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NOTE

from : The Presidency
to : COUNCIL (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)

Subject : Information from the Slovenian Presidency on the Conference on Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies (Brdo pri Kranju, 27–29 April 2008)
(Any other business item)

Delegations will find attached a note from the Presidency.

**Information from the Slovenian Presidency on the
Conference on Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies
(Brdo pri Kranju, 27–29 April 2008)**

The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union organised a conference on *Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies*. The European Commission and a number of NGOs were involved in its organisation.

Over 150 participants attended the conference, from EU and EFTA Member States as well as some participants from the Western Balkan states. The Conference participants also included representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, trade unions, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and others. There were also many representatives of NGOs, including: AGE, European Youth Forum, AIM, AEIP, Erste Stiftung, Union of Slovenian Pensioners' Organisation, the University of the Third Age, and Anton Trstenjak Institute.

The idea of organising the conference on intergenerational solidarity originated in the increasing pace of demographic change. The average life span is lengthening and, together with the low birth rate, the ratio between the generations is changing dramatically. These changes are becoming so great and far-reaching that their impact can be felt in most areas of social and economic life. The changing demographic ratios must be acknowledged and taken into account across the whole range of policy-making. Inappropriate systemic solutions or the neglect of this issue could even lead to intergenerational conflicts. There is an increasing trend towards treating generations separately in terms of acquired rights.

The Slovenian Presidency intended the conference to continue the dialogue launched by the European Commission in 2005 with its Green Paper *Confronting Demographic Change: A New Solidarity between the Generations*. Intergenerational solidarity is a common thread of the presidencies of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. During its presidency, Germany organised a conference on demographic change as an opportunity to utilise the economic potential of older people, while Portugal organised a conference on the coordination of professional and family life.

The purpose of the Slovenian Presidency's conference was not to identify the causes of demographic change, but to determine the new relations between the generations and research new approaches and policies to promote intergenerational solidarity that will create a cohesive and sustainable society.

The conference conclusion was that society can only develop through genuine reciprocal contacts and cooperation between all the generations. The conference therefore attempted to identify changes that have already occurred in modern society. The participants were interested in identifying the elements that formerly connected the generations and which should be promoted in new, changed circumstances, which elements are outdated, and which new elements can be offered to ensure successful intergenerational cohesion in the coming decades.

The conference was split into two parts. In the first, wider aspects of intergenerational solidarity and cohesion were addressed, while long-term care as one of the tangible aspects of intergenerational solidarity was addressed in the second part.

The first day of the conference comprised two plenary sessions and six round-table discussions.

Their titles were:

- Why do we need to reassess and support solidarity and cohesion to ensure a fair and sustainable society in today's context?
- The role of the state and civil society in intergenerational solidarity and cohesion
- Volunteers: Young and old as promoters of social change
- Intergenerational solidarity in modern forms of the family
- Innovative forms and good practice of international solidarity and cohesion
- Employment for all ages and flexicurity.

The second day of the conference focused on long-term care. In addition to two plenary sessions, there were three round tables on the following subjects:

- How can long-term care be made sustainable and fair for all generations?
- Quality long-term care for dependents of all ages
- Human resources in long-term care.

Some points from the conference.

- The search for new solutions must include a rethink and, if required, a redefinition of the roles of the state, the family, the formal and informal sectors and the division of work between the sexes;
- The discussion on intergenerational solidarity cannot be restricted to financial issues, but must also include wider aspects;
- European institutions must be aware of the role and importance of volunteering as one aspect of intergenerational solidarity;
- Intergenerational cooperation will depend less on relationship ties. NGOs and local authorities will have to focus particular attention on new opportunities for intergenerational cooperation and support.
- Long-term care is a social risk, which must be supported by broad social liability.

The conference conclusions were:

- We cannot expect successful and balanced development in our societies without intergenerational solidarity, cooperation and cohesion between the young, middle-aged and older generations;

- The end of the conference cannot signal the end of the discussion, and the question of intergenerational solidarity must be incorporated in the programmes of future presidencies, and other European institutions;
- Intergenerational solidarity must be tied to all four components of the flexicurity concept (contractual agreements, lifelong learning strategy, effective active labour market policy, and modern social security systems);
- We want intergenerational solidarity to be the subject of a two-year demographic cycle. A proposal for a bi-annual European event on intergenerational solidarity should be included in the Social Agenda. The first such event could take place in 2009;
- The year 2012 should be called Year of Intergenerational Solidarity as well as European Year of Active Aging;
- 29 April should be made European Intergenerational Solidarity Day;
- We propose that activities start in relation to long-term care and the dignity of care recipients. It would probably be appropriate to set up a forum, with a range of stakeholders combining representatives of authorities, service providers, users, and owners, who would deal with quality guidelines in the long-term care area, and that would apply at the European level.

The conference was dominated by the conviction that we cannot just wait and observe how changes develop, but must also conscientiously and actively engage in events and include the widest possible circle of interested parties. Every generation must participate in the search for solutions. The search for answers must redefine the role and meaning of the family and state, the formal and informal sectors, the division between the sexes and the division of social wealth. Many conference participants considered that the provision of adequate social cohesion in relation to economic objectives was a condition for stable long-term development.