

KEY STUDIES

QUALITY OF LIFE

BACKGROUND

The European Union, through its actions in a wide range of areas, has delivered nearly sixty years of peace, stability and economic progress to EU citizens, thus contributing to the improvement of their quality of life. 'Quality of life' is a broad, multidimensional concept, going beyond traditional categories such as 'economic production' or 'living standards'. 'Quality of life' includes not only the material aspects of life, but rather everything that one may value in living. Among the features that shape quality of life are health, environmental conditions, economic security, education, social connections, physical integrity, activities that people engage in and their ability to participate as full citizens in the framing of policies. This leaflet provides a list of studies that were published by the European Parliament's Policy Departments, illustrating the EU's capacity to contribute to the improvement of the citizens' quality of life.

Scan the QR code or just click on the title of the publication to access it directly.



NEWSLETTER

The Policy Departments' newsletter offers a monthly overview of the main upcoming events organised in the European Parliament, a summary of key studies in preparation and a direct link to the major studies published recently.

Receive this monthly newsletter:
ep-policydepartments@ep.europa.eu

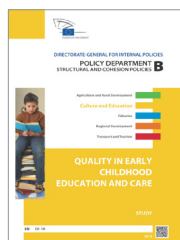
FACT SHEETS ON THE EU

The Fact Sheets provide an overview of European integration and of the European Parliament's contribution to that process. Updated regularly, they cover six main areas: how the European Union works; citizens' Europe; the internal market; the economic and monetary union; sectoral policies; and the EU's external relations.

www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets

PUBLICATIONS

Quality in early childhood education and care - May 2013

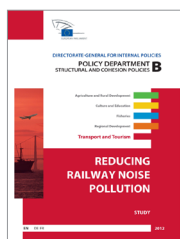


This study examines policy developments throughout Europe on the issue of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Recent EU policy developments are developed to offer a structure and context for policy developments on the national level. Bundling together existing data from diverse sources and conducting additional in-depth country studies, this study proposes constitutive pillars for quality ECEC. In addition, based on an in-depth investigation of good-practices throughout the EU, this document provides suggestions and recommendations for developing quality ECEC throughout the EU.



(Available in EN, FR, DE and PT, executive summary in 21 languages)

Reducing railway noise pollution - April 2012



12 million EU inhabitants are affected by railway noise during the day and 9 million during the night. This study lists measures, funding and regulations to reduce it. The introduction of modern rolling stock will lower noise most significantly. In the short run the replacement of cast iron by composite brake blocks on rail freight cars is most important. Developing a regulation scheme for a staged process towards low-noise rolling stock is the heart of a rail noise abatement strategy.



(Available in EN, FR and DE, executive summary in 21 languages)

What tools for the European agricultural policy to encourage the provision of public goods? - June 2011

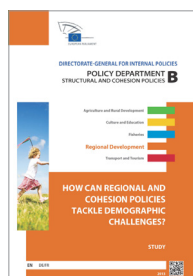


Agriculture plays an important role in the provision of a wide range of public goods in Europe, particularly regarding the environment and rural vitality. Appropriate policies are required to secure adequate provision in future. The Common Agricultural Policy potentially has a key role. This report examines some of the issues involved in reorienting the CAP for this purpose and proposes how it could be modified to contribute to the provision of public goods more effectively in the future.

(Available in EN, FR, DE and PL)



How can regional and cohesion policies tackle demographic challenges? Annexes - September 2013



This study provides an overview of regional demographic structures and trends in the EU with the focus on their likely effects on socio-economic and territorial cohesion and the role of Cohesion Policy in addressing demographic change. In detail it analyses how and to what extent the 2007-13 European Cohesion Policy and Structural Funds have been tackling demographic change at the regional level in order to derive useful indications on how Cohesion Policy actions could be more effective in the future programming period (2014-2020). The study contains a literature and data review on demographic and spatial trends in the EU regions and the main policy developments; a review of Cohesion Policy programming documents for 2007-2013; an in-depth field analysis of ten regional case studies and good practices and finally, a horizontal reading of the main findings to draw conclusions and policy recommendations for the 2014-2020 programming period.

(Available in EN, FR and DE, executive summary in 23 languages)



Consumer protection aspects of financial services - February 2014



Inadequate consumer protection, especially in the U.S. mortgage market, not only led to considerable consumer detriment but was a major contributor to the global financial crisis. In the EU, mis-selling of financial products has also resulted in significant consumer harm. Considering the significant potential detriment that financial services can cause to individual consumers and to the Single Market, consumer protection policy needs to properly focus on this area. Improved transparency and better informed transactions resulting from such policy will lead to better solutions for consumers and greater market efficiency. A number of recommendations to strengthen consumer protection in the area of financial services are put forward in this study.

(Available in EN)



Occupational health concerns: stress-related and psychological problems associated with work - May 2013



The study presents recent trends on stress at work as well as an overview of EU and national measures to tackle this problem, especially in the context of the economic and financial crisis. The report also includes a number of case studies illustrating initiatives that have proven successful in improving workers' mental well-being, in particular during restructuring. Given the growing concerns on the impact of the economic and financial crisis on workers' mental health, one of the main recommendations put forward in the study is that the next Strategy, or any other relevant European framework on occupational health and safety, should include stress at work as a priority area. (Available in EN)



Social protection rights of economically dependent self-employed workers - April 2013



This study reviews the effect of the current crisis on Europe's economy, as well as measures taken by governments and social partners to support SMEs in the crisis. The study discusses in detail the experience and potential of two main types of measures (short-time working arrangements and skills development and training) for a number of Member States. Most of them have implemented measures in the form of packages rather than stand-alone individual measures. The study reviews recent experiences with such packages in Austria and Lithuania and ends with conclusions and recommendations.

(Available in EN, executive summary in FR and DE)





Enforcement of fundamental workers' rights - September 2012



This study provides an overview of international and European law regulating a selection of fundamental workers' rights (freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, age antidiscrimination, the right to health and safety at work). It then analyses their enforcement in seven Member States (France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands and United Kingdom). On the basis of these findings, it explores possible ways forward for improved enforcement of fundamental workers' rights in the European Union, not only in times of economic crisis, but in the long term.



(Available in EN, executive summary in FR and DE)

Differences in costs of and access to pharmaceutical products in the EU - August 2011

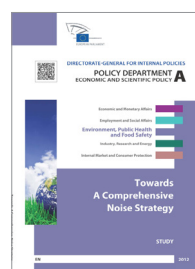


This report reviews the differences in the prices of pharmaceuticals among Member States. It presents an overview of the prices for pharmaceuticals protected by patents as well as those for off-patent pharmaceuticals subject to competition from lower-priced "generic" versions. The report reviews the approaches that Member States have used to regulate the pharmaceutical market on both the supply and demand sides, and assesses evidence regarding the impact of these different approaches on pharmaceutical prices, cost containment, industry innovation. The report also considers the implications for patient access to pharmaceuticals. The report considers policy options to strengthen coordination among Member States and exchange best practice.



(Available in EN and DE, executive summary in 21 languages)

Towards a comprehensive noise strategy - November 2012

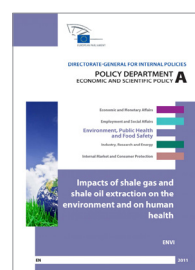


The study reviews the latest evidence on the health effects of environmental noise. It also provides an overview of the current EU regulatory framework on noise (Environmental Noise Directive and legislation on noise sources), assessing its effectiveness and identifying ways for future improvement. Recommendations are put forward for the development of a more comprehensive noise strategy.



(Available in EN, FR and DE)

Impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction on the environment and on human health - June 2011



This study discusses the possible impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the environment and on human health. Quantitative data and qualitative impacts are taken from US experience since shale gas extraction in Europe still is in its infancy, while the USA have more than 40 years of experience already having drilled more than 50,000 wells. Greenhouse gas emissions are also assessed based on a critical review of existing literature and own calculations. European legislation is reviewed with respect to hydraulic fracturing activities and recommendations for further work are given. The potential gas resources and future availability of shale gas is discussed in face of the present conventional gas supply and its probable future development.



(Available in 21 languages, executive summary in FR and DE)

Work-life balance: Barcelona targets revisited - November 2013

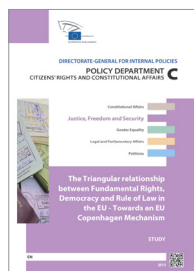


In 2002, the European Council decided in Barcelona to set targets for the availability of childcare facilities. Member States agreed to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and to at least 33 % of children under 3 years of age. The Workshop organised by the Policy Department takes stock of the situation in Belgium, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Slovakia. Besides, analyses are presented of the effects of the crisis and to what extent the offer of childcare services has been combined with other policies to encourage female employment and the reconciliation of work and family life. (Available in EN, FR and DE)





The triangular relationship between fundamental rights, democracy and rule of law in the EU - October 2013



This study examines the triangular relationship between fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law in the EU and the challenges that arise in reflecting on ways to strengthen EU competences in these terrains. It analyses the current 'state of play' and provides a map of EU-level mechanisms assessing respect for rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, and Article 2 TEU general principles, by EU Member States. Special attention is paid to crosscutting dilemmas affecting the operability and effective implementation of these principles. The study thinks ahead and offers possible 'ways forward' in EU policy-making for ensuring a more optimal respect, protection and promotion of the Union's principles by Member States and the EU. It proposes the creation of a new supervisory mechanism – the Copenhagen mechanism – to effectively address the current rule of law deficits facing the concept of 'democratic rule of law with fundamental rights' in the Union. **(Available in EN)**



EU budget and national budgets: facts, figures and impact - Mars 2014



The euro crisis has forced Member States and the EU institutions to create a series of new instruments to safeguard macro-financial stability of the Union. This study describes the status of existing instruments, the role of the European Parliament and how use of the instruments impinges on EU budget also through their effects on national budgets. In addition, we present a survey of other possible instruments that have been proposed in recent years (e.g. E-bonds and Eurobonds) in order to provide an assessment of how EU macro-financial stability assistance could evolve in the future and what could be its impact on EU public finances.

(Available in EN)



Beyond 2015: reconciling development and climate change goals - September 2013



After 15 years as the central international reference for fighting poverty and promoting development, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) will expire in 2015. The international community is seeking a new global development framework through two parallel tracks: the MDG review — led by the UN Secretary General — and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process launched by the Rio+20 conference. There are important overlaps between these tracks and growing calls for the processes to be integrated into a single overarching framework and set of goals to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development after 2015. Despite these calls — also made by the EU — there have been very few concrete proposals for accomplishing the integration in a practical manner. Following the UN Special Event on the MDGs that will take place on 25 September, various possible integration mechanisms could be adopted. In this context, the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDG, established this year by the United Nations General Assembly, occupies a central role with a growing importance. **(Available in EN)**



POLICY DEPARTMENTS

Policy departments consist of five units responsible for providing - both in-house and external - high-level independent expertise, analysis and policy advice at the request of committees and other parliamentary bodies (delegations, President, Bureau, Secretary-General). Their expertise covers all areas of activity of the European Parliament. Therefore they are closely involved in the work of committees which they support in shaping legislation on and exercising democratic scrutiny over EU policies. Policy departments deliver policy analysis in a wide variety of formats, ranging from studies and in-depth analyses to briefings and the Fact Sheets on the EU. This written output serves a variety of purposes by feeding directly into the legislative work of a specific committee or serving as a briefing for delegations of Members. Apart from a few confidential documents, all texts produced by policy departments are available on the Parliament's website for the benefit of all Members and the wider public. Policy departments also organise events, including workshops and expert panels, that enhance Parliament's analytical capacity and develop common approaches to current political issues.

All studies: www.europarl.europa.eu/studies

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