

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 162 (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 and the working age 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. 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);
5. 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);
6. 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);
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. Acknowledging that age can be a source of discrimination, which must be combated;
10. Sharing the view, however, that active ageing policies are not only confined to central levels but will also affect directly local and regional authorities as well;
11. Convinced that the local and regional levels are appropriate levels to undertake and co-ordinate concrete action to respond effectively to the consequences of ageing and dejuvenation;
12. Welcoming the initiatives undertaken by the Assembly of European Regions (Alive Programme) and many numerous regions in Europe;
13. Underlining the link between the economic situation, the level of employment and the birth rate;
14. Underlining that local and regional authorities can contribute to draft proactive policies, measures and services to effectively encourage the elderly population to be active;
15. Recognising that countries in transition can face additional economic problems when setting up social structures for elderly people,
16. Invites the local and regional authorities:
 - a. to commit themselves to fully integrating demographic changes in the drawing up of their policies;
 - b. to ensure that reliable data is collected at local and regional level in order to be in a position to identify the demographic trends, also at local level, to define the most appropriate policies;
 - c. to create a favourable climate for policy development, through project programmes and/or financial support to initiatives aimed at encouraging a "society of all ages" and "ageing-proof communities", including the generation of seniors;
 - d. 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;
 - e. to consider specific labour needs, particularly in the field of care and education, that will derive from an ageing society;
 - f. to monitor the developments of and evaluate regional senior policy actions;

g. to consider the drafting of active, integrated policies and, in particular:

In the field of labour and active life:

- i. to promote internal training for elderly workers;
- ii. to empower seniors and elderly people, by means of information technologies;
- iii. to raise the awareness of the public, the private and the non-governmental sectors on the added value that young retired people can offer;
- iv. to promote entrepreneurship as a means of inclusion of groups with special difficulties, for example elderly job-seekers;

In the field of housing:

- i. to ensure the setting-up of facilities that are compatible with the needs of elderly people;
- ii. to enable the elderly people to live independently;
- iii. to promote smart home technologies, making products and services easier for “less abled” people;
- iv. to favour regular home visits for the elderly in order to help them harness their own resources and to retain their functional abilities for as long as possible;

In the field of healthcare:

- i. to provide with adequate and sufficient infrastructures;
- ii. to promote the provision of health care at home, also through the establishment of co-operatives or the contribution of trained volunteers and/or social workers;
- iii. to promote specific programmes aiming at enhancing the health condition of elderly people;

In the field of full and active participation of elderly people in society:

- i. to create appropriate discussion groups focusing on ageing issues;

ii. to promote communication and information tools enabling elderly people to contribute to public discussion;

iii. to ensure the involvement of older people in local and regional governments and promote their active participation in elected bodies;

iv. to make sure that social services are accessible and effective for elderly people;

h. to develop and fund schemes allowing a more active role of elderly people in our society;

i. to provide opportunities in the field of recreation, intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational transfer of know-how;

j. to empower groups of citizens and non-governmental organisations to manage elderly-friendly programmes in the long-term;

k. to promote international exchange of good practices of active ageing (“learning region” and “learning municipality”) by making the best possible use of already existing networks (Alive, for example) and acting as “network broker” in Europe;

l. to ensure that reliable statistics are available at regional and local level that also take into account the activities, time-use, abilities, aptitudes, expectations and preferences of elderly people;

17. Invites the Committee on Social Cohesion to pursue its activities in the field of elderly persons, particularly with a view to the specific needs and expectations of the “young old” (aged 60 to 79 years) and the “oldest old” (aged 80 years and older).

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 resolution presented by Mr L. Van Nistelrooij, rapporteur).