



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Culture and Education

2010/0242(COD)

11.11.2010

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council
on the European Year for Active Ageing (2012)
(COM(2010)0462 – C7-0253/2010 – 2010/0242(COD))

Rapporteur: Hannu Takkula

PA_Legam

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Background

Since the early 1980's *European Years*, which focus on specific themes, have been organised at the EU-level nearly every year. The objective is to raise public awareness, and to draw the attention of national governments to important issues which the EU-countries want to collectively highlight. For instance, 2010 is the *European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*, while 2011 will be the (*European*) *Year for Volunteering*. The choice of theme years is made in advance so that campaigns can be set up and preparation work can be conducted.

The current proposal for the 2012 European Year is *Active Ageing*. This theme intends to serve as a framework for raising awareness, for identifying and disseminating good practice and for encouraging not only policymakers but stakeholders at all levels to promote the idea of activeness and also action among the "ageing" generations of Europe.

As with previous European Years, the proposed measures will include information and promotional campaigns, events and initiatives at the European, national, regional and local level to convey key messages and disseminate information about examples of good practice. Furthermore, the Commission hopes to encourage all EU-countries to commit to specific action(s) and goals in the run-up to 2012 so that tangible achievements can be presented at the end of the year 2012 itself.

The Commission has stated that it is not seeking specific funding for the year in question but suggests, in line with certain previous years, that funding for Active Ageing related campaigns (etc.) will be provided under various existing Community programmes and administrative budgets. While this approach to funding is somewhat sensible given the state of the economy, the Rapporteur wants to highlight the problematic nature of the issue especially with regard to budget lines which have faced cuts recently and which have already committed to funding long-term projects and programmes (e.g. Life-Long Learning programmes).

Observations

The Rapporteur recognises that the EU is in a process of significant population ageing. Research findings suggest that from 2012, the European working-age population will start to shrink, while the population over 60-years old will continue to increase by about two million people per year. The strongest pressure is expected to occur between the period of 2015 - 2035 when the so-called baby-boom generation will enter into retirement.

Population ageing has become one of our greatest challenges. Ageing will put increased economic and social demands on countries in Europe, but equally also in many other parts of the world. While considering these various challenges, we must also recognise that older people are a precious, often ignored resource that makes an important contribution to our societies. Therefore we must attempt to further utilise the potential contribution that older people can make to society.

The Rapporteur wants to give special attention to the word *active*. He emphasises that *active* refers not just to the ability to be physically active or to the ability to be able to participate in the labour force for longer, but *active* should equally refer to a person's continual and active participation in social, economic, cultural, and civic affairs.

The Rapporteur knows that population ageing raises many fundamental questions for policy-makers; some of the more notable issues include:

1. As people are living longer, how can the quality of life in old age be improved?
2. How to help people remain active as they grow older?
3. How to make sure the younger generation actively takes the older generation into consideration?
4. How to best balance the role of the family and the state when it comes to caring for people who need assistance, as they grow older?

Active ageing, by definition, includes creating more opportunities for older people to continue working, to stay healthy longer and to continue to contribute to society in other ways. Volunteering, for example, needs to be supported by a wide range of policies at all levels of governance. Therefore, it is natural that the *Year for Volunteering* precedes the *Year for Active Ageing*. However, as the Parliament has recognised before, European Years must not become mere public relations exercises, and efforts should be made to consolidate objectives and results in the context of specific policies, programmes and other initiatives across the board, while at the same time providing an impetus for new actions and policies.

Active ageing must be tackled on various fronts, not least in the work place, where there is a need to provide continuous learning opportunities for older employees also, to ensure that people remain active. Furthermore, older people need training in new technologies. It must also be remembered that "intergenerational" learning can bridge and even enhance learning experiences and help in the transmission of cultural values.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Amendment 1

Proposal for a regulation

Recital 5

Text proposed by the Commission

(5) The growing proportion of older people in Europe makes it more important than ever to **promote** healthy ageing. Healthy ageing can help raise labour market participation of older people, enable them to be active in society for longer, improve their individual quality of life and curb the strains on health and social care systems.

Amendment

(5) The growing proportion of older people in Europe makes it more important than ever to **encourage** healthy ageing **through the promotion of cultural activities (including sports), which contribute positively both to mental and physical health**. Healthy ageing can help raise labour market participation of older people, enable them to be active in society for longer, improve their individual quality of life and curb the strains on health and social care systems.

Or. en

Amendment 2

Proposal for a regulation

Recital 7

Text proposed by the Commission

(7) The Council adopted on 22 February 2007 a resolution on ‘Opportunities and challenges of demographic change in Europe: the contribution of older people to economic and social development’, which emphasised the need to increase the possibilities of active participation by older people, the new economic opportunities

Amendment

(7) The Council adopted on 22 February 2007 a resolution on ‘Opportunities and challenges of demographic change in Europe: the contribution of older people to economic and social development’, which emphasised the need to increase the possibilities of active participation by older people, the new economic opportunities

("silver economy") created by the growing demand of older people for certain goods and services as well as the importance of a positive public image of older people.

("silver economy") created by the growing demand of older people for certain goods and services as well as the importance of a positive public image of older people. ***The valuable voluntary work of older people is an excellent example of the essential contribution that the ageing population makes to society and the economy, and this should be further encouraged in the future.***

Or. en

Amendment 3

Proposal for a regulation Recital 13

Text proposed by the Commission

(13) In its Communication on "A Digital Agenda for Europe", the first EU2020 flagship initiative adopted on 19 May 2010, the Commission stressed the importance of ICT for ageing well, proposing in particular the reinforcement of the Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) Joint Programme. The Digital Agenda for Europe also recommended taking concerted action to increase the digital competences of all Europeans, including older persons, a group that is over-represented within the 150 million citizens, or about 30% of the total, who have never used the internet.

Amendment

(13) In its Communication on "A Digital Agenda for Europe", the first EU2020 flagship initiative adopted on 19 May 2010, the Commission stressed the importance of ICT for ageing well, proposing in particular the reinforcement of the Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) Joint Programme. The Digital Agenda for Europe also recommended taking concerted action to increase the digital competences of all Europeans, including older persons, a group that is over-represented within the 150 million citizens, or about 30% of the total, who have never used the internet. ***Facilitating access to, and providing training in the use of, new technologies would further improve the opportunities of older persons to benefit from lifelong learning and would also contribute to the removal of obstacles to lifelong learning related to distance and disabilities.***

Or. en

Amendment 4

Proposal for a regulation

Article 2 – introductory part

Text proposed by the Commission

The overall purpose of the European Year shall be to encourage and support the efforts of Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of the rapidly growing population in their late 50s and above, thereby preserving solidarity between generations. Active ageing means creating better opportunities and working conditions to enable older workers to play their part in the labour market, combating social exclusion by fostering active participation in society, and encouraging healthy ageing. On this basis, the objectives shall be:

Amendment

The overall purpose of the European Year shall be to encourage and support the efforts of Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of the rapidly growing population in their late 50s and above, thereby preserving solidarity between generations. Active ageing means creating better opportunities and working conditions to enable older workers to play their part in the labour market, combating social exclusion by fostering active participation in society, and encouraging healthy ageing ***through the promotion of cultural activities (including sports)***. On this basis, the objectives shall be:

Or. en

Amendment 5

Proposal for a regulation

Article 2 – point 1

Text proposed by the Commission

(1) to raise general awareness of the value of active ageing in order to highlight the useful contribution older persons make to society and the economy, to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of older persons;

Amendment

(1) to raise general awareness of the value of active ageing in order to highlight the useful contribution older persons make to society and the economy, to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of older persons ***by emphasising life-long learning strategies, including those relating to the use of new technologies***;

Amendment 6

Proposal for a regulation
Article 5 – paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

The Commission shall convene meetings of the national coordinators for the purpose of coordination at Union level and to exchange information, including on commitments made and their implementation in the Member States.

Amendment

The Commission shall convene meetings of the national coordinators for the purpose of coordination at Union level and to exchange information ***and knowledge***, including on commitments made and their implementation in the Member States.