Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1035 (1986)[1]

Ageing of populations in Europe : economic and social consequences

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Referring to its Resolution 585 (1975), on the economic and social consequences of the ageing of the population in Europe;

2. Aware that:

2.1. ageing of the populations in the great majority of European countries has been a constant feature over the last 100 to 150 years as a result of improvements in health and living conditions and the fall in fertility levels, although mindful of the fact that mortality rates continue to vary considerably according to country, sex and socio-professional category;

2.2. even in those countries, Ireland and Turkey, where fertility and mortality levels have been higher, statistics show trends similar to those in other member states in the period 2000-2020;

2.3. a decline of the 15-45 age-group is expected in sixteen countries over the period 1990-2020;

2.4. during approximately the same period:

2.4.1. increases of 20% and more are expected in the 45-60 age-group and of 15 to 20% in the 65 and over;

2.4.2. there will be a disproportionate growth in the number of very old people, aged 80 and over, which would be one-third of the size of this group;

2.4.3. birth rates of migrants will tend towards those of indigenous populations;

2.5. the percentage of the active population (20-65), which will be sufficient during the next two decades owing to the post-war baby boom, will deteriorate rapidly afterwards;

3. Believing that the trends concerning greater life expectation will be confirmed as a result of the progress achieved in the field of health, and that adequate policies should accordingly be implemented in the near future as regards:

3.1. the age group 45-60, which will represent the major part of the population in the next two decades and will be confronted with a rapidly evolving economic and technological context, while at that stage of life there is greater resistance to change for various reasons ;

3.2. old people whose rapidly growing numbers will have an important repercussion on the national health budget;

1. Assembly debate on 25 April 1986 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 5544, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, and Doc. 5549, opinion of the Social and Health Affairs Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 1986 (8th Sitting).

4. Emphasising that the announced 29% reduction of births in ten countries from now until the year 2000 would:

4.1. increase the ageing of populations due to a longer life expectation and generate drastic imbalances in the national budgets as a result of a growing dependency ratio of non-active populations;

4.2. entail a significant change in consumption patterns for goods and services;

5. Noting that the demographic balance would require a 2,1 birth rate per family;

6. Aware that current laws in various countries do not encourage couples to have more than two children;

7. Acknowledging that there are today other facts of life which may clash with big family requirements, such as:

7.1. changing family patterns and the role of the sexes, making people more demanding as regards their professional prospects, and improvements in the possibilities to combine family responsibilities with employment during this transitional phase;

7.2. a pessimistic approach to the future which is due to the risk of chronic unemployment and, even worse, to the threat of an apocalyptic war;

8. Convinced that social, economic and educational policies will be short-sighted if they do not take due account of demographic trends,

9. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member governments to foresee the implications:

a. of birth rate falls, by implementing a more active family policy inspired by the following guidelines:

1. the sharing of burdens between couples with children and those who remain childless;

2. increased financial assistance to families with children, especially those with two or more children;

3. improvements in the practical and financial possibilities for women to combine family responsibilities with employment, notably through increasing places in day nurseries and pre-school institutions;

4. provision of fuller opportunities for mothers and fathers to go back to work, if they so wish, after having interrupted their working life over an extended period of time;

b. of the numeric growth of middle-aged people and its repercussions on the labour market:

1. by giving a concrete content to life-long education, with continuous adult education, in the context of a rapidly changing technological environment;

2. by making provisions for vocational training and retraining at different periods of an individual's life;

3. by applying with determination the clauses of Assembly Recommendation 948 (1982), on the fight against unemployment, paragraph 16.vii.a and b (see appendix), and of Recommendation 981 (1984), on employment in Europe, paragraph 16.x.a (see appendix);

c. of the numeric growth of old and very old people:

1. by ensuring that each person has sufficient resources, and by examining favourably the generalisation of old age and invalidity benefits to guarantee a minimum income and take into account contributions made by each individual to public and private social welfare systems;

2. by taking steps to integrate the elderly into the community and to maintain their self-reliance and involvement in society and community affairs, particularly by promoting the decentralisation of power decisions;

3. by putting greater emphasis on health care, prevention and rehabilitation of the elderly-homes and hospitals should be considered only for those who require intensive medical care, and out-patient treatment should be encouraged and facilitated by the proximity of services;

4. by helping people to care for elderly parents within their families with adequate tax and benefit arrangements and community services;

5. by making it easier, through the use of the social services, for those of the elderly who so wish, to continue to live an independent life in their own homes;

6. by giving priority to urban planning and capital-improvement programmes taking account of the special requirements of the elderly who should themselves be invited to participate in housing and environment- improvement projects;

7. by encouraging the activities of voluntary agencies, associations and self-help organisations among the elderly.

Appendix APPENDIX

Recommendation 948 (1982) paragraphs 16 vii. a and b

a. a general reduction in the working year through measures to introduce greater flexibility and give the individual greater freedom of choice by :

1. a gradual shortening of the working week and working day by means of collective sectoral negotiation;
2. longer annual holidays and general provision for extended (sabbatical) leave;
3. more opportunities for part-time work. together with adequate social protection;
4. the introduction of a fifth team for continuous shift work;

b. measures to shorten working life. such as adjustments in pension schemes to enable individuals to decide their age of retirement, financial inducements to retire early, preretirement arrangements offering shorter hours in the final years of working life in order to case the transition to retirement.

Recommendation 981 (1984) paragraph 16.x.a

the implementation of new arrangements capable of improving the employment situation, such as the reduction and reorganisation of working hours including part-time work and flexible retirement, it being understood that these arrangements ought to be considered as measures to stabilise employment in a given economic context, hence subject to alterations.