care for elderly people and all dependants;
25. 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 services of general interest; 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;
26. Calls on Member States to reform their tax systems so as to ensure that people with interrupted employment histories as a result of their responsibilities as carers for children or for the elderly are not placed at a disadvantage in terms of old-age pension and social security provision;
27. Calls for future ESF rules that are simpler to manage and therefore enable small organisations to benefit more from funding and develop and manage innovative social projects; calls on the Commission to increase under the future ESF funding for transnational pilot projects at EU level which address social and employment issues, in order to facilitate innovative regional, cross-border and macro-regional cooperation and so meet common challenges arising from demographic change;
28. Recommends that Member States and the Commission set up user-friendly websites to enable members of the public to ascertain where EU cohesion funding is really going and what it actually achieves;
29. Calls for measures to raise awareness of the potential contribution vulnerable population groups can make to the strength of regions, as a source of social cohesion;
30. Calls for close cooperation between the Commission and the national statistical offices, which provide information on various matters, including population and migration numbers, in order to monitor data and analyse demographic trends, thereby contributing thus to the more efficient allocation of funds across Europe, in accordance with specific assets and needs.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	14.4.2011
Result of final vote	+: 41 -: 2 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Heinz K. Becker, Mara Bizzotto, Philippe Boulland, Milan Cabrnock, David Casa, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Marije Cornelissen, Tadeusz Cymański, Frédéric Daerden, Karima Delli, Proinsias De Rossa, Frank Engel, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Ilda Figueiredo, Thomas Händel, Marian Harkin, Roger Helmer, Nadja Hirsch, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Ádám Kósa, Patrick Le Hyaric, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Rovana Plumb, Konstantinos Poupakis, Sylvana Rapti, Licia Ronzulli, Elisabeth Schroedter, Jutta Steinruck, Traian Ungureanu
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Tunne Kelam, Gesine Meissner, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Csaba Sógor, Emilie Turunen, Cecilia Wikström
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Edit Herczog

26.4.2011

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

for the Committee on Regional Development

on demographic change and its consequences for the future cohesion policy of the EU
(2010/2157(INI))

Rapporteur for the opinion: Anna Záborská

SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas gender equality policies may contribute significantly to addressing the demographic challenges, notably by stimulating the inclusion of women in the labour market and reducing the risk of female and child poverty,
 - B. whereas women live longer than men and the increasing difference in life expectancy between men and women could further expose older women to isolation, dependence and poverty,
 - C. whereas the ageing of the European population represents one of the main upcoming public health challenges for the European Union, with an increasing burden of certain chronic diseases, some of which particularly affect women, and whereas national, regional and local authorities will have a crucial role to play in ensuring continuity, safety and quality in the delivery of healthcare and public health services,
1. Calls on the competent EU, national, regional and local authorities, within the framework of cohesion policy and in light of the Europe 2020 strategy, to make greater efforts to analyse the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming and gender equality measures in the cohesion policy, and of measures to combat discrimination, particularly in view of the new context of demographic change characterised by population ageing and substantial migration flows both from third countries into the EU and within the EU from east to west and from rural to urban areas, paying attention to women suffering from social exclusion;

2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that all regional and local authorities throughout the EU have included gender mainstreaming measures in their proposals for funding during the next cohesion policy programming period, together with the objective of reducing the negative effects of demographic change;
3. Points out that care policies and the provision of care services are intrinsically related to the achievement of equality between women and men, and emphasises that the lack of affordable, accessible and high-quality care services in most EU countries and the fact that care work is not shared equally between women and men have a direct negative impact on women's ability to participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life;
4. Calls on the Commission, in the next cohesion policy cycle, to introduce specific programmes and projects, in cooperation with regional authorities, to develop and enhance women's active participation in SMEs – which could directly improve female employment and prevent a 'brain drain' of young people from rural areas to urban areas or other countries – with a view to countering population decline;
5. Calls on the competent EU, national, regional and local authorities, acting within their respective areas of competence and as part of cohesion policy for the next period, to make provision for financial support measures for maternity and childcare by issuing vouchers, bonuses and cheques, to promote the supply of childcare and family services and benefits, and to put in place effective measures to enable people to reconcile work and family life, taking into account flexible working hours for parents (as a free choice) and sufficient provision of high-quality, affordable care services for children, the elderly and other dependents that allow parents, and especially mothers, to combine work and family life; emphasises that certain countries have introduced proper policies on reconciling work and family life, giving people the opportunity to choose freely between genuine, equivalent alternatives, with a view to increasing both male and female labour market participation rates and birth rates;
6. Considers, to this end, that teleworking should be developed wherever possible, on the basis of ambitious legislation that reconciles the interests of workers and business;
7. Considers that, in the light of the demographic changes under way in Europe and with a view to fostering a better work-life balance, more financial support should be allocated, under the new post-2013 cohesion policy strategy, to the provision of pre-school childcare facilities;
8. Emphasises the growing and crucial importance of local and regional authorities in Europe in promoting equal opportunities for women and men in order to help meet the demographic challenge, and urges them to integrate relevant policies into their decentralised cooperation projects so as to enable women – especially the most vulnerable, including immigrants, those belonging to minorities, disabled women, women who have been victims of gender-based violence, and unemployed women aged over 45 – to access new information technologies and micro-financing for business activities;
9. Calls on Eurostat to include in the regional human development index (HDI) factors relating to unpaid invisible work, with a breakdown by gender taking into account the triple role that women often play as mothers, daughters and grandmothers, as a

complementary element in the established, though still inadequate, regional social infrastructure, following the recent OECD study entitled ‘Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World’¹;

10. Refers to the huge imbalance between men and women in the sharing of domestic and family responsibilities, leading mainly women to opt for flexible working arrangements or even to give up work altogether, and thus impacting on women’s career development, on the continuing gender wage gap and on the accumulation of pension rights;
11. Asks Eurostat to examine and develop indicators to measure and value women’s and men’s involvement in voluntary activities, in order to show what women and men contribute to social cohesion, by region, and to improving quality of life, especially for people living in poverty;
12. Considers that voluntary work performed by women should count as accredited professional experience, should be duly recognised and should not result in their being penalised in terms of sickness insurance and retirement pension entitlements;
13. Calls on the Commission to propose specific initiatives, in the context of the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012, dedicated to the activities of older women and enhancing their contribution to social and territorial cohesion; emphasises that the principle of solidarity between generations is one of the structural keys to the European social model and thus to economic, social and territorial cohesion; calls for action to promote flexible retirement solutions and combine pensions with part-time work so as to encourage women to stay longer in the labour market; demands that, with a view to maintaining this principle, public authorities at various levels take an active approach and be involved in guaranteeing high-quality social services of general interest;
14. Requests Member States to reinforce the adequacy of pensions by combating gender discrimination in the labour market and especially by reducing the gender gaps with regard to careers and pay and ensuring compensation in pension schemes for time spent on family caring;
15. Calls on the Member States and regional authorities to encourage forms of support for families which take charge of dependent elderly people;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote forms of inter-generational training and education, by involving, for instance, young people, schools and associations in ICT training projects for elderly people, or by developing the skills of elderly people in extracurricular projects;
17. Calls on the Member States and regional authorities to develop and support forms of involvement of elderly people in formal and informal training activities and voluntary work, as well as their active participation in community life;
18. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to the public health impacts of the

¹ Miranda, V. (2011), *Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World*, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 116, OECD Publishing.

demographic challenge and to take appropriate action to address the increasing burden of disease affecting women and men, notably by enabling cancer screening for both sexes to be funded within the framework of the various cohesion policy instruments, with a special focus on regions inadequately served by public health services.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	20.4.2011
Result of final vote	+: 24 -: 0 0: 5
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Emine Bozkurt, Andrea Češková, Marije Cornelissen, Silvia Costa, Edite Estrela, Ilda Figueiredo, Zita Gurmai, Mary Honeyball, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Constance Le Grip, Barbara Matera, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Angelika Niebler, Siiri Oviir, Antonyia Parvanova, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Nicole Sinclaire, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Eva-Britt Svensson, Marc Tarabella, Marina Yannakoudakis, Anna Záborská
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Anne Delvaux, Christa Klaß, Katarína Neveďalová, Rovana Plumb

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	6.10.2011
Result of final vote	+: 36 -: 2 0: 6
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Charalampos Angourakis, Catherine Bearder, Jean-Paul Besset, Victor Boştinaru, Philip Bradbourn, Zuzana Brzobohatá, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Brice Hortefeux, Danuta Maria Hübner, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Juozas Imbrasas, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Mojca Kleva, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Jan Olbrycht, Markus Pieper, Monika Smolková, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Michail Tremopoulos, Viktor Uspaskich, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Joachim Zeller, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jens Geier, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Maurice Ponga, Elisabeth Schroedter, Patrice Tirolien, Giommaria Uggias, Derek Vaughan, Sabine Verheyen