



News Letter

2/2011

Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments
in Europe

2012: European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations – Main Focus and Activities in Germany

The European background

Together with the European Parliament, the European Council has designated the year 2012 as the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations”. The overall objective of the European Year is to facilitate the creation of an active ageing culture in Europe based on a society for all ages. Within this framework, the European Year is intended to encourage and support the efforts of Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners, civil society and the business community to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of the rapidly growing population in their late 50s and over.

Some of the individual objectives of the European Year 2012 are:

- to raise general awareness of the value of active ageing
- to stimulate debate
- to exchange information and develop mutual learning between the Member States and stakeholders at all levels
- to offer a framework for commitment and concrete action in order to enable the Union, Member States and stakeholders at all levels to develop innovative solutions, policies and long-term strategies through specific activities, and to pursue specific objectives related to active ageing and intergenerational solidarity
- to promote activities which will help combat age discrimination and overcome age-related stereotypes.

More specifically, the measures and initiatives for implementing the objectives of the European

Year 2012 can include some of the following activities:

- conferences, events and initiatives to promote debate, raise awareness and encourage the commitment to specific objectives contributing to sustained and lasting impacts
- information, promotion and educational campaigns
- exchange of information, experience and good practice
- research, surveys and dissemination of the results, focusing on the economic and social impact of promoting active ageing and of active-ageing-friendly policies.

Interested persons and organisations across the EU can get involved and publicise their initiatives on the EU website at www.active-ageing-2012.eu. Initiatives can be related to areas such as the labour market, adult education, volunteering, participation in social activities, or healthy ageing.

Implementation in Germany

In Germany, responsibility for the

European Year 2012 is in the hands of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth as national coordinator with the close participation of civil society and other relevant stakeholders. A national office run by German National Association of Senior Citizens’ Organisations (BAGSO) and Research Association for Gerontology e.V. (Forschungsgesellschaft für Gerontologie e.V.) has been operational since 1 July 2011 to provide organisational support for the national coordinator.

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations will be officially launched in Berlin in early February 2012 with a national event designed to attract wide public attention. The kick-off event will spread the message of the European Year as broadly as possible, raise awareness for active ageing in German public opinion and encourage collective involvement in implementing this special year. A closing event is scheduled for December 2012.



Editorial

DEAR READERS,

MORE AND MORE, GOVERNMENTS IN EUROPE ARE FORCED TO GRAPPLE WITH THE EFFECTS DEMOGRAPHIC AGEING IS HAVING ON SOCIAL COHESION, PUBLIC SERVICES AND PUBLIC FINANCES. IT IS HOPED THAT THE CAMPAIGNS ORGANISED WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE “EUROPEAN YEAR 2012 FOR ACTIVE AGEING AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS” WILL INCREASE AWARENESS FOR THIS TOPIC AMONG DECISION-MAKERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION-MAKERS. IN THIS ISSUE OF OUR NEWSLETTER, WE TOO ARE THEREFORE FOCUSING ON THE TOPIC OF “ACTIVE AGEING IN EUROPE”.

IN THE INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE, DR. CAROLIN EITNER OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL OFFICE FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR 2012 GIVES US AN OVERVIEW OF PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES IN GERMANY. ELKE TIPPELMANN, HEAD OF THE BRUSSELS OFFICE OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CITIZENS’ ORGANISATIONS (BAGSO), DESCRIBES THE LONG AND DIFFICULT DEBATE THAT PRECEDED THE DECISION ON THE EUROPEAN YEAR AND THE CURRENT STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL.

THE ARTICLE BY KATHRIN LINZ-DINCHEL WILL GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF THE MANY FACETS OF THE CONCEPT OF “ACTIVE AGEING” AND DESCRIBE EXEMPLARY MEASURES IN VARIOUS EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES.

ON THE LAST PAGE OF THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER YOU WILL FIND BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY APPROACHES IN EUROPE, A CURRENT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOME USEFUL LINKS. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE.

THE TEAM OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR SOCIOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE WISHES YOU PLEASANT READING!

Furthermore, several projects and measures are planned for the European Year 2012 in Germany. The national coordinator has already called on civil society and a broad range of other key players to submit suggestions in this regard. The Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth will provide financing for these activities. In Germany, activities for the European Year 2012 will focus on working environment and working conditions before the backdrop of demographic change, social volunteering and social participation of older people, "age limits" and the image of age and ageing, independence in old age through adaptive home environment and infrastructure, intergenerational solidarity, and reconciliation of elderly care and work.

A special website has been set up to provide information about events and activities relating to the European Year 2012 in Germany. It will offer information and facts about the evolution of our ageing society and offer the possibility for groups and organisations to publicise their own events in the calendar or present their own European Year projects.

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Websites for the European Year 2012:

For Germany: www.ej2012.de

The official EU website:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp>

Guest Column

European Year 2012: Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

On 7 July 2011, in a resolution adopted by 557 to 33 votes with 15 abstentions, the European Parliament gave the green light to the European Year 2012 for "Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations" (EY2012).¹ The title stated in Article 1 of the resolution, subject of a long controversial debate, includes the supplementary statement: "It shall promote the vitality and the dignity of all".

Representing the European Parliament, rapporteur and Franconian MEP Martin Kastler (Group of the

European People's Party) was able to push through many of his central positions. "The pillars of the project are inter-generational solidarity, preservation of vitality and respect for human dignity in all phases of life. These are the three main intentions of the European Year", explained MEP Kastler in his press release. According to the central message expressed by Article 2 of the resolution, the EY2012 is intended to facilitate the creation of "an active ageing culture ... based on a society for all ages". "We are not merely talking about the silver economy in the context of the workplace. Our focus here is on individual human beings – each with his or her role, rights, and inestimable value", explained Mr. Kastler.

The resolution closes a long debate on a European Year – with the name now chosen – which was initiated in April 2008, during the Slovenian EU Council Presidency. "We must ensure that ageing does not undermine solidarity between the generations" said former EU Commissioner Spidla in justification of an earlier European Commission initiative for a "First European Day of Solidarity between Generations" on 29 April 2009. The EY2012 proposal, which was presented by the European Commission in September 2010 under the shorter title of "European Year for Active Ageing"², kindled a controversial discussion in the Council that was not settled until the resolution of December 2010 that the title "as announced in 2008" should be expanded, paving the way for the joint decision of the Parliament and the Council.

The AGE platform, a European umbrella organisation of more than 150 senior citizens groups, drove the opinion-forming process through the various stages of the EU legislative process, acting as the motor of an informal "alliance" of meanwhile 31 European organisations. Together, AGE and the EU Parliament have been promoting the idea that the EY2012 should be used to encourage an intergenerational approach as a road towards a lasting and fair structuring of the various European social models. "Active ageing" as a "key" to safeguarding solidarity should also be more actively understood in terms of equal rights, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older people. This is the position taken by AGE, which pleaded with particular vehemence for better cooperation between people of all generations – a demand now reflected in Article

3.1 a of the resolution.

It was not only the formulation of the central message of the title that presented a particular challenge. Indeed, the intention was for the aims of the project to reflect a concept that took into account the value of active ageing and its various dimensions on the basis of the WHO definition of "active ageing". The resolution refers to this definition and opens up spaces for volunteering by older people, for lifelong learning, cultural forms of expression and sport. The significance of "active and healthy ageing" was also emphasised with a view to the innovation partnership launched in 2011, as was the role of the "working conditions" and the need to combat negative age-related stereotypes and age discrimination (cf. recitals and Art. 2 of the resolution).

Considering the lofty objectives of the European Commission, the most serious problem faced by the European Year – which is one of the elements of the Europe 2020 strategy, a strategy of active ageing covering the period from 2011 to 2014 – was its lack of a budget. Tough negotiations were needed before a budget of EUR 5 million was finally provided for activities at Union level. This amount will be used to fund campaigns, conferences and other EU activities – also within the scope of external conferences such as the World Health Day 2012 or the 10th anniversary of the UN Action Plan on Ageing 2012. National programmes are not eligible for support from this budget – but on the other hand, the goal of supporting "relevant Union-level networks" is explicitly mentioned.

Particularly important is the goal of the European Year formulated in Art. 2c "to offer a framework for commitment and concrete actions". The programme of the conference organised by the EU Parliament Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity, to take place on 7 November 2011³, reflects the ambition of European stakeholders of having results to show by the time the EY2012 is officially launched in Copenhagen on 18/19 January 2012. The conference will bring together high-ranking personalities – from representatives of the World Health Organization to local mayors – to form "partnerships" with the EU for a proactive approach to the four key objectives of the EY2012:

- an age-friendly EU within the scope of the EU 2020 strategy

- age-friendly working environments
- promoting volunteering and supporting informal carers
- improving healthy ageing and supporting independent living in old age

With the aim of encouraging innovative solutions to meet the demographic challenge, the AGE platform will present a "Roadmap" explaining what the European Coalition commits to do as well as a "Manifesto" with a political statement of the objectives of the EU year. A EY2012 website of the European Commission⁴ gives stakeholders from across Europe a chance to present their projects. It is hoped that this will better integrate regional and local levels and promote the intended "participation of a broad range of organisations", a goal also served by the recently published brochure "How to promote active ageing in Europe – EU support to local and regional actors"⁵.

The question that should be asked, however, is whether these measures will be adequate to give senior citizens a leading role in designing the year in the sense of a "bottom up" approach. This will require easily accessible financial resources for projects and initiatives as well as for activities with partners from other countries. The objective formulated in Article 3, to support cross-border activities at local and regional level, should therefore be understood as a specific encouragement towards improving European contacts and networks of senior citizens. Supporting mobility in Europe is one of the core objectives of the EU. Looking back to the European Year 1994, which had nearly the same name, shows that campaign years can make lasting contributions. The positive effects of ideas and special-purpose networks developed then are still being felt today. For instance, the "European Senior Citizens' Parliament" held during the 1994 campaign year inspired its implementation at the national level in Ireland – and the idea still bears fruit today in the form of senior citizens' parliaments in the German federal states of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

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¹ Legislative resolution of the European Parliament of 7 July 2011: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP/TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0332+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

- 2 Proposal of the European Commission of 6 September 2010: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0462:FIN:EN:PDF>.
- 3 Draft agenda: "Towards a successful European Year 2012 on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity" 7 November 2011: http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/11_11_07_EP_event_draft_agenda_tosend.pdf.
- 4 EY2012 website: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en>.
- 5 Brochure "How to promote active ageing in Europe – EU support to local and regional actors": <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012main.jsp?langId=en&catId=970&newsId=1065&fourthErNews=yes>.

Sociopolitical Developments in Europe

A multi-faceted concept: ideas and measures to promote active ageing in Europe

The topic of "active ageing" has found a permanent place on the European agenda: in view of demographic developments in Europe, the need to promote active ageing has taken on such a degree of urgency and desirability that the concept has now become an integral part of policy guidelines at both supranational and national level. But what do we mean when we talk about "active ageing"?

"Active ageing" as a process: what is active ageing?

The term "active ageing" was coined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the 1990s and defined a few years later: in its contribution to the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, the WHO defined "active ageing" as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality

of life as people age".¹ In this definition, the World Health Organization looks at "active ageing" from an individual point of view. However, "active ageing" can also be understood as a social concept that encourages people to develop their potential in the course of their entire life. This raises the question of what an ageing society has to offer and what might help older people to continue contributing as long as possible, with their strengths and potentials, to the economic and social development of society.²

"Active ageing" as a European topic

Following up on the initial proposal of the European Commission, in September 2010, for the adoption of a resolution for the "European Year 2012 for Active Ageing", the objectives of the European Year are to raise general awareness of the useful contribution older persons make to society and the economy, to promote active ageing and mobilise the potential of older persons.³ One month later, the Commission published its communication on the "Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative". The "European Innovation Partnership" in the area of "active and healthy ageing" is a pilot project intended as a component of the Innovation Union strategy within the scope of the Flagship Initiative. The aims of the "European Innovation Partnership Active and Healthy Ageing" pilot project are, "by 2020, to enable our citizens to live longer independently in good health by increasing the average number of healthy life years by 2, and, in achieving this target, to improve the sustainability and efficiency of our social and health-care systems, and to create an EU and global market for innovative

products and services with new opportunities for EU business."⁴ The objectives expressed in both Commission documents seem to point in the same direction: activation of the "social and economic potential of older persons". At the same time, individual senior citizens are offered support and assistance so that they can stay independent and free of health problems for longer periods. The concept of "promoting active ageing" thus melds many objectives and approaches at both individual and social levels.

The question that needs to be asked is therefore whether there is convergence within the European Union with regard to the objectives of promoting active ageing, and what strategies and measures the Member States are actually implementing (in terms of the concept of "active ageing").

Examples with regard to "active ageing" in Europe

Since June 2010, the Observatory has been monitoring, on a regular basis, the evolution of social policy measures for coping with demographic change in certain Member States.⁵

One focus of research interest has been how national ministries approach the topic of "active ageing". The results of a study carried out between June 2010 and January 2011 clearly demonstrate that "active ageing" is a catchphrase that integrates a broad range of objectives and strategies fostered in the policies on ageing of individual Member States.

In Spain for instance, the concept of "active ageing" has been linked to the idea of healthy physical and intellectual ageing and active participation in social life. The Spanish strategy could be defined as *orientation to the well-being of older persons in the autumn of their lives*. Its primary objective is to foster a *healthy lifestyle* for senior citizens (e.g. through leisure and fitness programmes or stays in health resorts). Campaigns have been implemented in the Netherlands, France, Spain and the United Kingdom to contribute to health awareness among senior citizens and to foster physical activity and sport for the elderly. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the first of October has been designated as a special campaign day on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons. In 2011, the motto of this day was "getting and staying active in later life".

Strategies to encourage active participation in working life and/or the promotion of volunteering in old age (e.g. by campaigns such as those organised in the United Kingdom and in France) serve as a counterweight to this approach. In this case, "active ageing" is all about orientation towards *using the social potential of older people*.

A great variety of other objectives and approaches are being discussed under the catchphrase "active ageing": for instance promoting the social participation of older people through improved social and health services, encouraging intergenerational solidarity, offering older people opportunities for professional and private further education, etc. The overriding objective of these national initiatives is always to increase the social relevance and improve the image of older people in public opinion and to create a better life environment for older people so that they can stay active and participate in life longer for their personal good and their society's benefit.⁶

Additional information on the various measures on "active ageing" in selected Member States is available in the Bulletin of European Policies on Senior Citizens on the website of the *Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe*.

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ISS e.V.

- 1 World Health Organization (2002): *Active Ageing. A Policy Framework. A contribution of the World Health Organization to the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid*. Geneva: WHO.
- 2 European Parliament (2011): *Position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading on 7 July 2011 with a view to the adoption of Decision No. .../2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Active Ageing (2012)*. P7_TC1-COD(2010)02042. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7_TA-2011-0332&format=XML&language=EN#BKM2 (online retrieval 14 September 2011).
- 3 European Commission (2010a): *Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Active Ageing (2012)*. COM(2010) 462 final. p. 10.
- 4 European Commission (2010b): *Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union, Communication of the Commission*. COM(2010)546final/SEC(2010) 1161. p. 40.
- 5 Cf. <http://www.beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/bulletin-europaeische-seniorenpolitiken.html>.
- 6 Linz, Kathrin/Stula, Sabrina (2011): *Bulletin Europäische Seniorenpolitiken. Webseite der Beobachtungsstelle für gesellschaftspolitische Entwicklungen in Europa. German online edition 1/2011*. <http://www.beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/bulletin-europaeische-seniorenpolitiken.html> (online retrieval 14 September 2011).
Linz-Dinchel, Kathrin/Stula, Sabrina (2011): *Bulletin of European Policies on Senior Citizens. Website of the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe. Online edition 2/2011 in English*. <http://www.sociopolitical-observatory.eu/en/bulletin-europaeische-seniorenpolitiken.html> (online retrieval 14 September 2011).



Background: Approaches to demographic policy in Europe

Report on demographic issues and demographic strategy in Germany

In October 2011, the German federal government will be presenting a report on the demographic situation in the country and on future developments expected in this area. It is hoped that an inter-ministerial demographic strategy can be developed by spring 2012. The process for reporting and strategy planning within the German federal government is in the hands of the inter-ministerial committee on demographic issues, which is chaired by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The main objective of reporting and strategy planning is to develop a coordinated demographic policy for the German federal government. Some of the topics relating to this issue are family, social cohesion, migration and integration, labour market and employment, social security systems, education, economic performance and public finance.

Additional information can be found at:

http://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/Themen/PolitikGesellschaft/DemographEntwicklung/demographentwicklung_node.html

European demography report and European demography forum

The European Commission published its third demography report on 1 April 2011. The report presents new data regarding birthrates, life expectancy and migration in all European Member States. The current report focuses on mobility and migration, two issues that will soon constitute special challenges for the EU.

Every two years since 2006, the Commission has published a report on the demographic situation in Europe and hosted a demography forum that offers a platform for the presentation of recent analyses on demographic development and serves to encourage exchanges and strategy debate between European institutions, Member States and non-

government organisations. The third demography forum, on "The Demographic Dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy", took place in November 2010 and discussed measures to promote active ageing as well as strategies to improve support to families.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=502&langId=en>

Initiatives in other European Member States

Declining birthrates, emigration and ageing populations are trends that affect Central and Eastern European countries to a particularly significant extent. The Bulgarian authorities reacted to these trends as early as August 2006 by developing a comprehensive national demographic strategy to cover the period up to 2020. The main objective of this strategy is to slow the decline in the country's population and, in the long run, to stabilise population numbers. Indeed, the Bulgarian population has shrunk by 580,000 inhabitants in the last decade¹. To counter this trend, Bulgaria has set itself various objectives which it hopes to reach by 2020: two of these are reducing child mortality and increasing the fertility rate to 1.5 children per woman. Moreover, it is hoped that greater numbers of highly educated young people can be persuaded to stay in Bulgaria.

Additional information can be found at:

http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/demography/Dem.%20Strategy_ENG.pdf

In the Czech Republic, a "National Programme of Preparation for Ageing" was launched in 2008 to cover the period between 2008 and 2012. The priorities and goals of the programme are active ageing, age-friendly environment and community, health in old age, support of persons with care responsibilities and support for the participation of older people in society.

Additional information can be found at:

http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/5607/starnuti_en_web.pdf

On the initiative and under the chairmanship of Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, a

"council on demographic issues" was appointed in Latvia in April 2011; it is to serve as a consulting and coordinating national body whose task is to find solutions to improve the demographic situation and to coordinate their implementation. Council members include national authorities, non-governmental organisations and experts on demographic issues.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/aktualizinas/2011gads/06/030611-mp-05/>

SABRINA STULA, DV e.V.

¹ The Sofia Echo (2011): Bulgaria geared for demographic collapse by 2060 – report http://sofiaecho.com/2011/06/09/1103149_bulgaria-geared-for-demographic-collapse-by-2060-report (online retrieval 8 September 2011).

Please Note

New on our website

Our website now offers additional information on the topic of demographic change, e.g. the latest issue of the "Bulletin of European Policies on Senior Citizens", which appears at regular intervals on our website and reports on trends in policies on ageing in selected EU Member States.

We would also like to direct your attention to the conference report of the international conference on "Eldercare Services in Europe – Home Care, Family Support and Domestic Services for Older People", a forum which took place in Berlin in September 2011 and was attended by 175 participants from 15 European countries. A short summary can already be found on our website. A full conference report both in English and German will be available in December.

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