REPORT

from: The Working Party on Social Questions
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council (EPSCO)

No. of prev. doc.: 13765/10 SOC 613 SAN 199 CODEC 956
No. Cion prop.: 13216/10 SOC 509 SAN 166 CODEC 787 - COM (2010) 462 final

- General approach

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Following a conference on intergenerational solidarity in April 2008 under the Slovenian Presidency, there have been calls to organise a European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. Such a European Year should strengthen intergenerational solidarity by increasing the awareness of the contribution of older people to society and by spreading innovative measures which could help to mobilise the full potential of the growing population in their late 50s and above.

2. In its Conclusions on Enhancing Solidarity between Generations through Active Ageing¹, the Council further invited the Commission to pursue the preparation of a European Year for Active Ageing in 2012 during which the benefits of active ageing and its contribution to solidarity between generations could be highlighted and promising initiatives in support of active ageing at all levels could be publicised.

¹ Doc. 7419/10.
3. The Commission presented its proposal on 7 September 2010. The proposal is based on article 153(2) TFEU (ordinary legislative procedure).

4. The aim of the proposal is to encourage and support the efforts of Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society to promote active ageing.

5. The European Parliament has not yet delivered its opinion.

6. The European Economic and Social Committee delivered its opinion on 21 October 2010. The Committee of Regions has renounced to provide an opinion.

II. OUTCOME OF THE WORKING PARTY'S DISCUSSIONS

7. At its meeting on 11 November 2010, the Social Questions Working Party reached agreement on the text of the draft Decision, as set out in the Annex, subject to parliamentary scrutiny reservations by the Danish, French, Maltese, Polish, Swedish and UK delegations.

8. All delegations maintain linguistic scrutiny reservations pending availability of the text in their own language versions.

III. CONCLUSION

9. Pending receipt of the European Parliament's Opinion in first reading, the Permanent Representative's Committee therefore recommends the Council (EPSCO) to reach a general approach on the text of the draft Decision as set out in the Annex.

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1 Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee SOC/389 - CESE 1377/2010.
Draft

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012)

(text with EEA relevance)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 153(2) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national Parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee¹,

Acting in accordance with ordinary legislative procedure,

Whereas:

(1) Pursuant to Article 147 of the Treaty, the Union shall contribute to a high level of employment by encouraging cooperation between Member States and by supporting and, if necessary, complementing their action.

(2) Pursuant to Article 153(1) of the Treaty, the Union shall support and complement the activities of the Member States on working conditions, the integration of persons excluded from the labour market, and the combating of social exclusion.

¹ OJ C […], […], p. […].
(2a) Pursuant to Article 3 of the Treaty, the Union shall inter alia combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men and solidarity between generations.

(3) Pursuant to Article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Union recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.

(4) Successive European Councils have recognised the need to tackle the effect of ageing populations on European social models. A key response to this rapid change in the age structure consists in promoting active ageing and thus ensuring that the rapidly growing population currently in their late 50s and above, who are, on the whole, healthier and better educated than any such cohort before them, have good opportunities for employment and active participation in society.

(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.

(6) The Commission presented its views on the demographic challenges the EU faces and on opportunities for tackling them in its communications on "The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity" of 12 October 2006, on "Promoting Solidarity between the Generations" of 10 May 2007 and on "Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the European Union" of 29 April 2009.

(7) The Council adopted on 22 February 2007 a resolution on "Opportunities and challenges of demographic change in 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.
(8) The Council adopted on 8 June 2009 Conclusions on "Equal opportunities for women and men: active and dignified ageing", which recognise 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, inter alia, to promote active ageing policies, taking into account the differing situations in the various Member States and the different challenges faced by women and men.

(9) The Council adopted on 20 November 2009 Conclusions on "Healthy and dignified ageing", inviting the Commission, inter alia, "to develop awareness-raising activities to promote active ageing, including a possible European Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012".

(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.

(11) The Council adopted on 7 June 2010 Conclusions on "Active Ageing", inviting the Commission "to pursue the preparation of a European Year for Active Ageing in 2012 during which the benefits of active ageing and its contribution to solidarity between generations can be highlighted and promising initiatives in support of active ageing at all levels can be publicised".
(12) The Commission proposed in its proposal for a Council Decision on "Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States" of 27 April 2010, which calls under the guidelines 7 and 8 on Member States to increase labour force participation through policies to promote active ageing, to raise employment rates of older workers through innovation in work organisation and to increase the employability of older workers through up-skilling and participation in lifelong learning schemes. Guideline 10 emphasises the need to enhance social protection systems, lifelong learning and active inclusion policies with the aim to create opportunities at different stages of people's lives, to shield them from the risk of social exclusion and to enhance their active participation in society.

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

(14) The Commission is implementing the European Disability Action plan that contains relevant actions for older persons given the correlation between disability and ageing. In particular actions on accessibility following Design for all approaches would be relevant. Furthermore the EU and all Member States have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities that contains amongst others relevant provisions for older persons.
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 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.

The objectives of the proposed European Year for Active Ageing cannot be fully achieved at Member State level due to the need for transnational exchange of information and the Union-wide dissemination of good practice, and can therefore, by reason of the scale of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on the European Union, this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve those objectives.

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Subject

The year 2012 shall be designated as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (hereafter referred to as "the European Year").
**Article 2**

**Objectives**

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, 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 above, thereby creating a society for all ages and fostering solidarity and cooperation between generations, taking into account gender equality. Active ageing means creating better opportunities so that older women and men can play their part in the labour market, combating social exclusion to foster active participation in society, and encouraging healthy ageing. This entails notably adapting working conditions, improving health and safety at work, gearing life-long learning systems to the needs of an ageing workforce and ensuring that social protection systems are adequate and provide the right incentives.

On this basis, the objectives shall be:

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, solidarity between generations and to do more to mobilise the potential of older persons and to enable the elderly to lead a life in dignity and independence;

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;

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 on a voluntary basis to specific objectives related to active ageing;

4. to promote activities which will help overcome age related stereotypes, in particular with regard to employability.
Article 3
Content of measures

1. The measures to be taken to achieve the objectives set out in Article 2 shall include the following activities at Union, national, regional or local level:

   – conferences, events and initiatives to promote debate, raise awareness and to encourage, on a voluntary basis, the commitment to specific objectives;

   – information, promotion and educational campaigns;

   – exchange of information, experience and good practices;

   – research and surveys on a Union or national scale, and dissemination of the results.

2. The Commission or the Member States may identify other activities as contributing to objectives of the European Year and allow the name of the European Year to be used in promoting those activities insofar as they contribute to achieving the objectives set out in Article 2.

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

4. Efforts shall be undertaken in order to ensure that all activities addressed to the wider public shall be easily accessible to all, including people with disabilities.

Article 4
Coordination with the Member States

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 may also promote and facilitate local and regional activities.
Article 5

Coordination at Union level

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 on a voluntary basis and their implementation in the Member States.

Coordination at Union level shall also be a matter for the existing policy committees and advisory groups.

The Commission shall also convene meetings of representatives of European organisations or bodies working in the field of active ageing to help it run the European Year.

The European Parliament, the Member States, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will be associated in the activities.

Article 6

Consistency and complementarity

The Commission – together with the Member States – shall ensure that the measures provided for in this Decision are consistent with any other Union, national and regional schemes and initiatives that help attain the objectives of the European Year.

Article 7

Evaluation

By 30 June 2014, the Commission shall submit a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the initiatives provided for in this Decision.
Article 8

Entry into force

This Decision shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Article 9

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at …,

For the European Parliament For the Council
The President The President