



INTERGROUP ON AGEING

STATEMENT TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF 21st MARCH 2003: "FOR A BETTER COHERENCE ON AGEING ISSUES"

The Intergroup calls on the Member States:

- To follow up and build on the Lisbon strategy in these areas and commit themselves to reaching its targets
- To prepare fully for both the social and economic consequences of the ageing of the European population, to better coordinate the different ongoing policies, and to mainstream ageing issues in all EU policies
- To commit themselves to give the European Parliament and civil society a real voice in the further developments of the Open Method of Coordination between Member States on social and ageing issues
- To ensure a decent level of pensions for all, men and women irrespective of their social status (married/separated/divorced) and eliminate gender discrimination in pension systems
- To develop innovative and creative solutions to redefine the role of older workers on the labour market and to fight age discrimination
- To take account of the specific situation of older people in the candidate countries
- To give the EU better competences to deal with common demographic challenges

The Intergroup on Ageing welcomes the fact that ageing issues have a prominent place on the agenda of the European Spring Summit (21st March 2003). Discussions on the modernisation of the European social model, and the necessary reforms to improve employment and social protection in Europe are key issues for the future of an ageing Europe that need to be commonly addressed.

The Intergroup is convinced that there is an urgent need to adopt a coherent approach between different EU policy processes. The Intergroup believes that to address effectively the challenges of population ageing across the EU, social protection and employment policies must be linked.

This streamlining exercise is not about merging existing processes into one, but ensuring there is a synergy between these policies and that their overall impact is better reflected in EU level discussions.

The Intergroup believes that the EU has a key role to play in ensuring a reform of pensions systems which will promote a decent level of pensions for all (including women), giving people a fair share of society's economic well-being, not just preventing outright poverty. Countries need to provide secure, universal and fully adequate 1st pillar pensions, whether or not 2nd and 3rd pillar systems are further developed. In parallel, it is also necessary to adopt reforms to allow and encourage older people to keep working longer. Effective retirement ages can best be raised by providing worker with genuine choices and opportunities for flexible retirement from the labour market, and by combating age discrimination. The Intergroup wishes to stress the fact that employment of older workers is an area where progress is lagging behind the Lisbon Strategy targets.

For more information on the Intergroup, contact the Secretariat (02.280.14.70) to the attention of Mr Podestà