



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Culture and Education

2010/0242(COD)

27.1.2011

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

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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 decision

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. ***With a view to achieving this, physical and sporting activities should be promoted among older people, who should, accordingly, be afforded easier access to public sports facilities.***

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

Amendment

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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.

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, ***including in the form of voluntary work***, 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. ***In the context of the enlargement, neighbourhood and development policies, a 'senior service' of retired experts, such as those which already exist in many countries, could prove extremely useful. 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.***

Amendment 3

Proposal for a decision Recital 8

Text proposed by the Commission

(8) The Council adopted on 8 June 2009 Conclusions on 'Equal opportunities for women and men: active and dignified ageing', which recognises that, throughout the EU, older women and men face serious challenges as they seek to live active lives and to age with dignity, and proposes a number of measures to Member States and the Commission.

Amendment

(8) The Council adopted on 8 June 2009 Conclusions on 'Equal opportunities for women and men: active and dignified ageing', which recognises that, throughout the EU, older women and men face serious challenges as they seek to live active lives and to age with dignity, and proposes a number of measures to Member States and the Commission. ***The measures planned for older people should include cultural activities and activities to promote general well-being, with a view to shielding older people against social exclusion and loneliness by including and involving them.***

Amendment 4

Proposal for a decision

Recital 10

Text proposed by the Commission

(10) The Commission emphasised *it* its Communication on ‘Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ the importance to the European Union of promoting a healthy and active ageing population in the interests of social cohesion and higher productivity. It proposed a flagship initiative ‘An agenda for new skills and jobs’, under which Member States should notably promote active ageing policies, and a flagship initiative on a ‘European Platform against Poverty’. Achieving these policy goals requires action from all levels of government and various non-governmental stakeholders; they can in turn be supported, at the Union level, by European Year activities aimed at raising awareness and fostering the exchange of good practice. National coordinators should see to it that national action is coordinated and is consistent with the overall objectives of the European Year. The participation of other institutions and stakeholders is also planned.

Amendment

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Amendment 5

Proposal for a regulation

Recital 13

Text proposed by the Commission

(13) In its Communication on "A Digital Agenda for Europe", the first EU2020

Amendment

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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.

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.***

Amendment 6

Proposal for a decision

Recital 15

Text proposed by the Commission

(15) Active ageing is targeted by several Union programmes, such as the European Social Fund, the European Regional and Development Fund, the PROGRESS programme, the Life Long Learning Programme, the Public Health Programme, the specific programmes on information and communication technologies and on socio-economic sciences and humanities in the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development, the Action Plan on ‘Ageing well in the information society’, the Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) Joint Programme for research and innovation, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme with pilot deployment projects on ICT for Ageing Well and the Action Plan on urban mobility. Union co-financing of European

Amendment

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Year activities will be in accordance with the priorities and rules applying, on an annual or multi-annual basis, to existing programmes and autonomous budget lines in the field of employment, social affairs and equal opportunities. Where appropriate, programmes and policies in other fields, such as education and culture, health, research, the information society, regional policy and transport policy, may support the European Year.

Preparatory Action on Social Tourism and the Action Plan on urban mobility. Union co-financing of European Year activities will be in accordance with the priorities and rules applying, on an annual or multi-annual basis, to existing programmes and autonomous budget lines in the field of employment, social affairs and equal opportunities. Where appropriate, programmes and policies in other fields, such as education and culture, health, research, the information society, regional policy and transport policy, may support the European Year.

Amendment 7

Proposal for a decision

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, ***promoting the perception of older people as a natural and integral part of society and highlighting the contribution that the invaluable experience they have gained over the course of their lives makes to society as a whole.*** Active ageing means creating better opportunities and working conditions ***for both paid and unpaid work in order*** to enable older workers to play their part in the labour market ***and in passing on expertise in traditional trades,*** 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:

Amendment 8

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 ***among the population*** of the value of active ageing ***and to combat negative stereotypes about old age*** 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 lifelong learning strategies, including those relating to the use of new technologies***;

Amendment 9

Proposal for a decision Article 2 – point 2

Text proposed by the Commission

(2) to stimulate debate and develop mutual learning between Member States and stakeholders at all levels in order to promote active ageing policies, to identify and disseminate good practice and to encourage cooperation and synergies;

Amendment

(2) to stimulate debate, ***to exchange information*** and ***to*** develop mutual learning between Member States and stakeholders at all levels in order to promote active ageing policies, to identify and disseminate good practice and to encourage cooperation and synergies;

Amendment 10

Proposal for a decision Article 2 – point 3

Text proposed by the Commission

(3) to offer a framework for commitment and concrete action to enable Member States and stakeholders at all levels to develop policies through specific activities and to commit to specific objectives related to active ageing.

Amendment

(3) to offer a framework for commitment and concrete action to enable Member States and stakeholders at all levels to develop policies through specific activities and to commit to specific ***and concrete*** objectives related to active ageing ***by devising long-term strategies, regularly assessing the effectiveness of the framework and the specific activities and objectives,***

Amendment 11

**Proposal for a decision
Article 2 – point 3 a (new)**

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(3a) to ensure that Member States encourage groups of all ages to interact and cooperate with one another and to engender a collegial relationship between all generations, thereby combating discrimination and exploitation.

Amendment 12

**Proposal for a decision
Article 3 – paragraph 1 – indent 2**

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

– information, promotion and educational campaigns;

– information, promotion and educational campaigns, ***including the use of new media and internet ;***

Amendment 13

**Proposal for a decision
Article 3 – paragraph 1 – indent 3**

Text proposed by the Commission

– exchange of information, experience and good practices;

Amendment

– exchange of information, experience and good practices ***through national coordinators and networks of contacts set up by stakeholders working to achieve the goals of the European Year;***

Amendment 14

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 – paragraph 2 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

2a. The Commission and Member States shall be encouraged to provide greater opportunities for those who volunteer to support elderly people and engage in fund raising programmes, thereby putting their enthusiasm and experience to positive use.

Amendment 15

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 – paragraph 3

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

3. The Commission and the Member States shall take account of gender mainstreaming in the running of the European Year.

3. The Commission and the Member States shall take account of gender mainstreaming ***and the disabled*** in the running of the European Year.

Amendment 16

Proposal for a decision

Article 4

Text proposed by the Commission

Each Member State shall appoint a national coordinator responsible for organising its involvement in the European Year. The national coordinators should also see to it that national activities are properly coordinated.

Amendment

Each Member State shall appoint a national coordinator responsible for organising its involvement in the European Year. The national coordinators should also see to it that national activities are properly coordinated ***and that civil society organisations are fully involved in the design and implementation of the European Year at local, regional and national level.***

Justification

There are numerous civil society organisations involved on the local and regional level in the field of active ageing. Their experience, expertise and resources could provide significant multipliers to the efforts by public bodies. Therefore they must be engaged and involved from start to finish at all levels of activity in the European Year.

Amendment 17

**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.

PROCEDURE

Title	European Year for Active Ageing (2012)
References	COM(2010)0462 – C7-0253/2010 – 2010/0242(COD)
Committee responsible	EMPL
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	CULT 9.9.2010
Rapporteur Date appointed	Hannu Takkula 19.10.2010
Discussed in committee	18.11.2010 2.12.2010
Date adopted	25.1.2011
Result of final vote	+: 29 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Maria Badia i Cutchet, Zoltán Bagó, Malika Benarab-Attou, Lothar Bisky, Piotr Borys, Jean-Marie Cavada, Santiago Fisas Ayxela, Mary Honeyball, Cătălin Sorin Ivan, Petra Kammerevert, Morten Løkkegaard, Emma McClarkin, Marek Henryk Migalski, Doris Pack, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, Marietje Schaake, Marco Scurria, Joanna Senyszyn, Timo Soini, Hannu Takkula, László Tőkés, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Gianni Vattimo, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Sabine Verheyen, Milan Zver
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Nadja Hirsch, Seán Kelly, Iosif Matula, Georgios Papanikolaou, Hella Ranner, Mitro Repo, Olga Sehnalová, Rui Tavares