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Questions for the
**Hearing of the Candidate for the
European Commission Presidency:
Towards a EU Strategy on
Demographic Change**

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Towards a EU Strategy on Demographic Change

Demographic and climate changes are both major challenges facing Europe. They are also the two main areas where huge opportunities for economic growth, innovation and social justice can be developed in the coming decade.

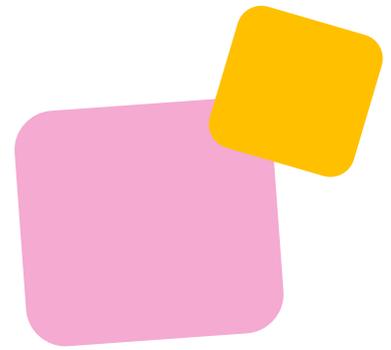
As President of the new College of Commissioners, you will have the power to **reinforce the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy** to ensure fair and sustainable growth and prosperity of European citizens at every stage of life.

In this framework, a new **EU Strategy on Demographic Change** can become a main vector for economic growth and help EU Member States and regions adapt to the needs of their rapidly ageing populations in ways that are sustainable and fair to all generations and ensure equality between men and women.

An EU Strategy on Demographic Change should seek to help coordinate and **build synergies between EU major dossiers on which demographic change has an impact.**

- **Do you agree that the EU needs to adopt and implement a Strategy on Demographic Change to coordinate and build synergies between all relevant EU policy processes and initiatives to ensure that Europe 2020 delivers an EU for all ages?**





The European Semester

EU macroeconomic development is very much impacted by the current demographic change Europe's is experiencing. The European Commission issues country specific recommendations to all Member States to ensure that they do their utmost to keep public debt under control. This implies reforming their social protection systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of their pension, health and long-term care systems and to tackle citizens' growing concerns about the sharp increase in socio-economic inequalities in the EU.

- Do you agree that adequacy of social protection systems is as important as sustainability and should be given equal attention in the European Semester process?
- Could the lead of the European Semester be moved from DG ECFIN to the General Secretariat to ensure that social issues have the same weight as macroeconomic issues in the process?
- How do you intend to use the Lisbon Treaty's Article 9 to take initiatives to support Member States in their efforts to guarantee adequate, fair and sustainable national social protection systems?
- What measures do you envisage to support Member States in their efforts to reach Europe 2020 objectives in the field of poverty reduction and increase of employment rate, including for older workers or older people in poverty as well as discriminated and excluded groups such as persons with disabilities?

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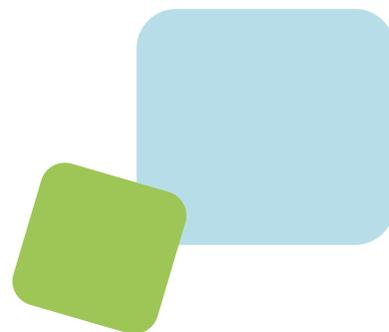


Fundamental rights

EU's approach to the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights has been on an ad hoc and fragmented basis and there is incoherence between how rights are addressed in EU's internal and external action, which entails important disparities about how EU citizens can access their rights.

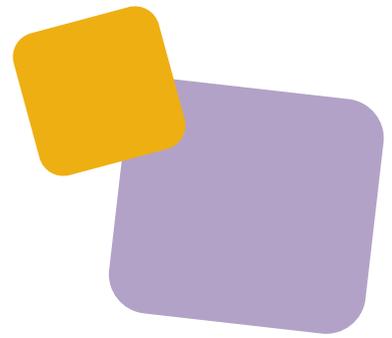
Furthermore the **Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008) 426)** was tabled by President Barroso and is blocked in the Council since 2008.

- Do you agree that the EU should renew its commitment and enhance its accountability to deliver the realisation of the rights of all EU citizens across its programme, policies and legislation in line also with the mainstreaming of the non-discrimination provision in EU Treaties and to improve the EU's capacity to promote and enforce fundamental rights and non-discrimination in its Member States?
- What actions do you intend to take to achieve equality and non-discrimination for all EU citizens in all areas of their lives? Do you commit to take action to achieve the adoption of a strong Equal Treatment directive?



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Internal market

The new European Consumer Agenda aims at boosting confidence in the Single Market. This implies ensuring the protection of all consumers, including the most disadvantaged ones.

- How will you guarantee that all consumers can benefit from a performing EU internal market and enjoy safe and accessible goods and services, including financial services and long-term care services?
- Will you commit to the presentation to the Parliament and Council of the long awaited legislative proposal for a European Accessibility Act?
- Do you plan to improve broadband coverage across Europe to facilitate the scaling-up of e-Health and ICT-based services supporting independent living for older persons and persons with disabilities?
- How do you intend to contribute to the mainstreaming of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in the Digital Agenda?

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Regional policy

Demographic change is a key challenge for most European regions. With more than 350 billion Euros, the reformed Cohesion policy for 2014-2020 is a powerful instrument to support local and regional authorities tackling current and future challenges, such as demographic change. Creating age-friendly environments, i.e. adapting everyday living environment to the needs of Europe's ageing population is the most promising solution to demographic change.

Age-friendly environments help create new jobs in innovative sectors and lower the pressure of old age dependency on the public purse by empowering people to work longer, age in better physical and mental health, remain active in their community as citizens and consumers, live independently at home and enjoy a good quality of life in their old age.

A large group of stakeholders supported by EU funding is currently framing a **EU Covenant on Demographic Change** to create a sustainable policy framework that will bring together local and regional, national and EU authorities and stakeholders who want to develop and implement smart and innovative solutions to support active and healthy ageing and make age-friendly environments across the EU a reality.

- **Since demographic change is identified as a cross-cutting policy objective and as such has lost visibility into the reformed cohesion policy, do you agree that it is the role of the EU to support such a Covenant on Demographic Change and will you make sure it is properly funded by the Operational Programmes?**

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