



Conference
Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies
Brdo, Slovenia
27-29 April 2008

BACKGROUND PAPER

Nowadays we are facing huge demographic changes that strongly affect the relationships among generations. The balance between generations which prevailed in the past has significantly evolved, with the share of the elderly increasing rapidly and today's younger generations numbering in some cases only half the generation born immediately following World War II. Up to now society has been composed of people of the young, middle and older generations supporting each other in various ways. However, today's way of life and the division of work, especially in the urban environment, have radically changed the relations between generations. There is an ever-growing tendency to look at the various generations separately, from the point of view of the rights these individuals have acquired. Inappropriate policy responses may even spark individual conflicts between generations. Many social systems (e.g. pension and health care systems) are already confronted with the new reality of demographic ageing, while others will still have to confront these changes. Extensive and in-depth adaptations of our social systems will be needed.

The paradigms based on these facts emerge more and more frequently. These paradigms are very tightly connected with issues concerning **intergenerational solidarity and cooperation**.

Whereas the question of solidarity and co-existence between generations is becoming one of the key questions for the future of Europe, the Slovenian EU Presidency in cooperation with the European Commission is organising a Conference on Intergenerational Solidarity and Cooperation, which will take place in Brdo, Slovenia, on 28 and 29 April 2008. The purpose of the conference is to continue the initial debate introduced by the European Commission with the Green Paper "Confronting Demographic Change: A New Solidarity between Generations".

The purpose of the conference is not to find the sources of demographic change, but rather to face the new balance and new relationships between generations, as well as to initiate a new approach to policy development that promotes solidarity between generations and ensures a fairer and more sustainable society. We will present, through examples of good practice, positive cases of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation. The participants will try to draw attention to some possible conflicting points between generations and explore potential solutions based on new forms of solidarity.

Up to now individual forms of solidarity in society were bound by existing structures and systems. Due to changes in the balance between generations, the new reality demands the change of structures and different relationships as well. We are convinced that changes won't occur spontaneously; countries, stakeholders and users themselves have to act proactively to accelerate adjustments of the social systems, before reality forces us into this.

The basis of the conference is the thesis that in the long term a society can successfully progress only by genuine mutual contact and cooperation among all generations. Therefore, the conference will have to emphasise the objective changes that were created in modern society. We will also discuss the elements which once bonded generations, and why it's meaningful to encourage them in the new, altered circumstances. Further on, we will discuss which elements have survived and what is necessary for successful intergenerational co-existence in the future.



The conference will be divided into two parts. The first part will address some broad aspects of intergenerational solidarity. The second part of the conference will cover one concrete aspect of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation – long-term care (LTC).

Monday, 28 April 2008

BROAD (SOCIOLOGICAL) ASPECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The first day of the conference will address the broad aspects of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation. The plenary sessions and roundtables will discuss problems in the context of intergenerational solidarity in modern society.

Existing experiences and activities, as well as visions and plans in the context of strengthening intergenerational solidarity and cooperation, will be presented in the introductory plenary sessions by Ms Marjeta Cotman, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Slovenia; Mr Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission; Mr José António Fonseca Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, Portugal; and Ms Viera Tomanová, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Slovakia.

Following the plenary session, Mr Martin Kohli and Mr Jože Ramovš will present the theoretical background and role of intergenerational solidarity in Europe.

Following are six roundtables:

11.30–13.00 Roundtables on intergenerational solidarity

Why does solidarity and cooperation among generations need to be reviewed and promoted to ensure a fair and sustainable society in today's context?

Solidarity is certainly not a new concept, but its forms have been changing: from the spontaneous, mechanical solidarity typical of agrarian societies with community members permanently living and working together, as well as supporting each other, on the same common territory, up to organised types of solidarity typical of modern industrial societies. In these societies, rights and duties and ties among generations have been mostly based on the division of labour, on a policy of full employment and on solidarity contracts among generations. One of the major events of the last four decades was, firstly, the miraculous emergence – and then the crisis – of social policies. With the new post-industrial modes of production, unemployment and the increasing number of social groups in need of support, the welfare state is put under pressure. Due to rapid social and economic changes, numerous new needs have been emerging. How can we best meet these new needs?

In the ageing European society, changes and new needs are being faced by all generations; therefore, intergenerational solidarity and cooperation need to be re-invented and supported by social policies and civil society initiatives.

The role of the state and civil society in intergenerational solidarity and cooperation

The workshop will discuss developments and trends that should influence and eventually change intergenerational solidarity in European societies. The workshop will explore the effects of major demographic trends, changes in the composition of our societies, geographic mobility

and new forms of family life. It should look at the specific roles that civil society and its organisations as manifestations of citizen involvement and action, as well as government and

public service entities, will have to play in developing and encouraging new forms of intergenerational solidarity.

We are asking speakers to address parameters such as old age pensions, social security and the provision of affordable care for the elderly and disabled. We would also encourage a discussion about contributions of the active generation towards the financing of education, and human capital formation among the younger generation (age groups 6–25).

We expect speakers to initiate debate in the workshop by pointing out some of the more critical aspects of moving away from pay-as-you-go and other traditional models of intergenerational solidarity, as well as the risks and dangers associated with new voluntary forms of intergenerational solidarity and entitlements based on accumulated funds.

Another main topic of this working group will be the role that can be played by established and new civil society formations, and their interplay with a public administration that no longer simply acts as a sovereign distributor of taxpayers' money, but sees itself as a catalyst and facilitator of new forms of social and intergenerational solidarity. In this context we would invite speakers to particularly reflect on possible differences between "old" and "new" EU Member States.

Volunteering: young and older people as promoters of societal change

Volunteering, like most board games, aims at people from 7 to 77 years old! Volunteers of all ages bring a unique contribution to society, being both economic and social. In an ageing Europe, trans-generational volunteering needs to be promoted and encouraged. The intergenerational dimension of volunteering is the least explored at the moment, while it takes place at the community level, bringing an understanding between generations and offering generations the opportunity to interact in a positive environment. The experiences, hopes and availability of senior citizens, combined with the thirst for life, hopes, opinions and experiences of young people, are the way to build a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Many NGOs are already practicing this intergenerational dimension in their activities. This requires time, support and effort to overcome the challenges of bringing different generations together.

The European Union is now tackling youth volunteering, especially the mobility aspect. Volunteering needs to be examined as a cross-generational practice, as intergenerational volunteering is a cornerstone in the construction of Europe.

Different speakers, regarding their background and experience, will share their knowledge and thoughts with the participants. Their interventions will tackle the following issues: 1) what to do in order to bring together volunteers of all ages, and what kind of stimulus is needed; 2) how intergenerational volunteering contributes to social cohesion; and 3) what are the challenges of bringing different generations together to volunteer.

14.30–16.00 Roundtables on intergenerational solidarity

Intergenerational solidarity in modern forms of the family

Family structures and family bonds are changing very rapidly. The traditional family with three generations living in the same home or nearby is being replaced by new forms of families: single

parents, blended families, families where relatives are geographically far away from each other, couples without children, etc. This new reality calls for a new approach to solidarity between generations within the family.



Innovative forms and practices of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation

The first part of the roundtable will present concrete new forms and practices of intergenerational solidarity in Europe and in Slovenia. These models are created spontaneously within the civil society, partly also by the systematic cooperation of action-developmental science work. Such is the case of the development and expansion of the social network of intergenerational programmes for quality ageing and solidarity between generations in Slovenia. Innovative models of intergenerational integration and learning of new communication skills between generations are an answer to the decline of traditional models for the development of interpersonal and intergenerational solidarity as the basis for the survival and development of each human culture. These models appear as the only prospective paradigm to solve the current demographic problems in Europe.

Employment for all ages and flexicurity

During this roundtable, the moderator will introduce as topics for debate: how can a balanced approach of flexicurity contribute to the creation of quality jobs for all ages; how can the EU facilitate the creation of decent working conditions for all ages in a context of flexicurity; and what is the added value of an intergenerational dialogue amongst people of all ages in a context of flexicurity. The roundtable will present the point of view of employers, as well as the work of social partners in connection with intergenerational dialogue. The roundtable will also present the academic point of view and experience from various European projects in connection with active ageing.

The final plenary session of the first day of the conference will present the key interest groups, who will give their reactions to the presentations of the roundtables. These representatives will present the views and reactions of individual institutions, such as the European Parliament, the European Union and the Social Protection Committee, in connection with the discussions during the roundtables. Furthermore, they will present the proposals and plans of their organisations to strengthen the bonds among generations and to increase the solidarity between generations.

Tuesday, 29 April 2008

LONG-TERM CARE

In its Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion from 2007, the European Commission sees a rising need for developing long-term care systems, which challenges the solidarity between generations. Facing demographic pressures, all countries are strongly committed to ensuring access to universal, affordable and high-quality long-term care (LTC), while ensuring its sustainability in term of finances and human resources.

Different countries have chosen quite different approaches to tackle LTC, regarding both organisation and financing.

Making trade-offs transparent and developing synergies between different policies helps to secure adequate social protection against health care and long-term care risks. Promoting healthy and active lifestyles, health and safety at work, and more preventive care, as well as taking account of health concerns in all policies is a win-win strategy.

In this respect the objective of the plenary is to give an overview of the ongoing reforms in different countries and to see how the countries, stakeholders and users are tackling accessibility, quality and sustainability of LTC in the light of intergenerational solidarity.



11.30–13.00 Roundtables on long-term care: Challenge for intergenerational solidarity

How to make long-term care more sustainable and fairer for all generations

The sustainability of social security systems, including LTC, gives rise more and more to intergenerational conflicts, charging one generation more than the other generations with the costs for the dependent. In this respect, the sustainability or viability of LTC is one of the major challenges that lie ahead for all Member States. The question of how to balance the burden of LTC between the state, the private sector and the family should be tackled. The way to finance a LTC system is different in each country, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but are some best practices to be considered, like having LTC as a separate social security risk?

Intergenerational solidarity and solidarity between healthy and ill people and poor and rich people is vital to avoid the risk of simply shifting the costs to the individual. Finally, the dependent should remain in the centre of attention and the human touch should not get lost on the road to financial soundness.

Quality in long-term care for the dependent of all ages

Ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality health care is an essential element of the European social model. To achieve and maintain high quality, many tools are used, including quality standards, e.g. minimum structural and procedural requirements for providers (guidelines) or adapted housing standards, accreditation or certification of providers, or quality-monitoring systems. A more patient-centred approach to care is needed to improve quality and ensure patient satisfaction. This means tailor-made services and ensuring patients' rights, and freedom of choice and involvement in decision-making, as well as new technology and information and communication technology (ICT).

Dignity and human rights should be the key issues when implementing long-term care: the German Charter of Rights for People in Need of Long-Term Care and Assistance is a good example in this respect. The complexity of needs and of interventions involving a multiplicity of providers given to people in need of care calls for an enhanced coordination in order to ensure a continuum of care. Lifelong promotion and prevention programmes are also key issues to allow people to stay longer in better conditions and avoid or delay the occurrence of dependency. Finally, monitoring and evaluating quality is essential to measure the quality of improvements in long-term care.

Human resources in long-term care

A sufficient supply of well-qualified staff is essential, because the majority of long-term care is people's work. Knowledgeable and engaged personnel are key prerequisites for achieving and maintaining high quality in care services. The labour force in long-term care consists of professionals, non-professionals and family carers, who are in the vast majority women.

One big concern is the lack of professional workers, particularly of trained and qualified staff. It is important to give a better profile of this work in order to attract people, as working in long-term care often has a negative, low-status image. Another fact is recourse to legal or undeclared

immigrants, which is often a solution to the shortage of personnel and who in some countries make up a significant proportion of the workforce in long-term care. The education of carers for older people is of utmost priority. Representatives of users must be involved in the development of the curricula, as well as in the training programmes.



Family carers represent the vast majority of carers in the field and make a very substantial contribution to social care. Different initiatives are taken to support family carers, like financial compensation given by municipalities (Sweden) or grants to the person in need of care to finance a family carer. Day care units for people in great need of care are also a good example of how to give specific care while allowing the family some respite.

Plenary session

The conference shall continue with final presentations of the representatives of key European institutions and non-governmental organizations. They will reveal the views of their organizations on intergenerational solidarity and long-term care in short presentations. They will focus on the activities that, in their opinion, are decisive and to which they intend to pay special attention in the future.

Mrs Valérie Létard, Minister of State attached to the French Ministry for Labour, Labour Relations and Solidarity, will outline France's activities in the area of intergenerational solidarity and will present the French Presidency's future plans in that field as well as the main themes of the next Presidency trio (France, Czech Republic and Sweden).

Marjeta Cotman, Slovenian Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, will present the most important conclusions of the conference and propose further activities in the area, including the idea of declaring the year 2012 not only the European Year of Active Ageing but also the Year of Intergenerational Solidarity.