

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety*

**2005/2147(INI)**

25.1.2006

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations  
(2005/2147(INI))

Draftsman: Thomas Ulmer

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that the European Union, through measures aimed at improving the framework conditions, wishes to support the Member States in reducing the discrepancy between the number of children parents wish for (2.3) and the actual number of children (1.5) they have;
2. Is surprised that the Green Paper makes only passing reference to the healthcare aspects of demographic change; emphasises that, because of an ageing population, the demand for health and long-term care services increases qualitatively and quantitatively; is convinced that investment in measures for preventing long-term illness is important for coming to terms with the human and financial aspects of demographic change; states that the longer people are in a position to enjoy healthy lives, the longer they can remain active and work;
3. Is surprised at the Green Paper's failure to mention the increasing frequency of new family structures, especially single-parent families, of which 85% are headed by women, or the fact that these families, while more liable to the risk of poverty, have greater problems of access to health care;
4. Stresses the need to ensure women, especially young single mothers, specific post-birth protection and support;
5. Agrees that, with lowering rates of reproduction, economic growth can be maintained only through measures aimed at higher employment, innovation and increased productivity, as well as by modernising social protection;
6. Is concerned about the difference in healthcare systems in the Member States, regions and social groups; states that the difference in healthcare (low life expectancy, widespread chronic illness, illness caused by living conditions), along with a low birth rate and emigration, can lead to a further increase in regional disparities and to a vicious circle which is difficult to break; asks the Member States to notify their differences in healthcare so as to achieve, with help from the Commission, a systematic exchange of best practice and to overcome this issue effectively;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to undertake and disseminate studies on population change in the individual Member States, taking account of the causes and the likely short-term consequences;
8. Welcomes the exchange of best practices among the Member States by means of the open method of coordination, and draws attention to the sound management of demographic change achieved by the Nordic countries, where the high participation of women in the labour market is accompanied by higher birth-rates; believes the Commission should undertake a study to evaluate the correlation between these two trends;

9. Calls on the Member States to adopt measures to permit the creation of high-quality and affordable day facilities for children and other dependent persons, so as to help reconcile family life and work;
10. Criticises the implicit and unreflective assumption in the Green Paper that a decline in population would have exclusively negative consequences on the established social system; thus wishes the following questions to be addressed:
  - (a) the extent to which the negative consequences of a population decline may be addressed by innovation, higher rates of employment and modernisation of social protection,
  - (b) whether there may also be positive aspects to the decline in population, for example in environmental, traffic congestion and land development issues etc.,
  - (c) whether a 'Pareto Optimum' may be developed for a long-term optimal population size for Europe;
11. Calls on the Commission to develop scenarios for the social integration of the ever-increasing group of ageing citizens as well as their changing needs;
12. Urges the Commission and the Member States to organise campaigns on population issues in the EU, in order to raise public awareness of the adverse consequences of the low birth-rate, notably for economic growth and the sustainability of welfare systems.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations
<b>Procedure number</b>	2005/2147(INI)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	EMPL
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	ENVI 12.07.2005
<b>Draftsman</b> Date appointed	Thomas Ulmer 12.07.2005
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	28.11.2005      24.01.2006
<b>Date adopted</b>	24.01.2006
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:            37 -:            1 0:            0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Irena Belohorská, Johannes Blokland, John Bowis, Frederika Brepoels, Dorette Corbey, Mojca Drčar Murko, Edite Estrela, Anne Ferreira, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Gyula Hegyi, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Kläß, Peter Liese, Jules Maaten, Linda McAvan, Riitta Myller, Miroslav Ouzký, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Guido Sacconi, Karin Scheele, Carl Schlyter, Richard Seeber, Jonas Sjöstedt, Antonios Trakatellis, Evangelia Tzampazi, Thomas Ulmer, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Jutta D. Haug, Jolanta Dičkutė, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Renate Sommer
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	