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

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs unanimously adopted the report by Martin KASTLER (EPP, DE) on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Active Ageing (2012). The committee recommends that the European Parliament's position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure make certain the following amendments to the Commission proposal

Title of the Year: Members want the initiative to stress intergenerational solidarity and accordingly, they have re-named the Year 'European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations', with the subheading 'Maintaining the vitality and respecting the dignity of all'.

Objectives: the overall purpose of the European Year is to facilitate the creation of a sustainable active ageing culture in Europe based on a society for all ages and on solidarity between generations. In this framework, the European Year shall encourage and support the efforts of Member States, their regional and local authorities, social partners, businesses and civil society, including religious organisations and associations active in combating poverty and social exclusion, to promote active ageing and to do more to mobilise the potential of the rapidly growing population in their late 50s and above, thereby maintaining the vitality of older people, enhancing their social participation, promoting the positive perception of older people in the society, creating a barrier-free society for all ages and fostering solidarity and cooperation between generations. In order to do so, it is essential for the European Year to support and make the most of initiatives that take account of the specific needs of older people, including those at local and regional level.

Members state that **active ageing means** creating better education, training and lifelong learning possibilities and better opportunities and age-friendly working conditions to enable older workers to play their part in the labour market, supporting the role of older people in family life and voluntary activities and their active participation in society, combating age discrimination and prejudice and eliminating negative stereotypes, fighting poverty and social exclusion, encouraging healthy ageing with dignity and facilitating it through preventive measures and access to quality health and social services..

Specific objectives: Members insert some new specific objectives for the Year which may be summarised as follows :

- **to raise general awareness** among the population of the value of active ageing and solidarity between generations, maintaining the vitality and respecting the dignity of all people, to combat ageism and negative stereotypes about old age, to remove barriers and recognise the diversity within all age groups, and to do more to mobilise the potential of older persons regardless of their ethnic or cultural origin;
- **to exchange information** and to develop mutual learning between Member States and stakeholders, in order to promote active ageing policies, to promote sustainable and safe pension systems in Europe ; to raise the appreciation of and to bring about better overall recognition of and support for the contribution of older people to economic and social development in Europe;
- **to promote activities** stimulating the development of comprehensive age management strategies related to employment and work, activities facilitating the introduction of consistent family-friendly policies which can have a meaningful impact on demographic trends, activities highlighting the importance of prevention of health problems and healthy lifestyles;

- **to introduce or to strengthen structural fiscal policies** in favour of non-profit organisations.

Amongst the concrete actions proposed by the committee, Members stress: i) information and also mentoring and training campaigns which are adapted to national, regional or local circumstances ii) exchange of experience and good practices, including through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), networks of contacts set up by stakeholders working to achieve the goals of the European Year and between local representatives iii) research and surveys focusing on the economic and social impact of promoting active ageing and of active-ageing-friendly policies.

When implementing these activities Members state that attention should be paid, on a horizontal basis, to preventative health-care oriented towards healthy ageing and to involving all generations in the pursuit of the objectives of the European Year, in particular by encouraging the participation of ageing and young people in common initiatives. The Commission and Member States shall be encouraged to provide greater opportunities for those who volunteer to support elderly people and who engage in fund raising programmes. Furthermore, they shall take account of the need to integrate the specificities of the situation of women and men and the need for all generations to be involved. Special attention shall be paid to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as to combating all forms of discrimination to which older persons may be subject.

Decentralised approach: the initiatives taken in the light of the European Year for Active Ageing will have a decentralised approach and ensure multi-level ownership.

Implementation: the Commission will implement the Year at European level. Each Member State shall appoint a national coordinator responsible for organising its involvement in the European Year and shall inform the Commission of that appointment. By 30 September 2011, each Member State shall inform the Commission of its work programme, which shall include details of the national activities planned under the European Year. The national coordinators should work independently, without reflecting solely the views of governments and should also see to it that national activities are and are properly coordinated and that stakeholders, including social partners and civil society organisations are fully involved in the design and implementation of the European Year at local, regional and national level. In order to ensure the participation of a diverse range of organisations, simplified procedures should be available for smaller scale events and operations.

Budget: Members specify that the financial envelope for the implementation, at Union level, of this decision, is, for the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012, at least **EUR 6 000 000**, of which EUR 2 000 000 shall be reserved for use within the period to 31 December 2011.

Financial and non-financial support: activities at the Union level may give rise to a procurement contract or the award of grants financed from the general budget of the EU. Where appropriate, programmes and policies in fields which contribute to promoting active ageing, such as employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, education and culture, health, research, the information society, regional policy and transport policy, may support the European Year in accordance with the rules applying and within the existing margins for priority setting. Non-financial support may be granted by the Union for initiatives undertaken by public and private organisations. .

Participating countries : Participation in the European Year shall also be open to EFTA States that are parties to the EEA Agreement, and to candidate countries,

International cooperation: the Commission may cooperate with the relevant bodies of other international organisations, in particular with the United Nations and the Council of Europe, in order to increase the Union’s effectiveness and to ensure the visibility of its efforts.

Report: the Commission's report shall also provide information on how the gender and disability have been mainstreamed in the activities of the European Year and how the European Year has contributed towards developing a sustainable active aging culture across Europe.