

Managing demographic change is an opportunity

Written by Lambert van Nistelrooij on 7 April 2016 in Opinion
Opinion

Rural areas will remain at a clear disadvantage unless we encourage intergenerational dialogue between young and old people, writes Lambert van Nistelrooij.



By 2060, there will be two adults of working age for every pensioner. For every two people leaving the workforce, only one younger person will enter in return. Cities are growing as rural areas are shrinking - the differences are tremendous. This is already affecting daily life in rural areas, where the social safety net to protect the elderly is weakening as the younger generations leave, searching for jobs elsewhere in Europe.

This is a wake-up call for my colleagues and myself in Parliament's active ageing intergroup. Empowering the elderly, combined with solidarity between generations, is the way forward. Whether we live in rural areas or cities, whether we are 15, 40, 70 or even 100 years old, managing demographic change is key.

The upcoming demographic shift will affect relationships between generations and the way that our society functions.

RELATED CONTENT

- [Anne-Sophie Parent: Use of mHealth can reduce the impact of demographic change](#) [1]
 - [Vytenis Andriukaitis: EU committed to increasing healthy life years](#) [2]
 - [Anne-Sophie Parent: Demographic change requires 'sustainable solutions' from EU leaders](#) [3]
-

We must value the contribution of all age groups in society. Therefore, inclusion and participation are necessary everywhere, in all regions in Europe. The ongoing stigmatisation and discrimination against older people will not help to build such a society.

Each year since 2009, 29 April has marked the European day of solidarity between generations. For me, as coordinator of Parliament's active ageing intergroup, this year will be a call to action.

Unfortunately, we do not have a strong starting point. Policymakers still view demographic change as a burden rather than an opportunity.

Granted, we must pay attention to the negative aspects of ageing, such as increasing pensions and higher healthcare costs. Yet it is also our duty to see demographic change as an opportunity. In order to lower healthcare costs, for example, we have developed new innovative solutions such as eHealth.

These solutions will access remote areas, providing care for a better quality of life, and leading to greater social inclusion.

These new developments will also bring forth jobs for young generations, for example in the service and care sectors. This will positively influence Europe's regions and rural areas. Therefore, I hope more young people will stay in these rural regions and find a job there. This way, we will reach a better balance.

Europe has clear opportunities to invest and innovate in rural areas beyond 2020. We can contribute investments from the funds for regional development, rural development and social funds. This way, we can bridge the digital divide, assisting older people develop digital skills and creating better infrastructure and services at local level.

Informal work is just as important. Volunteers play a leading role in achieving a higher degree of social inclusion. Solidarity between generations is all about better understanding, helping and supporting each other.

Volunteers have proven essential in building inclusive and active communities. They have already developed neighbourhoods that make it possible for citizens of all ages to take part.

A good example is 'Generation Games', an intergenerational event in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, which makes the connection between people of all ages through sports. Europe needs to encourage more of these types of initiatives.

These local communities are also very important for learning and teaching and for transferring skills and good practices. In the EU, only half of the people between 55 and 64 are employed. This generation still has a lot to offer both to young and older people: experience, transferrable skills, knowledge, and - as old-fashioned as it sounds - wisdom.

According to AGE Platform Europe, some industries have started calling back older, retired workers, because their skills have not been passed on to younger generations.

Every generation has its own contribution to make to society; it is about how we value people's capacities, both in voluntary and formal jobs.

We must not forget this. Therefore let's open the debate. 29 April - the EU day for intergenerational solidarity - is getting closer. Share your experiences with us at the European Parliament on 26 April, when we will hold a meeting on the topic. What could your community, region or city do to boost social inclusion? What could the EU and your country do to manage the future? Be our guest on this day.

Together with AGE Platform Europe, we will kick off a debate working towards an inclusive society, where there is an exchange between people of all ages. Not by measuring years, but by counting the possibilities in the intergenerational approach.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday 26 of April from 14h00 till 16h00 in the European Parliament, room ASP 6Q1.

About the author

Lambert van Nistelrooij (EPP, NL) is coordinator of Parliament's active ageing intergroup

Tags

[Employment and Social Affairs](#) [4]

[Health](#) [5]

Categories

[Employment](#) [6]

[Society and welfare](#) [7]



The Parliament Magazine is a Dods Group plc title

Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)

- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)
[HouseThe](#)
[Parliament](#)
[MagazineHolyrood](#)
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)
[Service](#)
[World](#)
[PublicTechnology](#)
[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[SummitPublic](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and
Care Innovation
Expo](#)[Civil Service
Live](#)[Civil Service
Awards](#)[Chief
Nursing Officer for
England's
Summit](#)[Women into
Leadership](#)[The
Youth Justice
Convention](#)[Socitm
Spring
Conference](#)[NHSCC
Annual Members'
Event](#)[Dods at Party
Conference](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)[Terms & Conditions](#)[Advertising](#)[Sponsorship](#) [Subscriptions](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/managing-demographic-change-opportunity>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/use-mhealth-can-reduce-impact-demographic-change>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/eu-committed-increasing-healthy-life-years>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/demographic-change-requires-sustainable-solutions-eu-leaders>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/employment-and-social-affairs>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/health>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/employment>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/society-and-welfare>