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(Information)

COUNCIL

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE MINISTERS FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

of 6 December 1993

to mark the end of the European Year of the elderly and of solidarity between generations (1993)

(93/C 343/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE MINISTERS FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

1. RECALL the Council decision of 26 November 1990 on Community actions for the elderly [1] and the Council decision of 24 June 1992 on the organization of the European Year of the elderly and of solidarity between generations (1993) [2], which provide for cooperation between the various Member States on the provision and exchange of information and call for reflection and discussion on measures to be taken in regard to an ageing population;

2. RECALL that the Community charter of the fundamental social rights of workers, adopted at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 9 December 1989 by the Heads of State or Government of eleven Member States, includes in its section 'Elderly persons' the statement that:

   'According to the arrangements applying in each country:

   24. every worker of the European Community must, at the time of retirement, be able to enjoy resources affording him or her a decent standard of living;

   25. every person who has reached retirement age but who is not entitled to a pension or who does not have other means of subsistence must be entitled to sufficient resources and to medical and social assistance specifically suited to his needs.';

3. RECALL the Council recommendation of 24 June 1992 on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems [3];

4. RECALL the Council recommendation of 27 July 1992 on the convergence of social protection objectives and policies [4];

5. RECALL the powers and responsibilities reserved for Member States under those recommendations;

6. RECALL that, in the course of the European Year, Community activities have been carried out which have in particular helped to frame the common principles set out in this Declaration;

7. RECALL the Council resolution of 30 June 1993 on flexible retirement arrangements [5];

8. NOTE that:

   — demographic developments, which point to a major increase in the population of the elderly in all the Member States, have economic, social, health and budgetary implications,

   — Member States nevertheless confirm their political resolve to meet the socio-economic challenges posed by the ageing of the population,

   — they recognize the valuable contribution of the elderly to social, cultural and economic life,

[1] OJ No L 28, 2. 2. 1991, p. 29.
[2] OJ No L 245, 26. 8. 1992, p. 43.
[3] OJ No L 245, 26. 8. 1992, p. 46.
[4] OJ No L 245, 26. 8. 1992, p. 49.
[5] OJ No C 188, 10. 7. 1993, p. 1.

— a positive response should be given to the needs and aspirations expressed by the elderly in order to enable them to participate actively in all aspects of the life of the community;

9. DECLARE that:

— Member States recognize, in their legislation and policies, the full citizenship of the elderly, in freedom and with equal rights and obligations, in all areas of the life of the community;

— they intend to promote the integration of the elderly in all areas of the life of the community, thereby acting to counter social exclusion and isolation as well as discrimination, given that all persons of any age are entitled to recognition of their human dignity;

10. DECLARE that Member States wish to pursue policies based on the essential principles of solidarity between and within generations in order to:

— promote the social integration of the elderly by enabling them to manifest themselves in society in the spheres of family, social, political, cultural, recreational and educational life,

— encourage respect for the elderly as individuals and their right to privacy and physical integrity, and promote opportunities for the elderly to assume their responsibilities;

11. CALL UPON Member States, in accordance with the above principles, to approve the following objectives framing policies concerning areas of special interest to the elderly:

(i) *regarding level of income and standard of living:*

(a) take measures to guarantee the elderly the right to minimum resources and/or access to other systems of social protection and to enable them to play a continuing part in social life on an independent basis;

(b) grant the elderly, when ceasing work at the end of their working lives, a substitute income, determined by means of standard benefits or calculated in relation to their earlier earnings, maintaining their standard of living in a reasonable manner, on the basis of their participation in appropriate social-security schemes;

(c) refer, in setting amounts, to such indicators as they consider appropriate, e.g. statistics on the average available income in the Member State concerned, statistics on household consumption, the statutory minimum wage, if any, or price levels;

(d) introduce arrangements for periodic review of such amounts, in accordance with these indicators, to ensure that needs continue to be met;

(e) ensure that the elderly can remain active in society and, having due regard to the economic and employment situation in each Member State, can retain links with the labour market;

(f) in due course, adapt pension schemes to demographic changes, while maintaining the basic role of statutory retirement arrangements;

(ii) *regarding housing and mobility:*

(a) encourage a flexible housing policy providing for a variety of accommodation which enables the elderly to continue to play a part in the life of the community; in this connection, account should be taken of the personal wishes of the elderly to continue living in their own homes;

(b) ensure that the independence and privacy of the elderly are respected;

(c) encourage the independence of the elderly by promoting a residential environment and transport infrastructure that are accessible and safe;

(iii) *regarding provision of care and services:*

(a) on the basis of objective criteria, provide adequate assistance geared to the autonomy and physical, mental and social well-being of the elderly; such assistance could include home care, home help, mobile services, sheltered housing and health services;

(b) encourage coordination of the various health and social services;

(c) promote a range of qualified services to meet the new requirements of a population with increasing numbers of very elderly people, so that dependence and institutionalization can be avoided as far as possible; this applies in particular to persons suffering from ageing diseases;

(d) establish criteria for introducing and organizing such services and facilities;

(e) without concentrating exclusively on the elderly as a target group, envisage preventive measures aimed at forestalling or delaying the onset of diseases and the beginning of dependence;

(iv) *regarding employment of elderly workers and preparation for retirement:*

— take initiatives to:

(a) assess, in a spirit of solidarity between generations, the extent to which differential treatment based on age is justified;

(b) make possible a smooth transition from working life to retirement;

(c) provide appropriate support for the elderly during that transition by introducing facilities for advice and counselling, information and practical assistance and streamlining administrative procedures accordingly;

(d) encourage the passing on of expertise to rising generations in order to take advantage of the experience of the elderly;

(v) *regarding the participation of the elderly:*

promote, in all layers of society, full involvement of the elderly in the life of the community through suitable provision of the information needed for active involvement in appropriate fashion in all areas concerning them;

12. EMPHASIZE that:

(a) the attainment of the above objectives can make a considerable contribution towards combating and preventing the social exclusion and isolation of the elderly;

(b) it is desirable to encourage the attainment of those objectives in the Member States;

(c) the Council and the Ministers for Social Affairs will periodically review progress in implementing those objectives;

13. NOTE the following statement by the Commission:

'The Commission emphasizes that demographic trends, and the ageing of the population in particular, constitute one of the major challenges for social policies.

If further points out that the European Year of the elderly and of solidarity between generations has enabled firm progress to be made on, in particular, data analysis, the debate on the implications of ageing, the development of innovative approaches, the exchange of experience, the mobilization of the bodies involved, cooperation between the latter and active participation by the persons concerned.

In this connection, it emphasizes that activities need to be undertaken which draw on this progress and that the 1994 budget guidelines provide a modest, but useful, basis for this purpose.

On the basis of the evaluation under way and the achievements of the European Year it intends to make medium-term proposals in 1994 for increased Community support for Member States' policies in this area.'