

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 136 (2003)¹ on the consequences of demographic change for Europe's regions

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Taking stock of the fact that the increasing share of the elderly in Europe's population on the one hand, and the decrease of the young population on the other hand, may be viewed as a successful outcome of improved health and living conditions, effective health and social policies and increased life expectancy combined with low fertility;

2. Noting that demographic ageing is expected to accelerate in the next ten to twenty years and will have a direct impact on national, regional and local social policies;

3. Recalling CLRAE Recommendation 5 (1994) on "Europe and its elderly people: towards a pact between generations and conclusions of the Siena Conference";

4. Recalling the Programme of Action adopted at the second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid 8 to 12 April 2002) and the Ministerial Conference on Ageing, held in Berlin in September 2002, organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);

5. Stressing the priorities defined in the Berlin Ministerial Declaration, following the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, namely "expanding participation of older persons in society and fostering social inclusion and independent living; promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth in addressing the implications of population ageing; strengthening adequate and sustainable social protection for present and future generations; encouraging labour markets to respond to ageing and take advantage of the potential of older persons; promoting life-long learning; enhancing life-long physical and mental health and well-being; ensuring equal access to high quality health and social care; mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ageing policies; supporting older persons, their families, and communities in their care-giving roles; and promoting intergenerational solidarity" (paragraph 8);

6. Supporting Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1591 (2003) and Mr Gyula Hegyi's report on "Challenges of social policy in Europe's ageing societies" (Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee);

7. Recalling the work carried out by the Committee of the Regions, in particular its opinion on the European Commission report on "Increasing labour force

participation and promoting active ageing" (COM (2002) 9) and the conference on "Facing the challenge of an ageing population: local and regional perspectives and practices" (Brussels, November 2002);

8. Underlining, with the European Population Committee, that active ageing is to be pursued as a coherent public policy with the aim of enhancing the social role and the capacity for autonomy in old age and the quality of life of all citizens in ageing societies;

9. Sharing the view, however, that active ageing policies are not only confined to central levels but must involve local and regional authorities as well;

10. Convinced that the local and regional levels are an appropriate level to undertake and co-ordinate concrete action to respond effectively to the consequences of ageing and dejuvenation;

11. Underlining the importance of the data collected by the Council of Europe European Population Committee, Eurostat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, where standardisation is necessary and which should also include social and welfare aspects,

12. Invites the Council of Europe:

a. to recognise the specific role of the Congress in the analysis of social cohesion policies at local and regional level and in the elaboration of appropriate policy guidelines in this field;

b. to entrust its European Population Committee and the Directorate General of Social Cohesion;

i. to continue to work on the project "active ageing";

ii. to pursue its activities related to the oldest old (aged 80 years and older) and elderly migrants in co-operation with the CLRAE Committee on Social Cohesion;

iii. to take into account the local and regional dimension of demography in their activities;

iv. to pay particular attention to specific groups which are particularly affected by ageing, such as women, minority groups and elderly people living in rural areas;

c. to integrate the aspect of intergenerational solidarity in the policies developed by the Directorates General of the Council of Europe, in particular in the field of culture, education, gender equality, social cohesion;

13. Invites the Parliamentary Assembly to pursue its work in the field of active ageing and encourage its competent committees to address this issue further;

14. Invites the European Union to consider the impact of ageing population at local and regional level and to identify it as an important element of social cohesion in Europe;

15. Invites the member states of the Council of Europe:

a. to keep the issue of ageing population high on the agenda in order to develop a policy based on demographic developments;

b. to ensure that competencies be transferred to regions and local authorities, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity;

c. to make sure that financial equalisation takes into account the demographic changes and incorporate the specific needs of local and regional authorities, which are more affected by an ageing population, in terms of housing, social care, health, etc.;

d. to promote the collection of demographic data at local and regional level, to be used especially for the definition of social cohesion policies;

e. to co-operate closely with the Council of Europe structures active in the field of demography, in particular the European Population Committee and the Congress.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 21 May 2003 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 22 May 2003 (see Document CPR (10) 3, draft recommendation presented by Mr L. Van Nistelrooij, rapporteur).