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# Discussion Paper

## EU CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

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Ann Zimmermann

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# EU Civil Society and Demographic Change

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This discussion paper is part of Population Europe's three-part discussion paper series, which provides in-depth insights into contemporary discussions among demographic experts from research, policy and civil society at the European level.<sup>1</sup> The first issue "Perspectives of Policy-Relevant Population Studies" (Bengtsson et al. 2012) is devoted to the research perspective and provides an agenda of the most urgent topics and innovative approaches in the field of policy-relevant population studies. The second issue "Demographic Change on the Political Agenda of the European Commission" (Zimmermann 2015) offers insights into how demographic change is discussed as a political challenge for the European Union (EU). This third issue focuses on the views and concepts of European civil society actors on the issue of demographic change and related fields. Together the three discussion papers describe and distil how some of the most influential protagonists from different societal areas approach demographic change and more specifically, how they set their agendas and priorities. These papers are not able to draw the full picture of the broad variety of responses to demographic change – which is almost impossible given the thematic and regional scope that would need to be covered and the multitudinous actors who are involved on the national, as well as the European level. However, they aim to provide a first orientation for readers who want to make their way through a public debate, which has been flourishing all over Europe since the 1990s. Therefore, these papers are supposed to contribute to the discussion about one of the most pressing issues of our time, which requires close cooperation between different stakeholders – from research, policy and civil society – in order to develop effective and sustainable solutions for the future of our ageing societies.

To approach the issue of EU civil society and demographic change, chapter 1 will clarify the scope of this paper in terms of how EU civil society is understood, what aspects of demographic change and population policy are considered and which period of time is covered. Chapter 2 provides examples of institutionalised forms of exchange between the EU and civil society organisations at the European Commission level in areas relevant to the issue of demographic change. A short overview will also be given of how demographic change

has developed on the political agenda of the European Commission and which aspects are prominent in its demography strategy today. In chapter 3 we focus on activities and positions related to demographic change by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which – as a consultative body of the EU – provides representatives of economic and social interest groups a formal platform to express their opinions on EU issues. Chapter 4 presents selected EU civil society organisations that are active in the fields relevant to this paper and gives an overview of how they approach these issues and what aspects they have considered to be particularly important in the last five years. In each field we have chosen two to three of the largest and most well-known EU organisations. As it would be almost impossible to describe the views of all civil society actors active within the European policy arena, we focused mainly on large networks and umbrella organisations that represent a broad range and a substantial number of member organisations. In regard to the area of ageing and health, we describe AGE Platform Europe (AGE) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA). Relating to fertility and family, we look at the Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU (COFACE) and the network Eurochild. Concerning the issue of legal migration, we introduce the related work of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Confederation of European Business (BUSINESSEUROPE) and the Platform for European Social NGOs (Social Platform). In chapter 5 we offer some final conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. EU CIVIL SOCIETY, DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND POPULATION POLICY

The term civil society is somehow problematic since there is no distinct and universal definition: “One of the reasons for the continued confusion of the civil society debate is that this is such an elastic concept, seen by many as a part of society (the world of voluntary associations), by some as a kind of society (marked out by certain social norms), and by others as a space for citizen action and engagement (described as the public square or sphere)” (Edwards 2011). For the purpose of this paper, we rely on a definition of civil society developed by a number of leading research centres, which was adopted by the World Bank. Therefore, we understand the term civil society as referring “to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations.”<sup>3</sup>

National civil society organisations tend to emphasise the national character of their interests and mainly address national members of the EU institutions, as well as their national administrations and governments. In this paper we focus on European civil society organisations – often called Eurogroups (Nugent 2010, Eising 2007) – which are typically umbrella organisations composed of national associations, rather than individual members who represent the interests of their various causes at EU level. Eurogroups primarily strive for two things (Nugent 2010: 249): (1) to gather and exchange information with EU organisations and national affiliates, and (2) to have their interests and views incorporated into EU policies by persuading and pressuring those who make and implement them: “The long, complex and multi-layered nature of EU processes provides many points of access for interests, and hence many opportunities for them to keep themselves informed about developments and press their cases with those who influence, make and implement decisions. The main points of access are the national governments, the Commission, and the

European Parliament” (Nugent 2010: 249).

As in the second issue of our discussion paper series “Demographic Change on the Political Agenda of the European Commission” (Zimmermann 2015), we define population policies in this paper as “direct or indirect actions taken in the interest of the greater good by public authorities in order to address imbalances between demographic changes and other social, economic, and political goals” (May 2005: 828). Looking at demographic change itself, we focus on the ageing of societies, which means the median age of a population increases because of an increasing number of older people (due to increasing longevity) and a comparably lower number of younger people (due to decreasing fertility levels). On the topical level we concentrate on discussions about how to deal with demographic change in three issue fields that correspond to the basic demographic processes of mortality, fertility and migration, namely: ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration. In relation to migration, we only include the legal migration of third-country nationals. We will not take into account the issues of asylum and irregular migration since these aspects are usually not discussed as a means of dealing with demographic change in Europe. We will also not consider the issue of intra-EU mobility, which refers to the migration of EU citizens to other EU Member States. Intra-EU mobility, of course, may also have significant effects in demographic terms, but unfortunately we are not able to include this area due to reasons of feasibility in regard to the scope of this paper. In terms of the time frame this paper covers the period from 2010 until today and thereby includes the second Barroso Commission (2010-2014) and the current Juncker Commission (2014-2019).

## 2. CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN THE FIELD OF POPULATION ISSUES

Before we turn to the question of how the exchange between the European Commission and EU civil society actors is organised and to examples in some of the relevant Directorates-General, we will briefly outline how demographic change is conceived as a political challenge on the level of the European Commission, which aspects are highlighted as particularly important and which possible solutions are discussed.

### 2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Today the issue of demographic change is firmly established on the political agenda of the European Commission.<sup>4</sup> In general, the Commission specifically highlights four interrelated aspects of demographic change in terms of population ageing: the fall in population size, the decline in the number of children and young people, the shrinking workforce and the increase in the number of people approaching retirement age. Demographic change started to gain high political visibility at the beginning of the 1990s with a clear focus on the situation of older people, their integration into society and intergenerational solidarity. Shortly thereafter the question of how to maintain economic performance with a decreasing and older labour force also came into focus, as well as the question of how to ensure adequate levels of social protection for an ageing population. The main strategies discussed to deal with these challenges were directed at increasing the overall size of the workforce, promoting active ageing, and ensuring sustainable and adaptable pensions. Within the last years it was increasingly emphasised that this alone may not be sufficient in the long run to compensate for the decline in the working-age population, but that there is also the strong need to increase productivity through investment in human and physical capital, and innovation. These different strands of the discussion about how to best deal with demographic ageing – and the numerous related aspects – resulted in the formulation of the demography strategy of the European Commission in 2006 (COM(2006) 571). This strategy defined five areas, which until today have represented the main dimensions of

demographic change as a political issue on the agenda of the European Commission:

1. Promoting demographic renewal by creating conditions supportive of those who wish to have children: more equal opportunities for citizens with and without children, universal access to assistance services for parents (esp. childcare), better work-life balance through flexible forms of work, effective gender equality policies and parental leave.
2. Promoting employment with more jobs and longer working lives: e.g. improvement of education systems, “flexicurity”, combating discriminatory prejudices against older workers, promoting a genuine European public health policy, reducing differences in life expectancy, increasing the number of women and people over the age of 55 working.
3. More productive and dynamic Europe by giving different economic operators the chance to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by demographic change (new markets for goods and services responding to the needs of an older clientele) and by encouraging economic actors to incorporate the ageing phenomenon into their innovation strategies.
4. Receiving and integrating migrants through the development of a common policy on legal migration, attracting a qualified labour force from outside the EU in order to meet the needs of the labour market, promoting diversity and combating prejudice for the sake of facilitating economic and social integration.
5. Sustainable public finances by increasing the employment participation rate, avoiding early withdrawal from the labour market, raising the age of definitive retirement, guaranteeing adequate social protection and equity between the generations, allowing for an increase in retirement income with supplementary pensions, ensuring a better balance between contributions and benefits, and creating stable and secure conditions for individuals to save and invest.

Within these areas a broad range of possible policy measures to reach these declared goals are discussed today, which have developed in the discussion over the last 25 years. In general terms the Commission has emphasised more and more over the last years the need for a life course approach to mitigate the consequences of



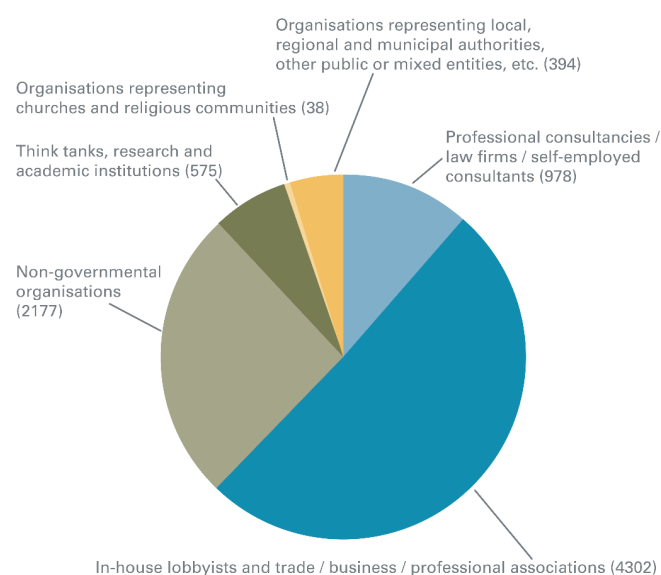
ageing by not only focusing on older people, but on all generations by strengthening people's skills, capacities and health, as well as their economic and social integration over the whole life course with a special focus on the bridges between the different stages of life. In the Commission's view, such an investment would lead to larger growth, lower dependency burdens and substantial cost savings in public spending.

## 2.2 INSTITUTIONALISED EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In comparison to other political systems – which also have substantial interactions with stakeholders for a variety of purposes – the EU “is remarkable in a high degree of dependence upon organised interests to achieve its goals” (Greenwood and Dreger 2013: 141). In the following we will focus on the European Commission as the executive body of the EU that proposes and develops policies and legislation, and represents the interests of the EU as a whole. In comparison to other EU institutions like the European Council or the European Parliament, the Commission is the main target for most interest groups at the European level: “It is so primarily, because of its central importance in so many respects: in policy initiation and formulation; in following proposals through their legislative cycle; in managing the EU's spending programmes; and in policy implementation. An important contributory reason why the Commission attracts so much attention is simply that it is known to be approachable” (Nugent 2010: 250). Vice versa, the exchange with interest groups is also important for the European Commission for a number of reasons (Eising 2007): Interest groups define, aggregate and articulate the interests of their members or their constituencies, which makes it easier for European institutions to monitor social change and consider new political concerns. The Commission especially relies on the expertise of interest groups in the design of public policy, since it only has limited in-house resources and needs to draw on external sources of information in order to perform its policy functions effectively. It must also make sure that its policy proposals meet with a consensus as, in view of its limited power, it would be difficult to enforce change

that did not meet the expectations of those affected.

It is not possible to determine exactly how many Euro-groups are active on the European level in general or in the fields specifically related to the issue of demographic change. To get a rough idea, one can look at the Transparency Register of interest representatives that was set up by the European Parliament and the European Commission in 2011.<sup>5</sup> This voluntary register was introduced to respond to criticism concerning the transparency and accountability of the EU's decision-making process because of the widespread lobbying in the EU institutions. There are six sections / types of registrants in the Transparency Register. In 2015 the largest section – representing more than half of all registrants – was “in-house lobbyists and trade professional associations”, while 26% of the registrants were NGOs (see Graph 1).<sup>6</sup>



Graph 1 Kind of registrants in the Transparency Register (N=8464)  
Source: Transparency Register (retrieved on 19/10/2015)

Still the registration is voluntary and therefore the register does not provide the full picture. Researchers estimate that approximately three-quarters of business-related organisations actively working with EU institutions are actually registered, while 60% of NGOs with a European interest are registered (Greenwood and Dreger 2013: 159). It is also not possible to easily define which areas the registered NGOs are engaged in since

the categories the register provides are very broad. Three of the defined fields are relevant in terms of the interests of this paper: In the category “employment and social affairs”, 564 NGOs with a European-level interest are registered; in the field of “public health”, 502 of these groups are registered; and in the field of “home affairs” (which also includes migration), 369 groups of these kind are listed.<sup>7</sup>

To get an impression of how the exchange between the European Commission and EU civil society is institutionalised, we will have a closer look at three Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Commission. Referring to the issue of how to best deal with demographic change with a focus on the areas of ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration, the following DGs are notably active (Zimmermann 2015): DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), and DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME). On a general level DG EMPL is the body within the European Commission which is concerned with demographic change most extensively. This can be seen by its comprehensive stance on demographic challenges and on the question of how to best mitigate the consequences of ageing. DG SANTE and DG HOME – in correspondence with their overall responsibilities – are dealing primarily with those aspects of demographic change that are related to health (DG SANTE) and migration (DG HOME). All three of the DGs have close contact with civil society organisations working in their fields and different forums of institutionalised exchange are provided, which will be briefly described in the following sections. Of course other DGs are also active in the area of demographic change and related issues, e.g. DG Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), DG Research and Innovation (DG RTD), DG Education and Culture (DG EAC), DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and DG Agricultural and Rural Development (DG AGRI).<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2.1 DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

DG EMPL emphasises that NGOs have become “essential actors in the social field, particularly in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. They engage in regular dialogue with public authorities with a view to ensur-

ing better implementation of EU initiatives and policies in the EU countries.”<sup>9</sup> Within the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>10</sup> – which is the EU’s ten-year strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – a new partnership between the EU institutions, national and regional governments and European stakeholders was set up in the form of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. One of the five areas for action defined is: “Working in partnership with civil society to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms.”<sup>11</sup> The Platform is designed to help EU countries reach the headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion, and brings together:

- EU-level NGOs and social partners in the fields of employment, social affairs and inclusion;
- representatives of EU institutions and other international organisations;
- representatives of national, regional and local authorities;
- think tanks and foundations for issues related to social inclusion.

Through the PROGRESS programme (2007-2013) – a financial instrument used to support the development and coordination of EU policy – DG EMPL aimed to increase the involvement of several European umbrella NGO networks in the fields of social inclusion, gender equality and the defending of the rights of people exposed to discrimination (see Table 1). The PROGRESS programme focused on EU policy in five areas with a strong demographic dimension: (1) employment, (2) social inclusion and social protection, (3) working conditions, (4) anti-discrimination and (5) gender equality.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in addition to the PROGRESS programme, the Commission also financially supports smaller networks working on the social integration of disabled people.

Regarding industrial relations, DG EMPL is in close contact with representatives of the European trade unions and employers, i.e. the “social partners”. Within the European social dialogue<sup>13</sup> discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations that represent the two sides of industry take place.<sup>14</sup> The social partners are consulted by the European Commission about the possible direction of an initiative in the

first stage and then on the content of an initiative in the second stage.<sup>15</sup>

#### Promoting social inclusion

Caritas Europa  
COFACE (Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union)  
Dynamo International-Street Workers Network  
EAPN (European Anti-Poverty Network)  
EMN (European Microfinance Network)  
ENSIE (European Network for Social Integration Enterprises)  
ESN (European Social Network)  
Eurochild  
Eurocities  
Eurodiaconia  
EuroHealthNet  
FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless)  
MHE (Mental Health Europe)  
PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

#### Promoting gender equality

European Women's Lobby

#### Representing and defending the rights of people exposed to discrimination

AGE Platform Europe  
ENAR (European Network Against Racism)  
EDF (European Disability Forum)  
ILGA Europe (International Lesbian and Gay Association – Europe)  
ERIO (European Roma Information Office)

Table 1 Umbrella NGO networks in the PROGRESS programme

## 2.2.2 DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

In the framework of the EU health strategy (COM(2007) 630), DG SANTE has set up groups and structures to help citizens, interest groups and organisations to be involved in EU activities in the field of health, like the Health Forum and the Stakeholder Dialogue Group.<sup>16</sup>

The EU Health Forum strives to inform and involve key health stakeholders in European health policy. It disseminates information, launches ideas for debate and contributes to policy building. It consists of two components: the EU Health Policy Forum and the Open Forum. The Health Policy Forum brings together pan-European stakeholder organisations from the health sector at the EU level (52 non-governmental umbrella organisations) to ensure that the EU's health strategy is open, transparent and responds to public concerns. It advises the Commission (and EU countries if appropriate) on health matters.<sup>17</sup> The Open Forum extends the work of the EU Health Policy Forum to a broader set of stakeholders in an annual flagship event: "The idea is to provide a platform for networking and exchanging ideas, particularly for groups and organisations which are not normally part of the 'EU circuit'."<sup>18</sup>

The Stakeholder Dialogue Group advises DG SANTE on good practice in the consultation process. Its Mandate is defined as: "The group helps the Commission tailor its stakeholder involvement processes to stakeholder needs in the areas of public health and consumer protection. It advises the Commission on process-related matters only, not on policy content. Members do not represent their organisations but participate in a personal capacity."<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2.3 DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

In 2009 DG HOME, together with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, see chapter 3), launched the European Integration Forum for facilitating dialogue with civil society on issues related to the integration of third-country nationals. The Forum met twice a year and discussed different topics related to migrants' integration. In 2014 it was decided to extend the scope of the Forum to cover topics related to immigration and asylum, and the new European Migration Forum was established. The Forum is supposed to serve as a platform for civil society to engage at the EU level and exchange experiences in order to enhance coordination and cooperation amongst key actors. By bringing together civil society organisations from EU Member States working at the European, national and local levels, the Forum aims at facilitating the creation of partnerships and synergies in this field. Participation of civil society organisations from third countries is also foreseen, according to the topic discussed. In addition, the Forum informs the implementation of EU decision-making in the areas of migration, asylum and integration. Through the work of the Forum, DG HOME strives to be better informed about the main challenges that civil society organisations face on the ground and on how to contribute more constructively to the needs of migrants.

Next to institutionalised forums for exchange between the European Commission and civil society actors, of which some examples have been shown here, the European Economic and Social Committee, which we will now turn to in chapter 3, gives – as an EU advisory body – interest groups a formal say on EU legislative proposals.

### 3. THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) – which describes itself as “a bridge between Europe and organised civil society” – is a consultative body of the EU. It provides representatives of economic and social interest groups a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues. Under Article 304 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU, it is specified that “[t]he Committee shall be consulted by the European Parliament, by the Council or by the Commission where the Treaties so provide.” Amongst the policy fields in which the EESC must be consulted are agriculture, freedom of movement of workers, internal market issues, economic and social cohesion, social policy, the European Regional Development Fund, the environment, research and technological development, research and training programmes, health and safety, and investment. Its opinions are forwarded to the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The EESC has 350 Members appointed for five-year terms who are divided into three groups: employers, employees and a third group of other various interests.

The EESC structures its activities along a number of themes, of which the most relevant in demographic terms is “social affairs”.<sup>20</sup> Topics that fall under the social affairs heading include: employment, education and training, culture and sport, disability, gender equality, poverty, health, justice, immigration and asylum, Roma, children and families, young people, older people, demographic change, and volunteering and active citizenship. All these themes are handled mainly by the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) who describes its prime concern as improving the welfare of all European citizens: “Through our activities, our members contribute to the fight against poverty, discrimination and marginalisation.”<sup>21</sup> Apart from opinions requested by the European institutions, as well as its own-initiative opinions with policy analysis and specific proposals, the SOC section regularly organises public hearings and seminars. Members of the section also participate in conferences and other events organised by the EU Presidencies, EU institutions and civil society organisations, including informal ministerial meetings (EESC 2011a).

In the following we will first show which role demographic change and related aspects play in the current and upcoming strategies of the SOC section (section 3.1). Then we will delineate how demographic change and related issues are framed in the SOC section’s general policy portfolio (section 3.2).

#### 3.1 STRATEGY OF THE SOC SECTION 2010-2015

At the beginning of each term of office, the SOC section sets out its priorities. Since this paper focuses on the period from 2010 until today, two terms are considered: 2010-2013 and the 2013-2015 half term. We will also explore the recommendations for the upcoming 2015-2017 term and the EESC’s recommendations regarding the European Commission’s work programme for 2016.

In the SOC Strategy 2010-2013 three headlines with nine priorities were defined – most of them having a strong demographic dimension (EESC 2011a):

1. More efficient labour markets: a good and productive life, the potential of young people, development of the internal market and free movement of labour.
2. Management of the social crisis: social security systems and the social impact of the crisis, giving every child the best start in life, healthy and active living.
3. Europe for all: proactive integration and immigration, enhancing rights and opportunities, active citizenship and volunteering.

For the 2013-2015 half term the SOC section chose three main areas of focus (EESC 2015a): (1) active participation – “Europe, obviously”, (2) sustaining the European social model through proactive investments in growth and job creation, and (3) a leap forward in innovation. The second area of focus is of particular relevance in demographic terms. Here the section carried out “work in support of the European social model, notably with regard to job creation and quality, the fight against youth unemployment, future labour market, education and training, social security, mobility, entrepreneurship, employee involvement, work-life balance, gender equality, combating poverty, non-discrimination, full recognition of all fundamental rights and better integration of im-

migrants and recognition of their contribution to the economy" (EESC 2015a: 1).

For the upcoming period of 2015-2017, the SOC section proposes three main areas of focus with the following sub-issues that are relevant in demographic terms (EESC 2015a):

1. "Investing, including social investment, inclusive growth, jobs and human capital": The SOC section suggests identifying ways to create quality jobs and combating youth and long-term unemployment through active and inclusive labour market policies. It further suggests looking at how to invest in human capital, initial education and training, as well as lifelong learning to develop relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for employability and innovation, and to deploy more efficient production methods.

2. "Respect for fundamental and social rights": Here the suggested focus is, among others, on monitoring the performance of social policies in the European Semester exercise, reinforcing equal treatment and anti-discrimination policies accompanied by positive action regarding education, training and integration in the labour market.

3. "Migration, asylum and integration": In respect to legal migration, the SOC section aims to continue its work on the new European Agenda on Migration<sup>22</sup> and the initiatives to be derived from it, and to look at initiatives to improve EU legal migration policy, such as the review of the EU Blue Card scheme. In addition, it recommends intensifying the cooperation with the European Commission, building on the joint support for the European Migration Forum (see section 2.2.3).

Finally, the EESC also gives recommendations pertaining to the European Commission's work programme for 2016 (COM(2015) 610). In terms of the topics of this paper – demographic change in relation to the issues of ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration – three aspects the EESC raises are especially relevant (EESC 2015b):

Gender equality: In the general remarks at the beginning of the recommendations, the EESC emphasises the need to ensure that every policy is gender neutral. Special attention should be paid to discrimination faced by

women in decision-making positions (e.g. in company boards and at the political level), in the work place and in situations related to social issues such as domestic violence: "All these factors should be addressed with a view to economic and social development in Europe, including demographics" (EESC 2015b: 1).

Social investment: The EESC emphasises the need to keep social investment on the agenda: "Examine the multiple positive effects of social investment, stressing a preventive and long-term approach, particularly for the labour market and public finances, in the following areas, and include them in the Europe2020 strategy: social services and childcare, education and tackling youth unemployment, promoting employment, promoting good health and active ageing, construction of social housing and a barrier-free society, and social entrepreneurship" (EESC 2015b: 2).

A new policy on migration: The EESC urges that a range of measures involving civil society organisations should be adopted, as well as a holistic plan, based upon the principles of human rights, solidarity and humanity. In terms of legal migration, the EESC calls for:

- launching an independent system of supervision and more effective democratic scrutiny to ensure proper implementation of legislation and policy;
- putting in place an annual inter-institutional process on issues related to immigration, focusing in particular on the rule of law and protection of fundamental rights;
- defining measures supporting professional training, agreements with countries of origin, and matching labour supply to demand;
- developing proactive policies which facilitate legal migration;
- improving horizontal legislation to guarantee the equal treatment of migrant workers in both work and social matters;
- evaluating the Blue Card directive to determine if it fulfils the purpose of making Europe a more attractive place to work for skilled workers.

What we can see from this overview is that even though demographic change as such is not prominently visible in the current and future strategy of the EESC, issues that are strongly related to the concept of demographic

change play a crucial role. When we take a closer look at the SOC section's general policy portfolio (see section 3.2), it becomes obvious that the concept of demographic change plays an important role in the political thinking and acting of the EESC.

### 3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND RELATED ISSUES IN THE SOC SECTION'S POLICY PORTFOLIO

In this section we will briefly present how demographic change is framed in general as an issue by the SOC section and which aspects are emphasised. We will also show which aspects are prominently discussed in the areas of specific interest for this paper in relation to demographic change, namely: ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration.

#### 3.2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Regarding demographic change as such, the EESC calls for a stronger focus on the quality of work. This can be seen in the position paper "Demographic change: a challenge and an opportunity" (EESC 2011b: 1), which begins with a quote from Leila Kurki, the President of the SOC section at that time: "Let's not talk about the formal retirement age. What is important is the value we attach to the time we spend at work. In a truly inclusive labour market with high quality work, people will want to – and will be able to – stay active longer. Satisfied people are more productive and this should be fully recognised as a key factor for growth."

Between 2010 and 2011 SOC issued four opinions directly referring to the challenges of demographic change with a focus on health and welfare, immigration, family policies and the labour market:

- "The impact of population ageing on health and welfare systems" (SOC/367 EESC-2010-972) in 2010: The Committee calls for a number of actions (1) on the national level: e.g. preventive health care, health promotion and education across all age groups, care insurance; and (2) on the European level: e.g. an action plan for and emphasising active, healthy and dignified ageing, Euro-

pean guidelines on reconciling family, work and care, as well as more gerontological and demographic research, and the promotion of a new image of old age.

- "Legal immigration in the context of demographic challenges" in 2010 (SOC/373 EESC-2010-1172): The EESC claims that a holistic approach is needed to tackle today's demographic challenges and that legal immigration should be part of the EU's response to the current demographic situation. The EU and the Member States should have open legislation that allows for immigration for employment purposes through legal, transparent channels for workers in both highly-qualified and less-qualified jobs. Politicians and others with influence in society, together with the media, should act with the utmost responsibility and set a clear political and social example in order to prevent intolerance, racism and xenophobia against immigrants and minorities. European legislation on immigration should ensure equal treatment based on the principle of non-discrimination.

- "The role of family policy in relation to demographic change with a view to sharing best practices among Member States" in 2011 (SOC/399 EESC-2011-804): The EESC calls for policies to reconcile work and family life, to enable more women to enter the labour market, to support families, combat child poverty and to enable men and women to have as many children as they want without having to withdraw from the labour market.

- "The future of the labour market in Europe - in search of an effective response to demographic trends" in 2011 (SOC/400 EESC-2011-1171): The EESC is convinced that the most effective strategy for managing population ageing in Europe is to make full use of available employment potential through a targeted growth policy and by increasing the number of quality jobs with compulsory social security contributions. It is criticised that "[e]fforts to increase employment levels of older people based mainly on changes to pension systems, which result in less favourable terms for accessing schemes and for entitlements, in particular proposals to raise the statutory retirement age, are wide of the mark." Apart from that the EESC underlines that demographic change also provides numerous opportunities for the economy and employment ("silver economy"). Furthermore, it is emphasised that if the retirement age is to be raised, then it is necessary to ensure that people can work longer:

“This means creating jobs and designing them so that people can work until the statutory retirement age. This will require systematic reform to develop work that accommodates older people. It is clear however that this should not lead to an increased pressure on older people, nor should stopping work put them into financial difficulties.”

All aspects that were raised directly in regard to demographic change by the EESC between 2010-2011 continued to be discussed in the years after within the relevant policy fields as the following sections will show. There we will take a look at the policy areas the SOC section defines for its work that can be subsumed under the topics of ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration.

### 3.2.2 AGEING AND HEALTH

Two of the policy areas the SOC section is active in can be assigned to the field of ageing and health, namely the policy areas of older people and health.

In regard to the issue of older people, the EESC organised in 2012 – the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” – a series of public hearings to bring representatives of employers, trade unions and NGOs into the discussion on how to respond to the needs of older people, address challenges created by the ageing of the European population and how to value older people’s contribution to society. Topics addressed were, for instance: acknowledging the ageing of the EU population and changing the image of age; growing old in good health; recognising the contributions of older people; improving the working conditions of older workers; promoting intergenerational solidarity in the labour market, in the workplace and in society; improving lifelong learning for senior citizens; making technologies work for active and healthy ageing; and ensuring adequate, safe and sustainable pensions. The EESC states: “Now that the EU Year is over, the EESC is making sure that the actions initiated in 2012 are linked to those of the previous, current and forthcoming European Years (Poverty, Volunteering, Citizenship, etc).”

Since 2010 eight EESC opinions have been released with relevance for the issue of older people referring to different aspects<sup>23</sup>, e.g.: health and welfare (SOC/367 EESC-2010-972, SOC/382 EESC-2010-977), pensions, retirement and the labour market (SOC/509 EESC-2014-2354, SOC/400 EESC-2011-1171, SOC/386 EESC-2011-72), active ageing (SOC/448 EESC-2012-1526, INT/588 EESC-2012-1290), and the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations” (SOC/389 EESC-2010-1377).

Looking at health policy, the EESC emphasises that the EU adds value to the work of the Member States – who are responsible for the organisation and delivery of health care – by bringing countries together to address common challenges, in close cooperation with international partners such as the World Health Organisation (WHO). Since 2010 20 opinions with a focus on health issues have been issued, four of them being particularly relevant in terms of demographic change: “Effective, accessible and resilient health systems” (SOC/516 EESC-2014-05569-00-00-ac-tra), “Health for Growth Programme” (SOC/437 EESC-2012-480), “The impact of population ageing on health and welfare systems” (SOC/367 EESC-2010-972), and “Solidarity in health: reducing health inequalities in the EU” (SOC/351 EESC-2010-640).

### 3.2.3 FERTILITY AND FAMILY

Understood in a broad sense, one can subsume four of the policy fields the SOC section is active in under the area of fertility and family, namely: family, children, youth and gender equality. Even though gender equality plays an important role in questions of reconciliation of family and working life, it is of course also relevant in the other two areas of ageing and health, and legal migration.

The EESC states that children’s welfare and well-being are of fundamental importance, whether in terms of their general situation, their quality of life or investment in the future: “A high-quality childhood backed by rights secures socio-economic development, enabling the EU to achieve its objectives in all areas. Child poverty and deprivation prevent millions of children from getting

the best start in life, and hinders their personal development. Very often, intervention at the early stages of a child's life can have a positive impact on the rest of their life."<sup>24</sup> Since 2010 the EESC has issued eleven opinions with regard to the topic of children.<sup>25</sup> Most of them were concerned with children's rights and protection of children, e.g. "International protection of unaccompanied minors" (SOC/515 EESC-2014-4595), "An EU agenda for the rights of the child" (SOC/415 EESC-2011-1853), and "Child poverty and children's well-being" (SOC/384 EESC-2010-978). Two opinions were directly related to demographic issues: "Family policy and demographic change" (SOC/399 EESC-2011-804) and "Early childhood care and education" (SOC/358 EESC-2010-102).

Regarding the issue of family the EESC states that "[t]he family is an irreplaceable form of social capital and should receive recognition for the contribution it makes to our society and to the care of people at every stage of their lives. The family should be properly supported and encouraged in its social and economic role. Demographic change (ageing) and evolution in family structures bring new challenges, changing the way family policies need to be designed, coordinated and implemented."<sup>26</sup> Since 2010 two family-related opinions have been issued by the EESC. One is the opinion "The role of family policy in relation to demographic change with a view to sharing best practices among Member States" in 2011 (SOC/399 EESC-2011-804), which was already introduced in the previous section about demographic change. The other opinion is "Family reunification" (SOC/436 EESC-2012-1300), which refers to the European Commission's Green Paper on the right to family reunification of third-country nationals living in the EU (Directive 2003/86/EC).

In terms of youth the EESC states on its website: "Young women and men have a crucial role to play in meeting the many socio-economic, demographic, cultural, environmental and technological challenges and opportunities facing the European Union and its citizens today and in the years ahead. Promoting the social and professional integration of young women and men, enabling them to make the best of their potential, is of vital importance. This entails not only investing in youth by putting in place greater resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in their daily lives and im-

prove their well-being, but also empowering youth by promoting their autonomy and the potential of young people to contribute to a sustainable development of society and to European values and goals. It also calls for greater cooperation between youth policies and relevant policy areas, specifically education, employment, social inclusion, culture and health."<sup>27</sup> Since 2010 the EESC has issued 22 opinions<sup>28</sup> related to the issue of youth focusing on topics like employment, skills, qualification, education, economic and social situation, integration, immigration and mobility.

Concerning gender equality the EESC stresses that it has been very diligent in pointing out the need for more gender equality and the ways to achieve it. It states that the crisis has halted the gains made across Europe in integrating women into the labour market and criticises that "[m]ore generally, it could be said that the European Union is only half way towards a gender-equal society."<sup>29</sup> Since 2010 the EESC has published ten opinions regarding gender equality on topics like employment, migrant women, services to the family, women in science, the Europe 2020 strategy, domestic violence, female entrepreneurs and health.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2.4 LEGAL MIGRATION

In 2012 the EESC published a position paper "Immigration and integration – Where civil society makes the difference" (EESC 2012) in which it claims: "Immigration makes an important contribution to Europe's economic development and wellbeing. New immigrants bring the skills and energy that Europe needs. The EU also has an ageing population, so legal migrants are needed to increase the working-age population and perform important tasks in society" (EESC 2012: 1). At the same time the importance of measures to integrate new migrants in Europe is emphasised: "It is obvious why civil society is so crucial to successful integration. Governments can create the framework, but integration itself can only occur in the places people meet: in workplaces, schools, clubs and so on. (...) [I]ntegration is a complex, long-term social process, with many dimensions and many stakeholders involved, particularly at the local level" (EESC 2012: 2). The EESC describes the



fundamental principles of its approach to immigration as based on the belief that migrants are human beings with exactly the same fundamental rights as EU citizens, which must be respected and safeguarded. The EESC especially emphasises three aspects in this regard: (1) the need for financial resources to offer appropriate means for integration, (2) the importance of employment to integration and (3) since migration is a worldwide phenomenon, the impact on sending countries must not be forgotten (e.g. “brain drain”).

In 2009 the EESC, together with the European Commission, launched the European Integration Forum to enable civil society organisations to have a say in the decision-making process. It was decided in 2014 to extend the scope of the Forum to cover topics related to immigration and asylum, and to establish the new European Migration Forum (see section 2.2.3).

Since 2010 the EESC has issued 30 opinions on the issue of immigration and asylum.<sup>31</sup> Some of these opinions explicitly refer to immigration in relation to demographic change, e.g. “Legal immigration in the context of demographic challenges” (SOC/373 EESC-2010-1172) or “European immigration policies” (REX/414), or other demographic aspects on the level of immigration, e.g. “Inclusion of migrant women in the labour market” (SOC/513 EESC-2014-04856-00-00-ac-tra). Due to the refugee crisis numerous opinions in the last years dealt with issues related to asylum and illegal migration.

Having provided this overview of the institutionalised forums of exchange between European civil society organisations and EU institutions in the field of demographic change and related issues, we will now look at some examples of EU civil society organisations that are engaged in the fields that are of particular relevance for this paper and which aspects they consider especially important.

## 4. EXAMPLES OF EU CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE IN THE FIELDS RELATED TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

For most civil society organisations, demographic change is an aspect that has a certain relevance to the issue of their concern – be it in the fields of social and political rights, environmental issues, human rights, or development work. This corresponds to the fact that hardly any policy field remains untouched by the consequences of population change. At the same time, demographic change is more of a general concept and not an issue that constitutes the main field of activity of civil society actors. There are – at least to our knowledge – no such civil society organisations on the level of the EU. However, there are numerous organisations active in fields highly relevant to demographic change.

In this chapter we provide examples of EU civil society organisations that are engaged in the field of ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration. We will present the main characteristics of the organisations, their visions, aims and what issues have been considered of particular importance in their field of work. We do not only focus on aspects that are directly considered in regard to demographic change as such, but ask more generally how they approach the issues that are highly relevant to population developments and related transformations, and which are discussed as core areas by researchers and policy makers at the European level (Bengtsson et al. 2012, Zimmermann 2015).

### 4.1 AGEING AND HEALTH

For ageing we chose AGE Platform Europe as an example of a civil society organisation active in the field at the EU level, which is one of the largest networks representing older people in the EU. Other EU civil society organisations that are primarily dealing with the concerns of older people are, for example, the European Federation of Older People (EURAG) and the European Federation of Retired and Older People (FERPA). There are also a number of groups that are addressing specific concerns of older people or specific aspects of ageing, for instance the European Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (EAHSA), European Civil Society Platform on Life-long Learning (EUCIS-LLL), European Association work-

ing for Carers (Eurocarers) and Alzheimer Europe.

Regarding health we will present the European Public Health Alliance, one of Europe's leading civil society organisations advocating for better health. Other actors that are primarily involved in the field of health are, for example, the European Patients' Forum (EPF), European Public Health Association (EUPHA) and the Health and Environment Alliance. There are, of course, also a large number of civil society organisations dealing with specific health problems, diseases and challenges such as Mental Health Europe (MHE), International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe), European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) and the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR).

#### 4.1.1 AGE PLATFORM EUROPE

AGE Platform Europe (AGE) is a network of more than 150 organisations (European, national and regional) of and for people aged 50+, representing over 40 million older people in Europe, which – by its own account – makes it the largest network representing older people in the EU. Established in 2001 the purpose of AGE's work is described as: "to voice and promote the interests of the 190 million inhabitants aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most."<sup>32</sup> Three core missions are defined (AGE 2011a): (1) protecting older citizens' fundamental rights, (2) increasing older people's participation in society and (3) helping people live a dignified life in old age.

AGE is involved in a range of policy and information activities, formulates position papers on relevant EU initiatives and outlines specific policy views and recommendations. AGE provides regular news about the European institutions, EU consultative bodies and non-European institutions (e.g. Council of Europe, United Nations, World Health Organisation), as well as a regular newsletter and press releases about age-related issues. AGE also organises and participates in events. The network is involved in numerous projects and runs different campaigns.

The main vision of AGE is defined as meeting the chal-

lenge of an ageing population. AGE is governed by a series of principles which should guide the members' and secretariat's work related to influencing policy development at the EU level: "towards a society of all ages", "older and retired people are a resource" and "older people as self-advocates" (AGE 2010). Other cornerstones of AGE's work are: integration, participation, inclusion, access, choice, well-being, independence, equal opportunities, life course approach and intergenerational solidarity. For the following topics, more detailed guidelines are defined<sup>33</sup>:

- **Intergenerational solidarity:** promotion of the idea of mutual transfer and dependence between the generations, and of the role of older persons as guardians of cultural heritage, experience and knowledge vis-à-vis younger generations.
- **Non-discrimination:** combating all forms of age discrimination in all areas of life.
- **Incomes:** all people should be able to enjoy a decent income after retirement and in old age (indexed pensions and benefits, family wages for women inactive in paid employment).
- **Employment:** despite the necessity for extending working life, the choice of the individual should be safeguarded, unemployment of older workers should be combatted, and the experience and skills of older workers recognised.
- **Lifelong learning:** everyone should be given the possibility of lifelong learning regardless of current challenges to entering the labour market.
- **Social participation:** promotion of social inclusion (all citizens should be able to have access to and participate in society) with integration as the key issue in this regard.
- **Healthy ageing - care and family carers:** e.g. promotion of healthy ageing and home health care, rejection of chronological age as a reason to deny access to medical treatment or services, promotion of measures to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life for those caring for an older relative or dependent, and older people should have a say in what kinds of care and services they would like to receive.

Since January 2014 AGE has built its work around 14 key policy issues on which it is working together with its

members and experts<sup>34</sup>:

1. mobilisation for an age-friendly EU ("one of the most effective approaches for responding to demographic ageing and increasing the Healthy Life Year indicator"<sup>35</sup>),
2. engagement in the European Semester<sup>36</sup>,
3. human rights and non-discrimination,
4. employment of older workers,
5. active citizenship and social inclusion of senior citizens,
6. adequate income in old age,
7. fight against poverty and social exclusion,
8. consumer rights including energy poverty<sup>37</sup>,
9. financial services (age discrimination, rights and needs of older persons),
10. healthy ageing,
11. dignified ageing, protection against elder abuse and quality long-term care,
12. accessibility of the built environment, transport and ICT,
13. standardisation (design for all, information and communication technology, transport and mobile payments),
14. reinforcement of senior tourism.

On its website AGE also presents examples of good practice in different fields in order to collect initiatives and promote the exchange of ideas and experiences within the EU.<sup>38</sup>

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

Since 2010 AGE has been active in the establishment and implementation of a number of European Years (AGE 2011b): 2010 was declared the "European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion" in which AGE actively participated in by stressing factors influencing poverty, such as age and gender discrimination, poor health and care services, poor housing and accessibility. It was also heavily engaged in the preparation for the upcoming "European Year of Volunteering" in 2011 by arguing that not only are many volunteers older, but many older people are recipients of voluntary help. AGE successfully campaigned for the "European Year for

Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations" and convinced the European Parliament and the Council that intergenerational solidarity is a crucial dimension in planning for ageing. Furthermore, AGE was mainly interested in the following areas: older citizens' representativeness and involvement in EU policy debates, active ageing, fundamental rights to an adequate income for a decent life in old age, a society for all ages and healthy ageing.

In 2011 AGE was heavily involved in the preparation of the upcoming "European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012" (EY2012) by leading the EY2012 Coalition, which defined its common goal as creating an age-friendly EU by 2020 by fostering greater solidarity between generations and enabling the active participation and involvement of all age groups in society (AGE 2012). Additionally, AGE was very engaged in the fields of older people's right to non-discrimination and equal opportunities, to free movement and equal access, to active citizenship and participation in society, older people's social protection and their right to dignity, and to healthy and old age.

In 2012 AGE continued its involvement in the EY2012 by contributing to its implementation and coordinating the EY2012 Stakeholder Coalition consisting of 70 organisations. AGE's policy work focused specifically on the EY2012 objectives of active ageing in employment, volunteering and citizenship, as well as healthy ageing and independent living (AGE 2013). AGE also worked in the field of non-discrimination and fundamental rights.

In 2013 AGE joined the "European Year of Citizens 2013" Alliance and supported its Manifesto "Towards a Democratic European Citizenship". Apart from that AGE was active in the fields of: human rights and non-discrimination, age-friendly labour markets, strengthening of the social dimension in the Economic and Monetary Union, right to adequate income and access to services in old age, healthy ageing, dignified ageing, accessibility, mobility, new technologies and tourism.

The work of AGE in 2014 was mainly devoted to raising political and public awareness in the European Parliament elections and within the scope of the renewal of

the European Commission. AGE also worked towards informing the new European Parliament and European Commission about discrimination and challenges faced by older persons in their daily life which prevent them from fully enjoying their rights in the essential areas of: human rights, active citizenship, employment, decent income in old age and the fight against poverty, health and quality long-term care, consumers' issues, accessibility, mobility, new technologies, research and age-friendly environments.

The "AGE General Assembly 2015 Final Declaration" (AGE 2015) gives an impression of the fields AGE is striving to focus on in the upcoming years. Under the headline of "Towards a better recognition of and respect for older people's rights in the EU", AGE urges EU and national policy makers to (1) apply the existing legal framework and monitor its impact on the rights of older people; (2) strengthen the legal framework to better protect the rights of older people and eliminate age discrimination; and (3) acknowledge older people's rights and ensure they underpin the silver economy to guarantee that its innovation potential is used to meet the specific needs of Europe's ageing population. On a general level AGE emphasises – against the background of the refugee and migrant crisis – that Europe must champion the rights of the most vulnerable, including refugees. In addition, AGE claims that "[l]ooking forward, it is vital that the EU also maintains its focus on the long-term challenges we face, such as demographic ageing, climate change, economic recovery, technological evolution, migration and the fairer distribution of wealth within and among generations and countries" (AGE 2015: 1).

AGE identifies two key trends that add to widening human rights disparities faced by older people across the EU: 1) inadequate investments in goods and services of general interest (e.g. pensions); and 2) the persistence of social inequalities among older people (long-term unemployment, older women, tenants, migrants, people with dementia or disabilities). Finally, AGE re-emphasises that ageing populations are not only a challenge, but also a rich resource in many regards, while it is underlined that older people also have responsibilities and duties in terms of preparing for an active and healthy older age by adopting healthy lifestyles, learning to keep up pace

with technological progress, adapting to new working environments, fulfilling civic duties or participating in local communities. AGE summarises its common vision for the future as "an inclusive society for all ages based on equal rights and where social and economic justice is guaranteed within and across generations" (AGE 2015: 2).

#### 4.1.2 EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), founded in 1993, is a European Platform of around 100 non-profit organisations (public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups) working together with the objective to improve health and to strengthen the "voice of public health in Europe" ([www.eph.org](http://www.eph.org)). EPHA defines its mission as "to bring together the public health community to provide thought leadership and facilitate change; to build public health capacity to deliver equitable solutions to European public health challenges, to improve health and reduce health inequalities." The underlying vision is one of a "Europe with universal good health and well-being, where all have access to a sustainable and high quality health system: A Europe whose policies and practices contribute to health, both within and beyond its borders."

EPHA monitors the policy making process within the EU institutions and supports the flow of information about health promotion and public health policy developments amongst interested players (politicians, civil servants, NGOs, stakeholders and the public). It aims to promote greater awareness amongst European citizens and NGOs about policy developments and programme initiatives that affect the health of those living in the EU, allowing them to contribute to the policy making process. In order to raise this awareness, EPHA produces different publications (e.g. news, press releases, newsletters, position papers, open letters, statements and briefings), runs campaigns and organises events. EPHA participates in policy debates, stakeholder dialogues and in a number of projects, and it trains, mentors and supports NGOs and health actors to engage with the EU.

In general EPHA and its members work on four broad goals: reducing health inequalities, promoting healthy

lifestyles, strengthening health systems, and changing the political and socio-economic framework. On this basis, the work portfolio is divided into four areas:

1. Healthy lifestyles, healthy behaviours: Working on health determinants, EPHA focuses on how to improve children's health, enhance conditions for healthy diets, improve mental health and well-being, and how to help reduce harm from addictive substances and behaviours.

2. Quality health systems and services: EPHA strives to strengthen health systems and make them more equitable by focusing on the health workforce and its recruitment, retention and education, and tools and means for better delivery of care: technology, medicines and medical devices, the provision of information related to care and medicines and health literacy, organisation of health services and health care, and communicable diseases.

3. Health, wealth and equity: EPHA emphasises that the conditions in which people are born and live in impact their lifestyles and behaviours. It considers that the current approach to policy making puts too much emphasis on conditions to improve competitiveness in economic sectors without due attention to public interest, including health and well-being. Therefore, EPHA aims to explore the role of innovation and research in health, the socio-economic conditions in which people live, and transparency and democratic governance in health-related policy making.

4. Europe and health: In this work area EPHA provides information on the EU institutions and their funding mechanisms.

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

In 2010 EPHA defined three broad topics with a number of priority areas for its work (EPHA 2011):

1. Keeping people healthy (health equity, alcohol, mental health, diet, food and nutrition, agriculture, tobacco, environment and chronic diseases);
2. Managing the patient journey (patient rights, patient safety, health literacy, health workforce);
3. Creating a healthy EU environment (EU2020 Strategy, stakeholder engagement, health and the EU financial framework);
4. Global health (global health and climate change, global health and trade).

As the highlight of 2010, EPHA points out the launch of its "European Charter for Health Equity"<sup>39</sup>, which aims at increasing awareness and motivating actions that will contribute to the improvement of health and well-being for all, and at reducing unfair and avoidable health inequalities. EPHA emphasised that the achievement of these objectives requires a life course and gender perspective, and calls on actions to implement the following priorities:

- Early child development as the best start in life;
- All children, young people and adults to make the most of their potential and control their lives;
- Fair and full employment and good working conditions for all;
- A healthy standard of daily living for all;
- Health rooted in healthy, cohesive and sustainable places and communities;
- Communities need cost-effective, ill-health prevention balanced with disease treatment.

Also in 2010 EPHA developed its five-year strategy, which laid out the goals and objectives for the 2011-2015 period (EPHA 2010) and defined three general aims:

1. To improve overall population health and healthy life years by tackling determinants of health, including inequalities;
2. To strengthen European health systems with better patient outcomes and reduced inequalities by using the health sector as a driver for change;
3. To support institutional and policy frameworks that promote health by addressing policy incoherence and improving governance.

In order to achieve these general objectives, EPHA defined a fourth horizontal objective, namely to strengthen and increase effective public health capacity within the EPHA membership and its partners.

Following this overview of two civil society organisations active in the field of ageing and health, we will now look at perspectives and positions of civil society actors in the field of fertility and family.

## 4.2 FERTILITY AND FAMILY

In the field of fertility and family, we selected two organisations that address different aspects of this topic. The first organisation that we will look at is the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union, which represents family organisations from all over Europe at the EU level, and the second one is Eurochild, which has a more specific focus on advocating the rights and well-being of children and young people in Europe. Other civil society organisations that are active in fields related to the issue of fertility and family are, for example, the European Federation of Parents and Carers at Home (FEFAF), the European Parents' Association (EPA), the European Large Families Confederation (ELFAC) and the European Youth Forum (YFJ).

### 4.2.1 CONFEDERATION OF FAMILY ORGANISATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) was founded in 1958. It brings together 60 civil society organisations from all over Europe with the aim of giving a voice to all families and representing the issues most important to them at the European level. COFACE defines its vision as working “towards a family friendly environment, enabling families and their members to benefit from sufficient financial resources, available quality services and adequate time arrangements in order to live and enjoy their family life in dignity and harmony.”<sup>40</sup> Against this background COFACE specifies its mission as:

- **Family mainstreaming:** the interest of families should be taken into account in all EU policies.
- **Equal opportunities between women and men:** a cornerstone for the reconciliation of family and professional life.
- **Social inclusion:** shaping of European policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion of families and their members.
- **Empowerment:** giving a voice to all family members as consumers and important actors for sustainable development.

COFACE liaises with the European institutions in all sectors related to the rights and interests of families, informs national organisations of developments in the EU, organises events and exchanges of ideas and experiences, as well as mutual aid between family organisations in different countries and collaborates regularly with other important stakeholders at the EU level such as the social partners and other European NGOs. COFACE participates in different projects and produces a number of publications like policy briefings, position papers, recommendations, reports, etc.

COFACE structures its policy activities into four areas with a number of sub-areas:

1. **Family and social policies:** work-life balance, child and family poverty, leave provisions, pensions, intergenerational solidarity, gender equality and migrant families.
2. **Inclusive policies for disabled, other dependent persons and their families:** family dimension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, family carers, inclusive education, respite, deinstitutionalisation and disability strategy.
3. **Consumer protection, services, public health and sustainable development policies:** air quality, sustainable development goals, consumer rights, financial services, public health, nutri-medias<sup>41</sup>, sustainable development and housing.
4. **Education and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs):** early childhood care and education, early school leavers, parenting, sexuality and emotional education, Roma families, ICTs, safer Internet and resources, social networking and audio-visual media services.

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

In 2010 COFACE published its memorandum “Better families, better society” against the background of the financial crisis and the start of the new office of the European Commission (COFACE 2010: 7): “COFACE and its national member organisations have serious fears for the plight of families and have a list of very concrete demands to put to the European Commission. These are their priorities. They go beyond just tackling poverty and social exclusion: they should prevent families from becoming marginalised.” In 2010 COFACE also initiated the idea of a 2014 “European Year for the Well-being of Families” and

launched a corresponding campaign. The scope and title of the campaign was later modified in 2012 and it became: "European Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life".

In 2011 COFACE was active in the fields of child and family poverty, EU family leave provisions, rights of persons with disabilities, family carers, inclusive education, de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities, financial services, collective redress and Roma families (COFACE 2012). Cross-cutting priorities were defined as the activities related to the 2011 "European Year of Volunteering" and the 2012 "European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations".

In 2012 one of the main objectives of COFACE was its campaign for a 2014 "European Year for Reconciling Work and Family Life", focusing on issues like family and work-life reconciliation, comprehensive family-friendly policies, family carers, mental health, intergenerational solidarity and time for volunteer activities. COFACE was also involved in a number of other fields, e.g. E-health and family, family dimension of disabilities, early childhood education and early school leavers, and de-institutionalisation (COFACE 2013).

In 2013 COFACE focused specifically on three main aspects: (1) raising awareness about cyberbullying, and focusing on prevention and early intervention; (2) vulnerable families and their needs and (3) the challenge to reconcile work and family life (COFACE 2014a).

After the decision of the Commission to not declare 2014 the "European Year for Reconciling Work and Family Life", COFACE nevertheless continued to address these issues in 2014 by organising conferences and other events about work-life balance practices (COFACE 2015a). In 2014 COFACE also worked to get citizens closer to the EU in light of the 2014 European elections, in particular with the publication "#FamiliesVOTE2014: Helping you make your choice for the 2014 European Parliament Elections" (COFACE 2014b). This publication brought concrete information about the big political groups to the attention of voters in order to boost citizens' knowledge and understanding of what the EU can and will do for families' well-being. It compared the various family policies of the

political groups in the European Parliament concerning the following social policy areas: (1) jobs, (2) work-life balance, (3) family carers, disability or long-term illness in the family, (4) housing, (5) energy, (6) migrant and transnational families, and (7) financial inclusion and the impact on families.

In March 2015 COFACE published the "European Reconciliation Package" (COFACE 2015b), which catalogues the problems faced by families, and analyses and collects practices and legal instruments at regional, national and EU level, as well as workplace solutions that work for all and not only for working parents with small children. Furthermore, COFACE launched a new central theme "Families in a vulnerable situation" with a focus on the topic of financial inclusion and key financial transactions that happen during the family's lifecycle. As part of this thematic year, COFACE organised the European conference "Accessible and fair financial services: alternatives to mainstream banking" and launched an awareness-raising video on accessible and fair financial services. COFACE started compiling inspiring practices from members inside a compendium, which will be released in February 2016. Also in 2015 COFACE continued its work on transnational families and the impact of economic migration on families, for example, by organising the European conference "Families Beyond Borders". The event, focused on transnational families, aimed at exploring challenges and consequences of what it means to move to a different country for better economic prospects, while leaving behind ageing parents and sometimes young children in their countries of origin.

In regard to the question of what the most pressing issues from the perspective of its organisation are in relation to demographic change in Europe today and in the future, COFACE states: "Europe is in the midst of a dramatic demographic transformation. The European population is set to decline by 2050 and this will have a profound impact on how work, the pension system and how our lives are organized. This situation will put considerable pressure on women to fill the gaps in the labour market alongside caring for their children and elderly relatives. Therefore, families may need far more assistance to reconcile work and family life to find viable solutions for these pressing challenges."<sup>42</sup>

## 4.2.2 EUROCHILD

Eurochild is a network of more than 170 organisations and individuals working with and for children throughout Europe. Founded in 2004 Eurochild describes itself as “striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.”<sup>43</sup> Eurochild’s vision is one of a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy, confident and respected as individuals in their own right.

The main activities of Eurochild are: sharing information on policy and practice from Eurochild, its members and EU institutions; monitoring and influencing policy development at national and European levels; creating interest groups and partnerships between member organisations; representing the interests of its members to international institutions; and strengthening the capacity of its members through training, individual advice and support. Eurochild also organises events, offers different publications on its website and is active in a number of projects.

Eurochild divides its policy work into six areas:

- Promoting children’s rights: Eurochild is working within the framework of CRAG – the Child Rights Action Group – to contribute to the development and implementation of the EU strategy developed in the European Commission communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” (COM(2006) 367).
- Fight against child poverty: Eurochild stresses that investing in children and their well-being is not only a moral obligation, but also an economic priority because it is probably the most effective route towards sustainable social, economic and political progress in Europe.
- Early years education and care: Eurochild emphasises that universal, high quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care services are crucial in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. Early childhood services have a great potential for increasing child well-being, advancing child rights, achieving fundamental social democratic goals

and ensuring that all children have a fair start in life.

- Family and parenting support: Eurochild argues for a greater recognition of the need to support families and parents, especially those in vulnerable situations who lack access to the resources necessary to enable their child to grow up in a positive family environment.
- Child and youth participation: Eurochild is committed to supporting the direct involvement and participation of children and young people by encouraging the development of participatory means and structures that facilitate children’s participation in policy developments at the national and EU level.
- Children in alternative care: Eurochild focuses on the interlinkages between poverty, social exclusion and children who are in, at risk of going into, or leaving alternative care, and explores synergies between child protection policies and anti-poverty / social inclusion strategies to give direction to policy recommendations at the EU and Member State level.

### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

In 2010 – which was designated the “European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion” – Eurochild worked to raise awareness about the extent of child poverty across Europe and what needs to be done to tackle it (Eurochild 2011). To influence EU policy and action, Eurochild focused on the areas of mainstreaming children’s rights, strengthening EU action on child poverty and well-being, shaping the Europe 2020 strategy and bringing a child rights perspective into key EU policies. On the level of enabling exchange and learning among Eurochild’s members, the main issues were family policies that work best for children, community-based early childhood services, children in alternative childcare and best practices in ending child poverty.

In its annual report in 2011, Eurochild criticised policy makers for often ignoring children’s rights and well-being against the backdrop of the economic crisis: “In fact, how society treats children will have a profound and long-term impact on our economic, social and political future” (Eurochild 2012: 1). On the level of influencing EU policy and action, and exchange and learning among members, Eurochild continues its work in the areas from 2010 with an additional focus on the EU budget, early



years education and care, de-institutionalisation, Roma children, family and parenting support, and children with intellectual disabilities. Eurochild's activities also focused on these main areas in 2012 (Eurochild 2013a).

In 2013 Eurochild adopted its five-year strategy for the period of 2014-2018 with five goals (Eurochild 2013b):

1. Put children's rights and well-being at the heart of policy making.
2. Build a community of professionals that integrate children's rights and well-being into their daily work.
3. Give a voice to children and young people.
4. Change the way society views and treats its children and young people.
5. Develop the Eurochild network in order to deliver a powerful force for change.

In 2014 Eurochild supported the development of national child rights coalitions in Europe and strengthened its campaign to end institutional care in Europe, working with partners across 12 European countries through the "Opening Doors for Europe's Children" campaign (Eurochild 2015). Eurochild has strengthened its efforts to build the economic case for investing in children, while continuing to remind governments of their obligations to realise children's rights.

Asked about the main challenges of today, Eurochild sees family and parenting support as central to the pursuit of realizing children's rights and promoting well-being across Europe. "Our capacity to cope with change, to face uncertainty with confidence is very linked to childhood experience. A broad child-centred investment strategy is needed. It would take in early childhood policies – not only childcare provision but how to support families during this critical phase of a child's life, health promotion and more market regulation to protect children as consumers, more and better family support services at community level to prevent family separation and better social welfare and protection policies. Crucially acknowledging children as fully-fledged rights holders to be listened to and respected can provide the quantum leap our society needs to become more resilient. If Europe invests in children in a way that supports parents and families, ensures access

to quality affordable services, and empowers children and young people to participate in decision-making, we build the foundations for a better future."<sup>44</sup>

Following these two examples of EU civil society organisations active in the field of fertility and family and the overview of their main aims, positions and activities in the last years, the next section is devoted to civil society organisations that are concerned with the issue of legal migration at the EU level.

### 4.3 LEGAL MIGRATION

There are several civil society organisations that are focused on migration at the EU level. Most of them, however, are primarily dealing with issues related to asylum and illegal migration – which are both not included in this paper – as well as the issue of mobility of EU citizens to other EU Member States (see section 1). Civil society actors working in the field of asylum and illegal migration are, for example, the European NGO Platform Asylum and Migration (EPAM), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW).

In regard to the issue of legal migration, which this paper focuses on, we chose the European Trade Union Confederation, the Confederation of European Business and the Platform for European Social NGOs. All three do not deal primarily with the issue of legal migration, but they have a much broader scope – workers' interests, business interests and social interests. Since legal migration, however, is to a large degree related to work migration, these organisations have a special interest in this issue. While the European Trade Union Confederation and the Platform for European Social NGOs are clearly civil society organisations, it is debatable whether the same holds true for the Confederation of European Business. We nevertheless included this organisation in order to get an impression of the perspective of both sides – workers and employees in addition to the broader social perspective.

### 4.3.1 EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was set up in 1973 and today is comprised of 90 national trade union confederations in 39 countries, plus 10 European trade union federations. ETUC aims “to ensure that the EU is not just a single market for goods and services, but is also a Social Europe, where improving the wellbeing of workers and their families is an equally important priority. The ETUC believes that this social dimension, incorporating the principles of democracy, social justice and human rights, should be an example to inspire other countries. The European social model – until the onset of the crisis – helped Europe to become a prosperous, competitive region with high living standards.”<sup>45</sup> ETUC takes action through political pressure and negotiations with EU institutions, social dialogue and large-scale demonstrations.

Overall, ETUC distinguishes eleven policy areas in which it is active: economic governance, social dialogue and industrial relations, employment / Europe 2020, mobility and migration, the EU Single Market, fundamental social rights and European labour law, equality, social policies, sustainable development, external relations and standardisation.

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

The field of migration is differentiated into the areas of labour mobility, migration, and Interregional Trade Union Councils (IRTUCs)<sup>46</sup> / interregional cooperation. In general, ETUC’s work in the field of legal migration focuses primarily on equal treatment and non-discrimination of migrant workers, which is also related to seasonal work and intra-corporate transfer. For example, ETUC claimed in 2013 on the occasion of the international migrant’s day: “Migrant workers continue to face uncertainty in the labour market ahead of national workers; with evidence of wage discrimination, social dumping, and lower opportunities in the access to market. Some employers are also taking advantage of the economic crisis with cases of abuse and exploitation (especially in the agriculture and construction sectors). In addition public service cuts in fields such as health and education, as well as in those services specifically aimed at migrants (like integration facilities, assistance and visa / permit delivery) are hav-

ing a negative effect on the migrant population. The Europe 2020 strategy considered migration to be a tool to counter workforce decline, as well as specific and temporary labour market shortages. Within this framework efforts have been directed to attract high-skilled third country nationals. While recognising the role this sector of the migrant population can play within a wider migration strategy, ETUC urges EU policy makers to address migrants as human beings regardless of their level of education.”<sup>47</sup>

Also in 2013 ETUC adopted the “Action Plan on Migration” (ETUC 2013) in which a number of priorities and positions are presented that are related to legal migration in regard to three initiatives:

1. Concerning the EU2020 strategy and the contribution of migrants to the EU economy, ETUC:

- rejects the idea that future migration policies could be driven solely by utilitarian aims; instead migrants need to primarily be considered as human beings that should have equal rights as European citizens;
- plans to show how migrants already contribute to the sustainability of economic and welfare systems and also how much value migrants bring in terms of dynamism and cultural enrichment;
- denounces an excessive stress on the concept of circular migration and calls for attention on the abuses in the employment of third-country nationals for short periods;
- plans to advocate in favour of removing obstacles for third-country nationals to be allowed to work in public services;
- demands for the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications, ensuring access for migrants to employment services, lifelong learning, requalification paths, apprenticeships, public education and training.

2. In regard to the new 2014-2018 five-year programme of DG HOME, ETUC prioritises a rights-based approach and equal treatment, improvement of legal channels, integration of migrants, the importance of the international dimension (International Labour Organisation, United Nations and other international bodies) and the

need to continue consulting with trade unions based on the partnership principle.

3. On the level of its own agenda for integration and inclusion, ETUC:

- advocates the two-way process of integration (as a dynamic process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents in the EU) and a greater participation of migrants in the civic, cultural, economic and political life of hosting communities;
- recommends the prompt restoration of a suitable level of public expenditure to provide services to migrants (e.g. integration facilities, assistance to migrants and permit / visa delivery);
- claims that it is time to address the issue of regularisation and amnesty for undocumented migrants in a more open and straightforward debate, and advocates for measures aimed at helping millions of third-country nationals to make the transition to full regular status.

Since 2013, due to the refugee crisis, ETUC's agenda in the field of migration has mainly focused on irregular migration, which is not included in this paper.

In 2015 ETUC adopted its "Paris Manifesto – Stand up in solidarity for quality jobs, workers' rights and a fair society in Europe", in which it also mentions its position on legal migration of non-EU nationals (ETUC 2015a: 6): "We demand the adoption of a balanced and fair EU response to migration flows of third-country nationals, based on solidarity and protection of workers' rights, as well as paths for integration and inclusion of migrants in the European labour market, trade unions and society."

Also in 2015 ETUC released its "ETUC Action Programme 2015-2019" (ETUC 2015b), in which one section is devoted to the issue of "Fair treatment and integration of migrant workers". Regarding legal migration, ETUC announced a number of demands and commitments for the upcoming years, e.g.:

- Advocate for a more effective common European immigration policy, both at the institutional level and in society, by shifting the attention away from narrow security issues to the contribution migrants make, human rights,

equal treatment and integration;

- Promote tolerance and combat all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia towards migrants;
- Tackle abuses and violations of the rights of migrant workers, which drive down conditions and fuel precarious employment practices and social dumping, and reaffirm that integration will only take place when there is strong employment protection and decent treatment for all workers through trade union action;
- Secure a more coherent legal framework for migration at the EU level based on these principles, and more coordination and solidarity between both the EU and Member States, and among Member States;
- Increase and support trade unions' efforts to recruit migrants, and to include the needs of migrant workers in the workplace in their agendas.

#### 4.3.2 CONFEDERATION OF EUROPEAN BUSINESS

The Confederation of European Business (BUSINESS-EUROPE) was founded in 1949 and today represents the interests of 40 national business federations from EU countries, the European Economic Area and some Central and Eastern European countries. It describes itself as "the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. (...) We work on behalf of our member federations to ensure that the voice of business is heard in European policy-making. We interact regularly with the European Parliament, Commission and Council as well as other stakeholders in the policy community. We also represent European business in the international arena, ensuring that Europe remains globally competitive."<sup>48</sup>

BUSINESSEUROPE is active in the following areas: better regulation, corporate and legal, digital economy, economy and finance, energy and environment, EU single market, governance, industry, International Relations, research and innovation, SMEs and entrepreneurship, social and trade. Within the social field BUSINESS-EUROPE deals with the topic of "mobility and immigration" and argues that on the general level, "an EU frame-

work needs to be in place that facilitates the entry of highly skilled migrants from outside the EU as well as their mobility within the EU once they are here. This is needed to address the broad range of skills and competences that will be required in Europe as a result of the projected decline of the EU's working age population."<sup>49</sup>

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

In 2010 BUSINESSEUROPE focused on the fields of temporary residence of third-country nationals as seasonal workers (BUSINESSEUROPE 2010a) and intra-corporate transfers of third-country nationals (BUSINESSEUROPE 2010b).

At the European Integration Forum in 2012, BUSINESSEUROPE stated that businesses have and will continue to have a need for highly skilled, as well as lower skilled, labour in the years to come, particularly if projected demographic changes become a reality. It emphasised that economic migration of third-country nationals is one way to meet this demand, while it stressed that at the same time, better tailoring the skills people develop in education to labour market needs is another important element in raising the productivity and competitiveness of Europe's economy in the years ahead: "In conclusion, economic migration can be very valuable for the future prosperity of the EU, but we should not look upon it as the only option and recognise at the same time the role that education and labour market reforms can play in meeting Europe's skills needs."<sup>50</sup>

In 2013 BUSINESSEUROPE published a note (BUSINESS-EUROPE 2013) in which it sets out its view on the need for greater labour market mobility and measures to achieve this in the EU within the next years. BUSINESS-EUROPE understands labour market mobility as including intra-EU mobility of EU citizens and migration of non-EU citizens. In this paper we only focus on those positions related to migration of non-EU citizens, which can be summarised as:

- To help meet the demand from employers for highly skilled workers, an EU framework needs to be in place that facilitates the entry of highly skilled migrants from outside the EU, as well as their mobility within the EU

once they are here.

- Intra-EU mobility is especially important for third-country nationals legally residing in the EU as intra-corporate transferees, students and researchers, and it can bring genuine added value for the individual and for economic growth in the EU.

- For attracting and retaining talent in the EU, the ability for third-country students and researchers to stay in the EU for up to 12 months following the completion of their studies or research in order to look for a job or to start a business is crucial. This can help stimulate job creation and the EU's competitiveness on the global stage.

- A longer term approach towards migration needs to focus on the more general demand for labour in the context of the projected decrease in the working-age population that will result from the changing demographic structure within the EU.

In 2014 BUSINESSEUROPE defined ten priorities that should guide the new Juncker Commission to improve the investment climate in Europe and encourage job-creating entrepreneurship (BUSINESSEUROPE 2014). Under the headline of the 7th priority "Modernising labour markets, education and social protection to create more jobs", BUSINESSEUROPE also calls for action in the field of migration: "The European Union will have to develop a credible approach to immigration, taking into account labour market needs in a context of rapid demographic ageing and reconcile the benefits of a diverse workforce with legitimate aspirations to secure Europe's borders and tackle with irregular migration."

On the occasion of the "State of the Union"<sup>51</sup> speech by European Commission President Juncker in September 2015, BUSINESSEUROPE President Emma Marcegaglia released a statement that addressed legal migration: "We shall not forget that in view of a shrinking workforce, we will need a constructive approach towards migration. To face our demographic and labour market challenges, we need more talented people from around the world to regard Europe as an attractive destination to study, work and live in. The announced legislative package on legal migration should focus on this objective."<sup>52</sup>

### 4.3.3 PLATFORM FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL NGOS

The Platform for European Social NGOs (Social Platform) was formed in 1995 and describes itself as the largest platform of European rights and value-based NGOs working in the social sector. Its 48 members represent more than 2,800 national organisations, associations and other voluntary groups at the local, regional and national level in every EU member state. These include organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, people affected by poverty, young people, children and families, gays, lesbians and transgender people. Member organisations also include those campaigning on issues such as social justice, homelessness, lifelong learning, health and reproductive rights, and anti-racism.

The Social Platform strives to promote social justice, equality and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of member organisations. Its work is grounded in a rights-based approach encompassing human dignity, gender equality and equality for all, respect for diversity, solidarity, freedom, social justice, sustainability, transparency and participatory democracy. The Social Platform describes its vision as a “socially just and cohesive Europe based on our values. A society that ensures no one is excluded and where the well-being, the dignity, and the enforcement of human rights of its peoples – and in particular people in vulnerable situations – is the central aim of all policies.” Overall, six strategic objectives are defined: (1) equality for all, (2) strong social protection and welfare systems, (3) socio-economic justice, (4) decent work and quality employment, (5) people-centred services for the common good, and (6) participation of civil society organisations in decision-making. When implementing these strategic objectives, Social Platform’s work is organised around four main activities:

- Building cooperation among members through the exchange of expertise and capacity building.
- Supporting members in developing joint campaigns on specific issues.
- Supporting members’ campaigns on cross-cutting issues.
- Ensuring access to decision-makers for members on common policy issues.

- Leading the advocacy on strategic common issues by influencing EU policies and legislation.

Social Platform is active in the following areas: campaigns, civil dialogue, employment, inclusion, rights, services and social justice. Migration is dealt with in the area of campaigns. On a general level Social Platform claims that third-country nationals must not be treated as second-class citizens: “EU migration and integration policies must be based on a human rights approach, where equality is promoted and migrants are recognised and respected as rights holders. While recognising that different laws and policies apply, depending on one’s migration status, there is often a gap between law, and its implementation and practice at the national level. However, human rights should apply to all migrants, no matter their migration status.”<sup>53</sup>

#### MAIN FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES IN 2010-2015

In 2013 Social Platform adopted a position paper with numerous recommendations for the EU (legislative and non-legislative measures) and Member States based on its areas of work. On the level of legal migration<sup>54</sup>, three positions are particularly relevant within Social Platform’s overall human rights approach towards third-country nationals not being second-class citizens (Social Platform 2013):

Poverty and social exclusion – guarantee migrants their social, economic and cultural rights: Social Platform supports stressing the link between migration, discrimination and poverty, and social exclusion. “The social inclusion of migrants is closely linked to their ability to access quality employment, education, further training and other services. Social inclusion strategies in many countries give comparatively little consideration to preventing and fighting (the risk of) poverty and social exclusion among migrants” (Social Platform 2013: 5). It emphasises that this is all the more concerning in the context of the economic crisis and harsh austerity measures, especially in countries receiving external financial assistance, where migrants have been particularly affected by the financial cuts to social protection mechanisms and social services due to their initial vulnerable status.

Employment – guarantee migrants access to quality and sustainable employment: Social Platform criticises that many migrant workers face serious human rights violations, are exposed to substandard working conditions and to power imbalances in favour of the employer when a residence permit is directly linked to the work permit and face a greater likelihood of unemployment. The key barriers for migrants to access the labour market are seen in the lack of recognition of informal / formal education, qualifications, professional and intercultural experience, and in the lack of access to information and language proficiency. Because of mismatches in one's position and education, and stigmatisation and discrimination by employers, many migrants fall into undeclared and irregular work with precarious working conditions. Many migrant women in the labour market are concentrated in stereotypical female occupations, in a position that does not match their qualifications, or fall into prostitution. Social Platform argues that "labour migration cannot be separated from family migration, because the former generates the latter. It is therefore necessary to utilise and plan labour and family migration jointly" (Social Platform 2013: 7).

Civil dialogue – strengthen the EU institutions' consultative processes with, and by, migrants and their civil society associations: Social Platform states that participation in public and political life is an important element to integration: "However, migrants are particularly under-represented and they often feel isolated and alienated from the host society. They are either not authorised to vote in local elections or do not have access to information about their rights and how they can participate in the political debates and democratic life" (Social Platform 2013: 15). Social Platform points out that naturalisation and citizenship rights foster the political participation of migrants. Furthermore, it is emphasised that migrant associations and civil society organisations should play a key role in contributing to the European migration and integration policy debate: "This dialogue is essential to fight against mutual stereotypes, to show diversity as enriching rather than threatening and to contribute to social cohesion. NGOs also play a key role in helping to change attitudes towards migrants by providing a platform for dialogue, opportunities and access" (Social Platform 2013: 15).

In 2015 the Social Platform particularly focused on two campaigns: "Criminalising Solidarity" (advocating for service providers and NGOs not to be criminalised or sanctioned for their humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants) and a joint NGO statement "#WeApologise", which was translated into several languages (including Arabic) and directed towards migrants fleeing war, persecution and poverty. Here, one of the key points with repercussions also for the issue of legal migration is to urge decision-makers to provide safe and regular channels to the EU, so that migrants' well-being does not rest in the hands of human smugglers. The Social Platform also wrote a joint letter to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers with other NGOs including a call for: "Member States to put forward concrete proposals to revise and open new regular channels for migration. Such proposals must go beyond the Blue Card and high-skilled labour migration and include humanitarian and family sponsorship scheme for protection, sufficient channels to meet labour market needs in lower-skilled sectors as well as the laws and administrative capacity to facilitate family reunification"<sup>55</sup>.

This overview of the positions and activities of civil society actors in the field of legal migration shows that, clearly, each organisation has its own special approach to the issue of concern. In the last chapter we will summarise the insights this paper provided and offer some conclusions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper gave an overview of the main aspects of how the issue of demographic change in relation to the fields of ageing and health, fertility and family, and legal migration is discussed by some of the most influential EU civil society actors. As mentioned above, this overview does not claim to be representative, since within the frame of a discussion paper we could only cover a selection of actors. Nevertheless, it offers hints to the many facets of the issues and the variety of interests involved at the level of EU civil society. Within these limitations, at least four general observations can be made:

First, this paper has shown the role of EU civil society in political advocacy with regard to the interests of the people actually affected by certain phenomena, policy measures or proposals – which organisations like AGE is providing for older people, COFACE for families, Eurochild for children and young people and EPHA for civil society stakeholders in the field of public health in Europe. These are all examples – as well as the other organisations presented in this paper – of EU civil society actors defining, aggregating and articulating interests of their members or their constituencies from all over Europe at the EU level. The work of these organisations makes it easier for European institutions to observe and consider general political concerns and interests of the countless national civil society actors in the EU Member States.

Second, the overview indicates how differently the same issues may be approached by different civil society actors. This became, for instance, particularly evident in the field of legal migration: BUSINESSEUROPE – as an important advocate for businesses' interests in Europe – makes the need to facilitate the attraction and entry for third-country nationals, as well as their mobility within the EU once they are here, their first priority. In contrast, the EU workers' and social interest representatives – ETUC and the Social Platform – focus much more on the importance of effective integration and the need to secure equal treatment, non-discrimination and human rights of migrant workers and their families. How organisations prioritise issues further underlines the importance of involving a broad range of civil society actors in the debate about how to best deal with the consequences of demographic change, since they provide

not only insights “from the frontline” about different problems, needs and interests, but are also able to identify possible negative repercussions of certain measures discussed that might not be considered by policy makers or researchers.

Third, the overview of the positions of EU civil society organisations gave an idea of potentially contentious issues in the debate of how to best deal with the consequences of population ageing between the European Commission and civil society organisations representing specific interests. One example is the increase of the retirement age: the European Commission strongly recommends an increase in the retirement age in its demography strategy while the EESC claims that the focus should instead be on promoting an inclusive labour market with high quality work, which would not only enable people to work longer, but would also make them want to.

Four, this paper also provided some examples of how the exchange between civil society actors and the EU is organised and institutionalised at the European Commission level. Indeed, the European Commission strongly values the special expertise of interest groups in the design of public policy. This is presumably not only true because of the Commission's limited in-house resources, which makes it necessary to draw on external sources of information in order to perform its policy functions effectively, but also because the inclusion of civil society may enhance the chances that its policy proposals are accepted. Against the background of the Commission's limited power – especially in the field of population policies (see Zimmermann 2015) – it would be difficult to enforce policies that do not meet the expectations of those affected. Still, this does not say much about the actual influence of civil society actors, but it shows that civil society is at least heard. However, this is not a one-directional approach: It is obvious that the agenda of the European Commission also influences the activities of civil society actors in a direct way through policy making, but also indirectly through competitive funding of projects and other activities. The research perspective also does not stand for itself. On the one hand, research provides policy makers, as well as civil society actors, crucial insights about certain phenomena, correlations and developments based on thorough data analysis and

up-to-date statistical methods. On the other hand, the agenda of researchers themselves can be influenced by policy, for instance, through knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement, funding opportunities or contract research. The practical experience of civil society actors also provides researchers important impulses in designing their research projects, reflecting not only the statistical evidence, but also the level of individual experiences, as well as political concerns and obstacles.

Overall, the main conclusion from this paper is that a constructive dialogue and lively exchange of knowledge, insights and experiences between policy makers and civil society actors – as well as research (as shown in Bengtsson et al. (2012)) – is crucial to find effective, sustainable and socially acceptable ways to deal with the issue of demographic change, not only for mitigating its consequences, but to turn this challenge into a real opportunity for Europe.



- [1] The discussion paper series is part of Population Europe's strategy to promote comprehensive knowledge and new insights based on top-research findings, and make them easily accessible to decision-makers and other audiences interested in Europe's demographic change ([www.population-europe.eu](http://www.population-europe.eu)). As the collaborative network of Europe's leading demographic research centres, Population Europe has developed an extensive set of tools for efficient dissemination of research outcomes to researchers, policy makers, civil society, the media and other interested audiences. Furthermore, Population Europe actively promotes direct exchange between scientists and societal decision-makers through regular conferences and workshops jointly organised with its partners.
- [2] All hyperlinks offered in this document were checked on 10.12.2015. Therefore the date of actual retrieval of the information is not given in each case separately.
- [3] <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20101499~menuPK:244752~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html>
- [4] This section is based on the second issue of the Population Europe Discussion Paper Series "Demographic Change on the Political Agenda of the EU" (Zimmermann 2015).
- [5] <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister>
- [6] Who is supposed to register is defined as: "Activities covered by the Register include lobbying, interest representation and advocacy. It covers all activities designed to influence – directly or indirectly – policymaking, policy implementation and decision-making in the EU institutions, no matter where they are carried out or which channel or method of communication is used. The emphasis is on 'what you do' rather than 'who you are.'" [http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do?locale=en&reference=WHOS\\_IS\\_EXPECTED\\_TO\\_REGISTER](http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do?locale=en&reference=WHOS_IS_EXPECTED_TO_REGISTER)
- [7] The register was searched with the following predefined search terms on 5 November 2015: Section = "NGOs (Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and similar)", Level of interest = "European", Fields of interests = "Employment and Social Affairs", "Public Health", "Home Affairs".
- [8] For a more detailed description, see the introduction of chapter 2 in Zimmermann (2015).
- [9] <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=330&langId=en>
- [10] [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)
- [11] <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=961>
- [12] <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=987>
- [13] <http://www.ec.europa.eu/socialdialogue>
- [14] Through the social dialogue budget, financial support is given to transnational projects carried out by social partners and others active in the field of industrial relations. The European Social Fund (ESF) provides financial support for capacity building of social partner organisations at the national level.
- [15] A list of the consulted organisations can be found on DG EMPL's website: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=329&langId=en>
- [16] [http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest\\_groups/eu\\_health\\_forum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/eu_health_forum/index_en.htm)
- [17] A list of member organisations can be found here: [http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest\\_groups/eu\\_health\\_forum/policy\\_forum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/eu_health_forum/policy_forum/index_en.htm)
- [18] [http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest\\_groups/eu\\_health\\_forum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/eu_health_forum/index_en.htm)
- [19] [http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest\\_groups/stakeholder\\_dialogue\\_group/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/stakeholder_dialogue_group/index_en.htm)
- [20] The other topics are: agriculture and environment, civil society, consumers, economics and cohesion, energy and transport, enterprises and industry, Europe 2020, external relations - enlargement / EU neighbours, external relations - the rest of the world, information society and institutional reform (<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.themes>).
- [21] <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.sections-commission>
- [22] [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index_en.htm)

- [23] All opinions are available online under: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.the-elderly-opinions>
- [24] <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.children>
- [25] All opinions are available online under: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.children-opinions>
- [26] <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.family>
- [27] <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.youth>
- [28] All opinions are available online under: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.youth-opinions>
- [29] <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.gender-equality>
- [30] All opinions are available online under: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.equal-opportunities-opinions>
- [31] All opinions are available online under: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.immigration-and-asylum-opinions>
- [32] <http://www.age-platform.eu/about-age>
- [33] <http://www.age-platform.eu/about-age/useful-documents/guiding-principles>
- [34] <http://www.age-platform.eu/age-work/age-policy-work>
- [35] <http://www.age-platform.eu/age-work/age-policy-work/age-friendly-environments>
- [36] Implementation of the EU's economic rules is organised annually in the so-called European Semester. In each European Semester the European Commission analyses the fiscal and structural reform policies of every Member State, provides recommendations and monitors their implementation. The Member States then implement the commonly agreed policies ([http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/economic\\_governance/the\\_european\\_semester/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/economic_governance/the_european_semester/index_en.htm)).
- [37] "[R]ising energy prices and deteriorating services are leaving more and more older persons close to the poverty line with the choice between heating and eating, or being cut-off from essential services because they are not able to pay the bills" (<http://www.age-platform.eu/age-work/age-policy-work/consumer-rights>).
- [38] <http://www.age-platform.eu/good-practices>
- [39] <http://www.eph.org/a/4368>
- [40] <http://www.coface-eu.org/en/About/Our-vision/>
- [41] <http://www.coface-eu.org/en/Policies/Consumers-Health/Nutri-Medias/>
- [42] The quote was provided to the author of this paper on the 9th of December 2015.
- [43] <http://www.eurochild.org/about-us/what-we-do/>
- [44] This quote was provided to the author by Eurochild on the 11th of December 2015.
- [45] <https://www.etuc.org/aims-and-priorities>
- [46] These councils were established as bottom-up initiatives in order to deal with labour market problems in "Paris Manifesto - Stand up in solidarity for quality jobs, workers' rights and a fair society in Europe", adjoining regions in different EU countries and in a few cases also including non-EU states (Hammer 2010: 351f).
- [47] <https://www.etuc.org/press/international-migrants%E2%80%99-day-etuc-calls-human-rights-approach-eu-policy#.VmBB0meFPcs>
- [48] <https://www.buinessseurope.eu/mission-and-priorities>
- [49] <https://www.buinessseurope.eu/policies/social/labour-markets-and-social-policy/mobility-and-immigration>
- [50] <https://www.buinessseurope.eu/sites/buseur/files/media/imported/2012-01159-E.pdf>

[51] [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/soteu/docs/state\\_of\\_the\\_union\\_2015\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/soteu/docs/state_of_the_union_2015_en.pdf)

[52] <https://www.buinessurope.eu/publications/buinessurope-reacts-state-union-speech>

[53] <http://www.socialplatform.org/what-we-do/over-arching-campaigns/migration/>

[54] The Social Platform itself uses the term regular migration instead of legal migration.

[55] <http://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The-best-and-worst-of-Europe-a-joint-letter-from-EPAM-Social-Platform-and-CONCORD-Europe.pdf>

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