



2014 - TWENTIETH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF THE FAMILY

The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD),
The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD)
and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union
in cooperation with the
Focal Point on the Family (UNDESA)

European Expert Group Meeting
**“Confronting family poverty and social exclusion;
ensuring work-family balance;
advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity
in Europe”**

Convened as part of preparations for the
Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014
(Cfr. Report of the Secretary-General ,
Preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the
International Year of the Family in 2014,
A/67/61-E/2012/3)

6-8 June 2011

AIIDE MEMOIRE

I. BACKGROUND

Family policy in the UN context

The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD), The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union in cooperation with the Focal Point on the Family (UNDESA) are organizing a European Expert Group Meeting to be held 6-8 June 2012 in Brussels. The theme of the meeting is “Confronting family poverty and social exclusion; ensuring work-family balance; advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity in Europe.” The meeting is convened as part of preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014.

One of the objectives of the 1994 International Year of the Family (IYF) and its follow-up processes is a sustained, long-term effort to strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families. In its resolutions 62/129 (2007) and 60/133 (2005), the General Assembly has encouraged Governments to continue to make every possible effort to integrate a family perspective into national policymaking. In particular, the General Assembly recommended that the United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions, research and academic institutions and the private sector play a supportive role in promoting the objectives of the International Year and contribute to developing strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities. The 2010 General Assembly resolution (A/RES/64/133) encouraged member States to adopt holistic approaches to policies and programmes that confront family poverty and social exclusion and invited Member States to stimulate public debate and consultations on family-oriented and gender- and child-sensitive social protection policies.

The Economic and Social Council’s resolution on the “Preparations for an observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family” (2011/29) noted the importance of designing, implementing and monitoring family-oriented policies, especially in the areas of **poverty eradication, full employment and decent work, work family balance**, social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The resolution further encouraged Member States to continue their efforts to develop **appropriate policies to address family poverty, social exclusion and work-family balance and share good practices in those areas**.

In addition, the most recent resolution of the Commission for Social Development, to be adopted by the ECOSOC in July 2012 invited “Member-States, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions to support, as appropriate, the preparations for regional meetings in observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family” (E/CN.5/2012/L.3, para. 13).

The Expert Group Meeting is convened in response to above mentioned resolutions.

Family policies

Family policies, differing in content, scope and target are often broadly defined as Government's actions to benefit the family. Family-friendly policies can also be enacted by private institutions and come from civil society organizations. Often family policies benefit only families with children while those caring for adults, such as older persons are excluded. Frequently, family policies are confined to economic issues, and disregard other aspects of family functioning, such as interactions between family members.

Families perform a variety of functions, including economic support, childrearing, nurturing and educational roles as well as caregiving to all family members, young and old. It has been often observed that family policy should aim to help families perform these various functions and aim at reducing family poverty and social exclusion; ensure minimum standards of social protection; prevent intergenerational transmission of poverty; focus on multiple aspect of child well-being; attempt to reconcile work and family life, as well as support intergenerational solidarity and various care arrangements within the family.

As stated in the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union at the 50th session of the Commission for Social Development: "The European Union and its Member States are developing several initiatives on families, namely to address demographic change and promote family policy evaluation, or the exchange of good practices, through specific programmes, such as the European Alliance for Families, the European Demographic Forum, as well as expert groups, demonstrating the commitment of all European Union countries to improve living conditions of families."

Other significant initiatives have also taken place within the EU, such as the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations and the European thematic week on population and family issues called "Europe for Families, Families for Europe" organized under the Hungarian Presidency in 2011, as well as some others outside the EU, like the 2011 Moscow Demographic Summit or the National Marriage Week in Albania.

Confronting family poverty and social exclusion

Equality is a fundamental right within the EU and other European countries. However, deep-rooted disadvantages faced by certain groups of society, coupled with ingrained attitudes and beliefs of others, means that legislation alone is unlikely to achieve the goal of creating a society which genuinely offers equal opportunities to all and is totally free from discrimination. While extreme poverty affects certain groups within the EU, most notably the Roma in some Member States, the more widespread form of poverty within the EU tends to be relative poverty, both in monetary and non-monetary terms.

Social exclusion relates to being unable to enjoy levels of participation that most of society takes for granted. It is a complex, multi-dimensional, multi-layered and dynamic concept that the EU's social inclusion process defined as a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feeling powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives'.

Social exclusion is multi-dimensional in that it encompasses income poverty, unemployment, access to education, information, childcare and health facilities, living conditions, as well as social participation. It is multi-layered insofar as the causes of exclusion can be at the national, community, household or individual level.

(Cfr. Eurostat, 'Combating poverty and social exclusion: A statistical portrait of the European Union 2010', http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EP-09-001/EN/KS-EP-09-001-EN.PDF).

A variety of family-oriented policies aim at poverty reduction. For instance, gender- and child-sensitive social protection policies addressing family poverty and reducing the vulnerability of younger and older generations have been increasingly mainstreamed in the European Union. In particular, social transfer programmes sustaining the vulnerable families are indispensable to changing the structure of opportunities and are key to reducing the intergenerational transfer of poverty and inequality.

The provision of child benefits and a variety of tax incentives for families with children, are also seen as contributing to the reduction in both child poverty, family poverty and overall poverty rates. Quality child care provision is also a strategy to reduce poverty by facilitating parental employment.

Ensuring work-family balance

Europeans who have a job enjoy greater life satisfaction than economically inactive citizens and unemployed people. However, the feeling of an excessive workload due either to professional or family obligations leads to a substantial reduction in life satisfaction. According to the Second European Quality of Life Survey, women who work outside the home and experience work–family conflict tend to be less satisfied with life than women who work solely in the home. Unemployment, nevertheless, has the most negative impact on life satisfaction: even those who report a high level of work–family conflict are far more satisfied with life than unemployed persons.

Overall, Europeans are more dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with their family than with the amount of time spent at work, family life being more adapted to em-

ployment requirements than work arrangements are to family life. Substantial differences exist between countries in terms of the reasons for unsatisfactory work–family balance. In the Nordic countries, as well as in the Benelux countries and France, failure to achieve a satisfactory work–life balance is due to a shortage of time. In the central and eastern European countries and the candidate countries, work–family balance is above all negatively affected by tiredness due to poor working conditions resulting from long working hours. Balancing work and family seems to be easier in German-speaking and Anglo-Saxon countries: this may be explained by a lower proportion of dual-earner couples and working single mothers in these countries.

(Cfr. Eurofound, ‘Second European Quality of Life Survey - Family life and work – 2010’, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2010/02/en/1/EF1002EN.pdf>).

Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks balancing work and family life should be established to encourage shared responsibilities between family members, the State, the private sector and the society at large. Such policies may range from parental leave to child benefits and access to quality and affordable childcare. Flexibility of working hours and working place, professional support and advice and efforts to create a more family-friendly culture in the workplace are equally important.

Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity

The European population structure is changing and becoming progressively older. A steady increase in life expectancy across Europe during the last century led to increased longevity, while in more recent decades – from the 1970s onwards – Europe has experienced falling fertility rates. These two developments impact upon demographic ageing, a process that has become established in the EU in the last 30 or 40 years and which is expected, by many, to become further entrenched during the next half century, as the absolute number and the relative importance of the population of older persons continues to grow.

These demographic changes will lead to significant challenges for families and individuals – for example, it could become commonplace for people to move into retirement while still having one or both of their parents alive.

Many of the challenges that arise from population ageing are universal and include:

- pressure on public budgets and fiscal systems;
- strains on pension and social security systems;
- adjusting the economy and in particular workplaces to an ageing labour force;
- possible labour market shortages as the number of working age persons decreases;
- the likely need for increased numbers of trained healthcare professionals;
- higher demand for healthcare services and long-term (institutionalised) care;
- potential conflict between generations over the distribution of resources.

(Cfr. Eurostat, 'Active ageing and solidarity between generations - A statistical portrait of the European Union 2012', http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EP-11-001/EN/KS-EP-11-001-EN.PDF).

Demographic changes in Europe necessitate a serious analysis of the state of intergenerational relations within families. Ageing populations on one hand and precarious situation of young people (in terms of employment and social disadvantage) on the other hand, put into sharp focus the necessity of advancing intergenerational solidarity, especially in times of crises and uncertainty.

Initiatives aimed at promoting intergenerational solidarity and cooperation encompass a variety of social protection schemes targeting the older and younger persons within families. At a community level, youth and older persons volunteer programmes are being implemented to bring generations closer together. Similarly, investing in cross-generational community centres has been found to increase the level of interactions between the generations. In the work-place, programmes promoting intergenerational communication through job-sharing and mentoring opportunities aim at improving both interactions between employees and their overall productivity.

II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The primary objective of the Meeting is to provide Member States and other stakeholders with expert opinion and recommendations regarding confronting family poverty and social exclusion; ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration.

Experts dealing with various aspects of family policy are invited from a broad geographical distribution to participate in the meeting in their personal capacities. **Experts will be asked to provide a paper, participate in group discussions and give their expert opinion and policy recommendations on the best ways of integrating family perspective into overall policy making and developing family policies in the areas of poverty reduction, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity in Europe. The experts are also expected to provide specific recommendations and examples of good practices in the three areas mentioned above.**

The expected outcomes of the Meeting are:

- a) 7-10 page paper (single-spaced) prepared by each expert on issues in the annotated agenda and including policy recommendations
- b) final outcome report encompassing a summary of discussion, policy recommendations and papers by the experts

Papers by experts will focus on issues identified in the agenda below, explain their relevance, provide quantitative and qualitative evidence, analyze the roles of social institutions, summarize conclusions and provide policy recommendations. In as much as possible, an emphasis will be placed on policy actions at the local, national, regional and international levels. The report and experts' papers will be posted on the website of the Programme on the Family, as well as the websites of the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD).

The final report of the expert group meeting as well as expert papers will be used as an input to the 2012 Report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF). This report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council.

The report and experts' papers will also be posted on the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family website.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The meeting will be convened at the Headquarters of the European Union Committee of the Regions (Jacques Delors building - Rue Belliard 99-101 - B - 1040 Brussels - Belgium.)

The total number of participants will be approximately 22, including 9 experts participating in their personal capacity. These experts will be identified and invited by the International Federation for Family Development. Representatives from international organizations, United Nations offices and agencies as well as civil society organizations will also be invited. **Participants are expected to arrive on 5 June and stay through the duration of the meeting, through the end of the day on 8 June.** Travel and attendance costs will be covered for experts and practitioners invited. An information note will be sent out to participants at a later stage to assist with travel arrangements.

Only introductory remarks and brief presentations are envisioned. The preparatory process, including advance preparation of written inputs by the experts is seen as very important. **The participants should submit their papers to the EGM Secretariat by 10 May 2012.** The list of issues to explore is given below, it should be read in conjunction with the annotated agenda provided to all participants, where experts are identified as moderators and providers of introductory remarks.

The participants will meet in 9 working sessions

- Each session will have brief introductory remarks or presentation/s by expert/s which will introduce the topic and provide context for ensuing discussion
- A moderator for each session will lead the group discussion and will be responsible for compiling the recommendations from each session
- Discussions and brainstorming will be the preferred method of work and no formal conference style presentations are envisioned
- The working language of the meeting will be English. There will be no interpretation provided. All submissions should be made available to the Secretariat in English.

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IV. PROPOSED AGENDA

Day 1 - 6 June 2012

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-9:45	Opening session Welcome and opening remarks Focal Point on the Family, UN DSPD/DESA
9:45-10:00	Introductory Session Objectives of the meeting IFFD Representative
10:00-10:15	Introductory Session Expected outcomes of the meeting DIIFSD Representative
	Introduction of the participants
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-12:30	Session I: Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion Child poverty <i>Introductory remarks</i> <i>Good Practice</i> <i>Roundtable discussion</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:15	Session II: Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion Family resilience <i>Introductory remarks</i> <i>Good Practice</i> <i>Roundtable discussion</i>

15:15-15:30	Break
15:30-16:45	<p>Session III: Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion Families at risk and social protection</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>
16:45-17:00	Policy recommendations from day 1

Day 2 - 7 June 2011

9:00-10:30	<p>Session IV: Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance Maternity, paternity and parental leave arrangements</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-12:30	<p>Session V: Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance Work, fertility and the transition to parenthood: trends and their impact on work and family agenda</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch break

14:00-15:15	<p>Session VI: Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance Integration of family policies responses and shared responsibilities</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>
15:15-15:30	Policy recommendations from day 2
15:30-15:45	Break
15:45-17:00	<p>Session VII: Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity Parenting courses</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>

Day 3 - 8 June 2011

9:00-10:30	<p>Session VIII: Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity Social inclusion and integration of older persons: active ageing</p> <p><i>Introductory remarks</i></p> <p><i>Good Practice</i></p> <p><i>Roundtable discussion</i></p>
10:30-10:45	Break

10:45-12:30	Session IX: Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity Improving intergenerational relations: youth and older person's volunteer programmes <i>Introductory remarks</i> <i>Good Practice</i> <i>Roundtable discussion</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:00	Policy recommendations from day 3 Distillation of findings, finalization and adoption of recommendations
15:00-15:15	Concluding remarks, farewell and closing

V. RAISE AWARENESS MEETING

A public awareness raising meeting will be held the day before the commencement of the EGM at the Headquarters of the European Union Committee of the Regions (Jacques Delors building - Rue Belliard 99-101 - B - 1040 Brussels – Belgium, same location as the EGM.)

Only those designated to intervene in that meeting are required to arrive in time for it and their costs will be covered, still all the other participants are welcome to attend.

5 June 2012

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-9:50	Opening session
9:50-10:30	Towards the Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014
10:30-11:10	Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion
11:10-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:10	Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance
12:10-12:50	Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity
12:50-13:15	Closing Session
13:15-14:30	Lunch