



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 December 2012

17468/12

**SOC 992
SAN 322**

NOTE

from :	Council (EPSCO)
to :	Delegations
No. prev. doc. :	16592/12 SOC 948 SAN 289
Subject :	Council Declaration on the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012): The Way Forward

Delegations will find attached the Council Declaration adopted by the Council (EPSCO) on 6 December 2012. It contains in the Annex the Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, jointly agreed by the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee.

Council Declaration on the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012): The Way Forward

Recalling that the European Union is founded on universal values of human rights and dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, and that the 2009 Lisbon Treaty confirmed that among others the Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, and solidarity between generations ¹;

Noting that the Europe 2020 Strategy calls for inclusive growth and rising labour market participation and reduction of poverty and social exclusion rates, – the Council

- expresses its strong commitment to promoting active ageing and solidarity between generations, and invites all relevant actors to take full account of this approach in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy; and
- welcomes, in this connection, the "Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations", elaborated by the Social Protection and Employment Committees (*annexed to this Declaration*).

1. Encouraged by the ongoing achievements of the European Year 2012

Enhancing and highlighting the useful contributions that older people make to society and economy, improving their independence, as well as strengthening solidarity between generations, are the objectives of the European Year 2012.

¹ Article 3 Treaty on European Union

The European Year 2012 has contributed to creating political momentum. It has shown that policy-makers at all levels, from the EU to local administrations, and a wide range of stakeholders including social partners and many civil society organisations representing all generations, are ready to join forces and take a step forward in tackling the challenges and seizing the various opportunities of ageing populations.

The momentum created for the promotion of active ageing and solidarity between generations goes beyond raising public awareness and changing attitudes towards ageing. It is also a call to build on these achievements and translate them into a strong political legacy that delivers concrete results, ensuring social cohesion and prosperity and contributing to the well-being of all generations.

2. Promoting EU values and solidarity between generations

Solidarity between generations in an ageing society notably requires creating conditions which permit older people to achieve more independence that will allow them to take better charge of their own lives and to contribute to society, enabling them to live in dignity as full members of society. This requires a balanced distribution of resources and opportunities between generations.

The right of the elderly to live a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social, economic, cultural and civic life is embedded in the EU's commitment to the active ageing and solidarity between generations' agenda, as is the need for a society for all ages.

3. Facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities

Demographic change can, among other things, be successfully tackled through a positive life-course approach that focuses on the potential of all generations and particularly of older age groups. Action is needed to enable both women and men to remain active as workers, consumers, carers, volunteers, and citizens and to preserve the solidarity between generations.

Active ageing and solidarity between generations require:

- strengthening social cohesion, inclusion and participation across a person's lifetime by ensuring opportunities and access to services and to political, social, recreational and cultural activities; volunteering, which helps to maintain social networks and reduce isolation; gaining new competences which contribute to personal fulfilment and wellbeing;
- promoting participation in the labour market, through actions for the involvement of younger and older people in training and life-long learning activities, which facilitate the intergenerational transmission of knowledge; as well as through actions for the reconciliation of work and private life;
- recognition of the values of all age groups and their contribution to society, thus promoting positive perceptions and attitudes towards all age groups; engaging them in decision-making (policy formulation and implementation), paying special attention to their opinions and concerns and giving them a voice in research processes that may affect them;
- promoting research and innovation to improve the lives of older people, including accessible environments for all, promoting participation in society for longer and independent living, including promotion of e-inclusion and e-health, as well as other technological and ICT innovations, thereby fostering the silver economy;
- health promotion, disease prevention and early diagnosis throughout the lifecycle, as well as rehabilitation, leading to active and healthy ageing and independent living, while taking into account the different needs of women and men regarding the respective services and future research;
- adjusting social security systems in such a way that they are able to provide sustainable and adequate pensions which will contribute to the reduction of the number of elderly people, especially women, who live below the poverty threshold and allow the elderly to live in dignity.

4. Working together for the future

The EU and its Member States, as well as social partners, civil society, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders, should work together at European, national, regional and local levels in an effort to provide better opportunities for older people to remain active and to participate in society together with the younger generations. Several initiatives have been implemented during the European Year 2012, demonstrating that these partnerships are creating a positive basis for future years. The legacy of the European Year 2012 needs to be preserved and further developed at European, national, regional and local level, along the lines outlined in the Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, annexed to this Declaration.

5. Agreeing on the key political messages

- Active ageing and solidarity between generations are key to the creation of a Europe for all ages – a competitive, prosperous and cooperative Europe of innovation, creativity, social inclusion and cohesion.
- Active ageing encompasses the participation of older people in social, economic, political, cultural and civic affairs, as well as in the labour force.
- The work potential of older people should be fully utilised through lifelong learning systems, active ageing policies which enable both women and men to remain in employment for longer, health and safety at work policies and the promotion of healthy ageing as a continuous process across the lifecycle.
- The transmission of older people's knowledge and skills to the younger generations and vice-versa should be encouraged and their skills could also be utilised after retirement, for example in the social economy and through voluntary work.

- Measures encouraging cooperation between generations should be promoted and the negative perceptions and stereotypes, including gender stereotypes, should be eliminated at central, regional and local levels.
 - The active ageing perspective should be mainstreamed across all relevant policy areas.
 - The reconciliation of work and family life, for women and men, could be enhanced through gender equality policies, family-friendly measures and practices at the work place, leave arrangements for both women and men and measures for the care of children and elderly family members or other dependants with disabilities.
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The Employment Committee The Social Protection Committee

Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

Preamble

Due to rising life expectancy and declining fertility rates, the proportion of older people in Europe is increasingly rapidly. It is projected that by 2050, the ratio of people over 65 compared to the working age population (15-64 years of age) will reach 50% - double of the current levels.

These demographic developments imply major social and economic consequences. While positive aspects of greater longevity should not be forgotten, the present situation also poses challenge to labour supply and to social protection systems. With the latter mainly based on the principle of solidarity within and between generations it is necessary to maintain a balanced distribution of resources between age groups.

Older people make a significant contribution to the economy and society, but as their health and education levels improve over time, their contributions can be further enhanced. This could be done by making full use of their potential by optimizing opportunities for physical, social and mental well-being throughout the life course. This is the aim of the "active ageing" policy approach. It is the key to a high quality of life for people of all ages, improved productivity and a move towards strong solidarity between generations in our ageing societies. The active ageing approach promoted in the context of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations also contributes to raising employment and reducing poverty and social exclusion and thus helps to meet the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Active ageing needs to be promoted in the areas of employment, participation in society, and independent living along the guiding principles set out below. They need to be implemented taking into account differences in the organisation and resources of Member States, and the specific circumstances and challenges they face.

Active ageing requires measures to be taken in a broad range of policy domains by many stakeholders. These include public authorities at different levels, businesses and the social partners, civil society organisations, service providers and the media. Social innovation and a more effective use of new technologies can have a major role to play in promoting active ageing. Opportunities for active ageing need to be fostered for all groups of older people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, cultural background and possible disability. Active ageing also allows for greater solidarity among older people themselves. As more older people take care of their own needs through active ageing, society can channel more support to those older people in greatest need.

Guiding Principles for Active Ageing and solidarity between generations

(1) Employment

- **Continuing vocational education and training:** Offer women and men of all ages access to, and participation in, education, training and skills development allowing them (re-)entry into and to fully participate in the labour market in quality jobs.
- **Healthy working conditions:** Promote working conditions and work environments that maintain workers' health and well-being, thereby ensuring workers' life-long employability.
- **Age management strategies:** Adapt careers and working conditions to the changing needs of workers as they age, thereby avoiding early retirement.

- **Employment services for older workers:** Provide counselling, placement, reintegration support to older workers who wish to remain on the labour market.
- **Prevent age discrimination:** Ensure equal rights for older workers in the labour market, refraining from using age as a decisive criterion for assessing whether a worker is fit for a certain job or not; prevent negative age-related stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards older workers at the work place; highlight the contribution older workers make.
- **Employment-friendly tax / benefit systems:** Review tax and benefit systems to ensure that work pays for older workers, while ensuring an adequate level of benefits.
- **Transfer of experience:** Capitalise on older workers' knowledge and skills through mentoring and age-diverse teams.
- **Reconciliation of work and care:** Adapt working conditions and offer leave arrangements suitable for women and men, allowing them as informal carers to remain in employment or return to the labour market.

(2) Participation in society

- **Income security:** Put in place systems that provide adequate incomes in old age preserving the financial autonomy of older people and enabling them to live in dignity.
- **Social inclusion:** Fight social exclusion and isolation of older people by offering them equal opportunities to participate in society through cultural, political and social activities.

- **Senior volunteering:** Create a better environment for volunteer activities of older people and remove existing obstacles so that older people can contribute to society by making use of their competences, skills and experience.
- **Life-long learning:** Provide older people with learning opportunities, notably in areas such as information and communication technologies (ICT), self-care and personal finance, empowering them to participate actively in society and to take charge of their own life.
- **Participation in decision making:** keep older women and men involved in decision making, particularly in the areas that directly affect them.
- **Support for informal carers:** Make professional support and training available to informal carers; ensure respite care and adequate social protection to prevent social exclusion of carers.

(3) Independent living

- **Health promotion and disease prevention:** Take measures to maximise healthy life years for women and men and reduce the risk of dependency through the implementation of health promotion and disease prevention. Provide opportunities for physical and mental activity adapted to the capacities of older people.
- **Adapted housing and services:** Adapt housing and provide services that allow older people with health impairments to live with the highest possible degree of autonomy.
- **Accessible and affordable transport:** Adapt transport systems to make them accessible, affordable, safe and secure for older people, allowing them to stay autonomous and participate actively in society.

- **Age-friendly environments and goods and services:** Adapt local environments as well as goods and services so that they are suitable for people of all ages (design-for-all approach), in particular by making use of new technologies, including eHealth; prevent age discrimination in the access to goods and services.

 - **Maximising autonomy in long-term care:** For people in need of help/care, ensure that their autonomy and participation are augmented, preserved or restored to the greatest possible extent and that they are treated with dignity and compassion.
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