

The Need for Intergenerational Solidarity. Does Age Matter?
Provisional abstract, paper to be presented at the session Population Ageing
(convenor: Emily Grundy)

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Europe's populations are 'ageing' rapidly. The prospect of an older population composition, more particularly the decreasing numbers of people at working-age, is regarded by policy makers and members of the research community as a threat for the sustainability of the existing welfare regimes (see, for example, Schoenmaeckers, *forthcoming*). The solutions to the problem would be higher productivity and higher activity rates, including the postponement of age of retirement (*idem*). To reach these objectives, researchers and especially policy makers underline the need for intergenerational solidarity (as exemplified in the 'Green Paper' of the European Commission, 2005).

But to what extent is there solidarity between generations in Europe? According to the international DIALOG-programme ** a majority (70%) of citizens consider the rising number of older persons as something to be worried about. In other words, the increasing number of older persons is essentially regarded as a 'menace', rather than, to use the words of Frank Notestein (1954), "a great triumph of civilization". More specifically, the attitude of citizens toward older persons and their role in society would be seriously influenced by age. Younger people have a less positive attitude than older ones. The pattern is consistent across countries. The other

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** DIALOG is the acronym of an international PPA survey (Population Policy Acceptancy survey) that is being implemented with financial assistance from the European Commission as part of the 5th Framework Programme. There are in total 12 participating countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany (Eastern and Western), Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia. The programme is co-ordinated by the German BiB. The PPAS data set is based on representative samples including information of some 30,000 men and women.

important (and consistent) effect is produced by sex: men have a less positive attitude toward older persons than women. These results have been obtained from GLM applications (General Linear Modelling) on an index-variable concerning attitude toward elderly. The index-variable is constructed on statements regarding the position of older people in society, such as, for example, 'The aged guarantee maintenance of traditional values in society' (Schoenmaeckers et al., *forthcoming*).

The results indicate the importance of a 'life course' approach and of the need for better information.

The purpose of the proposed paper is to come to a better understanding of these provisional findings. For example, is there a similar 'age-pattern' regarding the opinion of citizens with respect to their preferred age of retirement? or with respect to the care of elderly? To what respect is 'attitude' also a function of better knowledge (on demographic developments)? And how to explain the (important) differences that are observed between countries?

The paper will be based on GLM applications on the PPAS DIALOG data set.

References:

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