Resolution on the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002

2002/2536(RSP) - 11/04/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

In its resolution on the Second UN World Assembly on Ageing, the European Parliament pointed out that demographics are changing in both developing and industrialised countries. In the EU, people aged 60 or over account for 21.5% of the population. By 2020, a 30% increase is expected in this age group and a 40% increase in the group aged 80 or over. There must be an international action strategy towards a society for all ages, by the allocation of adequate political and financial means, based on solidarity between generations, a positive image of living longer and the contribution of older people to the well-being of society. The Council and the Commission need to mainstream ageing issues in all relevant policy areas and to include older people in all relevant European social, economic and development cooperation policies and programmes. Parliament was also concerned about discrimination faced by older workers, and felt it important to ensure the re-entry of persons excluded from the labour market into working life. One suggestion is the introduction of phased retirement schemes as a possible way of presenting older workers' experience and knowledge and handing it down to younger ones. Member States should promote self-employment by encouraging small and micro-enterprise development and ensuring access to credit for older persons, without discrimination relating to gender. Parliament went on to note that poverty in old age has a strong gender dimension. Women are morel likely to suffer discrimination in access to healthcare and income. Decent pensions are particularly important for women, whose entitlement can otherwise be very low due to low pay and/or part-time jobs and may often be interrupted by family responsibilities. The open method of coordination in the fields of pensions, social inclusion and healthcare is welcomed. Parliament reiterated its support for the European social model, and stated that social protection systems based on universality and solidarity between and within the generations is needed.