# Demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations

2005/2147(INI) - 23/03/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Philip **BUSHILL-MATTHEWS** (EPP-ED/UK) on demographic challenges and solidarity between the generations. Thereport was adopted by 448 votes in favour and 78 against, with 22 abstentions. (Please see the summary of 22/02/2006.) In addition to the points mentioned in that summary, Parliament raised the following issues:

- it was surprised that the Green Paper made only passing reference to the healthcare aspects of demographic change, and emphasised that, with an ageing population, the demand for health and long-term care services increased qualitatively and quantitatively. Investment in measures for the life-long prevention of illness was important for coming to terms with the human and financial aspects of demographic change;

- Parliament pointed out that infertility, and particularly male infertility, is on the rise, especially in highly industrialized areas. Parliament pointed out that in some European countries up to 15% of couples are now infertile, chemical pollution being one of the causes of infertility;

- Parliament urged Member States to promote tax measures to encourage a higher birth rate and drew attention to the fact that women, in particular young single mothers, should be guaranteed special protection and support following the birth of a child;

- Member States should identify equality of the sexes and a balance between work and private life as government priorities;

- mounting social security costs will require dynamic economic growth to finance them. Parliament observed that fiscal methods such as increasing taxes to fund social security are less sustainable in the long-term given the falling tax base and higher dependency ratio as well as the urgent need to stimulate entrepreneurship in Europe. It highlighted therefore the need for a holistic policy approach when considering social security reform. There is a need to develop beyond the concept of a 'welfare state', and more towards a 'welfare society' in which all stakeholders recognise that they too have responsibilities for looking after each other and that these responsibilities can be mutually reinforcing ;

- Parliament stated that it could not stress strongly enough the importance of access to education, skills development, technology and life long learning opportunities plus the promotion of a training culture that encourages participation by people of all ages, particularly those entering and re-entering the job market;

- it noted that EU legislation on age discrimination has so far been ineffective in achieving its aims and calls on the Member States to improve their efforts to implement existing EU anti-discrimination legislation in this field, in particular Directive 2000/78/EC on equal treatment in employment and occupation. Parliament also noted that the business case for retaining older workers needs to be made more strongly considering the potential of this group;

- on immigration, Parliament pointed out that policies which give immigration priority to skilled workers in order to strengthen EU economies also generate the direct opposite result of weakening the economies of those countries whence such skilled immigrants have come. It considered that Member States should recognise their responsibilities in this regard.

Finally, Parliament concluded that while the EU should continue to compare and contrast Member State performances, experiences and best practice in terms of dealing with the various challenges of demographic change, existing EU institutions are adequate for this purpose and no additional EU structures are required.