

8 April 2021

Statement by the Committee on Health and Welfare
2020/21:SoU35

Green Paper on Ageing - Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations

Summary

In this statement, the Committee has examined the European Commission's Green Paper on Ageing - Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations. The Green Paper deals with matters relating to the ageing population in Europe and the challenges and opportunities that this demographic development involves. The Committee stresses in its position the importance of respecting the division of powers between the EU and the member states, the need for basing the discussion on a modern view of ageing and older people and the importance of combating all forms of age discrimination. The Committee proposes that the Riksdag file the statement.

The examined document

Green Paper on Ageing - Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations (COM(2021) 50).

The position of the Committee

The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission highlights the discussion on Europe's ageing societies and the challenges and opportunities that this involves. Like the Government, the Committee considers that an exchange of knowledge and experience is positive as the member states face similar challenges as regards our demographic development and related issues.

The Committee agrees with the Government's observation that it is crucial that the division of powers between the EU and the member states is respected. The impact of our ageing populations on society, as well as on older people's lives and conditions in society, is closely connected with our national social welfare systems. The Committee notes that there are considerable variations in the way member states have chosen to organise their social welfare systems and ageing policy measures. The Committee wishes to stress that each member state's

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powers to take decisions concerning its national welfare system must be respected. At the EU level, matters dealt with in the Green Paper concerning ageing should therefore primarily be considered or decided in forms that do not involve binding legislation for the member states. In the opinion of the Committee, the EU should instead focus on measures with a clear added value for the work of the individual member states, such as overall knowledge acquisition and communication of experiences and good examples. The Committee considers that, in particular, areas such as research, new technology, digitalisation and housing can benefit from an increased exchange of experiences at EU level. The member states have good opportunities to learn from each other, for example, regarding the use of technological and digital devices that are of central importance in enabling older people to lead active lives, and how to develop housing for older people that also promotes social contacts, even between generations.

The Committee wishes to stress that the discussion on ageing must be based on a modern and respectful view of older people. The older generation are a resource for our societies and make important contributions, for example, through engagement in civil society, communication of knowledge and care of relatives. In the opinion of the Committee, access to statistics about older people's activities and commitments, including in non-profit organisations and unpaid work, is of value as it enables us to identify and follow the older generation's contributions to society and the economy. There are considerable opportunities to be gained from making better use of the unique skills and long experience that older people possess. Older people today are also, to a greater extent, healthy and active and have a good ability to live independently and to contribute to society even at an advanced age. In this context, the Committee wishes to stress the importance of preventive measures to promote good public health and lifelong learning from early childhood and throughout life. The Committee notes that an important factor for good health is that we feel needed by society, which is also a precondition for participation and well-being. It also wishes to underline the importance of technology which can both improve healthcare and social services, and promote the opportunities of older people to live autonomous and independent lives in society for as long as possible.

In the opinion of the Committee, an informed view of older people as experienced and valuable members of society can also contribute to creating a labour market where those who are able and want to can continue to participate in the labour market. This can also contribute to the provision of high-quality care services and different forms of housing for older people. However, the Committee wishes to point out that certain groups, such as people with especially

heavy jobs, may not have the same opportunities to prolong their working lives. This often affects women and risks leading to low pensions and a difficult economic situation, which, in the opinion of the Committee, highlights the need for a clear gender perspective in continued discussions.

The Committee notes that age discrimination is a problem that affects many older people, for example, in working life, but also in other sectors of society. In the Green Paper, the Commission highlights the importance of discussing how to ensure how everyone can participate in society. In the opinion of the Committee, a central aspect of this discussion is highlighting the existence of age discrimination and how we can combat negative attitudes or prejudices about older people. Some older people are especially badly affected, and may furthermore be subjected to further grounds of discrimination, for example, those with functional disabilities, women or those who are LGBTQI. Older people have the same rights as everyone else to participate in all parts of society and, in the opinion of the Committee, it is important not to view older people as a homogeneous group. Like others in society, older people are individuals with varying needs and preconditions. The Committee wishes to underline that it is not possible to determine a person's abilities or needs purely on the basis of age.

With regard to what has been stated above, the Committee proposes that the Riksdag file the statement.