

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF OLDER PEOPLE 1993

THE OLD ARE YOUNGSTERS WHO HAVE GROWN OLDER

Solidarity between Generations in Sweden
Summary

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The Old Are Youngsters Who Have Grown Older

Solidarity Between Generations in Sweden
The European Year of Older People 1993

Kommittén för europeiska äldreåret 1993

Summary of
the Final Report of the Swedish Committee on the
European Year of Older People 1993
Stockholm 1994



The Old Are Youngsters Who Have Grown Older

Exploring the Relationship Between
The Young and the Old in the 1990s

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About this report

The Swedish Committee on the European Year of Older People, acting on the direct instructions of the Government of Sweden, has co-ordinated implementation of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993.

On 15th December 1993 the Committee published its interim report in the official Government SOU series, *Borta bra men hemma bäst? Fakta om äldre i Europa* ("No place like home? Facts about older persons in Europe") (SOU 1993:111, 140 pp.). Its final report, *Gamla är unga som blivit äldre. Om solidaritet mellan generationerna Europeiska äldreåret 1993* ("The old are youngsters who have grown older. Solidarity between generations in the European Year of Older People 1993") (SOU 1994:39, 149 pp.), was presented to the Minister of Health and Social Affairs on 3rd March 1994.

The following is a summary of the main experiences and conclusions resulting in Sweden from the European Year 1993. It is based on the account given in Part I of the final report.

Stockholm, 17th May 1994

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Introduction

"The European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations" is a very wide concept, affording scope for any studies and activities whatsoever touching on conditions for older persons and, moreover, anything concerning other generations, as regards their relations with older persons.

If the field, thus viewed, is virtually unlimited, the aggregate resources for implementing the programme were massive as well, with all member states of the EU and EFTA concentrating their attention on a single theme. Even so, it was clear to the Swedish Committee from the very outset that each individual country, and especially a small one like Sweden, would be forced to limit the field somewhat and concentrate its efforts on a well-chosen sub-theme.

The Swedish Committee therefore decided at its very first meeting, in January 1993, that Sweden's efforts during the Year of Older People were to concentrate mainly on the theme of Solidarity between Generations.

A mistake in the right direction

The Committee justified this choice of theme by its conviction that segregation of the generations had probably gone further in Sweden than in any other European country.

The results of all-European studies under the aegis of the Year of Older People were later to show that this conviction on the Committee's part was something of a misapprehension. The Eurobarometer and the parallel Swedish survey were to show that older people in Sweden, and their coevals in Denmark, regarded themselves, least of all older persons in Europe, as lonely and isolated.

Sticking to what is objectively quantifiable, there is no doubt that the generations in Sweden live further apart than in most other countries. Nearly half of all households in Sweden are single-person households, and many singles are older people. And in a far-flung, sparsely populated country like ours, geographical distances between people and generations are often and inevitably considerable.

But our barometers show quite clearly that living alone is not regarded as loneliness but as something very positive – independence.

The growing number of older persons living on their own is apparent in all European countries; it becomes more noticeable as we move northwards and it is outstandingly apparent in Sweden and Denmark. But research has shown that single living does not mean desertion and isolation. "Nearness at a slight remove" is a research term epitomising a reality emerging from the questionnaire material, and this is true not least of inter-generational contacts in Sweden.

Thus, although to begin with the Swedish Committee probably overemphasised the segregation of generations in our country, our choice of main theme for the Year proved to be a lucky shot. The motto "Solidarity between the Generations" became something of a battle cry, admirably symbolised by the highly appreciated and widely distributed logotype for the Year in Sweden.

As it was clear from the very outset that activities under the Swedish Year of Older People programme would for the most part have to be based on voluntary, unpaid work, a theme simply had to be found which was capable of inspiring and enthusing the prospective volunteers. Solidarity between the Generations provided exactly this kind of theme. It may originally have been chosen out of a misapprehension, but that misapprehension proved to be a mistake in the right direction.

Two perspectives

The theme of Solidarity between Generations came to be developed in two perspectives, short-term and long-term.

First the theme refers to the encounter in the present, to getting to know each other, learning from each other and finding that there are many ways in which we can help and support each other. Initiatives and activities under the aegis of the Year of Older People have provided many opportunities for contacts of this kind. The biggest and most publicised must have been the arrangement in Stockholm on the UN Day of Older People, 1st October, when youngsters and seniors in their thousands met and socialised at Fryshuset, in what was, to say the least of it, a variegated programme.

Similar contacts and get-togethers were organised in hundreds of places up and down the country, albeit mostly on a smaller scale.

But the theme of Solidarity between Generations has also been interpreted in a longer perspective, as a community of interest between old and young. Conflicts between generations are to a great extent based on the supposition that there must necessarily be competition between them, that everyone must jostle for a slice of the same cake.

From many discussions during the Year of Older People, however, there emerged a realisation that young and old are the same individuals at different points in life, that ordering things as well as possible for all of us at all stages of life must be a matter of common interest.

This realisation, expressed in the dictum that "The old are youngsters who have grown older", forms the title of the Committee's final report (SOU 1994:39). And such an idea, insofar as it has spread and taken root, may prove to be the main lasting benefit in Sweden of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations.

Thanks for your help!

Invitations to take part in the activities of the European Year of Older People 1993, were extended in many directions – to national, local and regional authorities, research institutions and a large number of organisations working with retired persons and with the younger generation.

The response was far, far stronger than the Committee had ever dared to hope. An active part has been played by big national authorities, by associations large and small, by spontaneously formed working parties and by individual enthusiasts. The catalogue of activities during the Year compiled by the Committee bears witness to great ingenuity, enthusiasm and energy.

All the various activities can be termed voluntary. Even in cases where national and local authorities took the initiative and made the arrangements, they greatly exceeded what can be termed their official obligations. We met and worked with the human face of authority.

The Swedish Committee is sincerely grateful to all those who in this way helped to make a success of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993.

Nils Carlshamre

Chairman,

Swedish Committee on the European Year of Older People 1993

The European Year 1993 in Sweden and co-operation at European level

The European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, was a success! That was the unanimous verdict from all parties concerned within the EU and its twelve Member States at the summing up of proceedings in Brussels on 7th-8th December 1993.

High marks are also awarded to Sweden's implementation of the European Year of Older People, 1993, with its principal theme of Solidarity between Generations. The response in our country beggared all expectations, even though essentially no time was allowed for planning and preparations, either centrally or locally. Work began with the Year already upon us.

Thousands of activities have taken place in the EU countries, most of them undertaken in the field by and for committed older persons and other participants of all ages. In Sweden, an EFTA state, there were hundreds of activities.

The time has now come to take stock of the results.

First mention must go to one of the most important results of all: the European Year of Older People 1993, is going to have a sequel: sights are trained on a new European Older People Programme, starting in 1995.

European co-operation

The decision to organise a European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, had the backing of the EU Council of Ministers. It formed part of and marked the conclusion of the EU's first Older People Programme, 1991-1993. Work was co-ordinated by the European Commission in Brussels.

The purpose of the European Year of Older People 1993, was to focus attention on the social dimension of European co-operation and to

- highlight the positive contribution of older persons to society,
- strengthen solidarity between the generations,
- enhance awareness of the challenge posed to society by an ageing population.

The following are important points of departure for EU and EFTA co-operation under the Older People Programme and during the Year of Older People:

- (a) There is not, and has not been, any question of harmonising legislation or regulatory systems. Responsibility for questions concerning older persons

is located at national level. Instead the main emphasis is on the transmission and exchange of knowledge, experience and information.

In other words, the principle of subsidiarity applies, i.e. decisions are to be taken at the lowest possible level.

- (b) The legal basis of EFTA/EU co-operation is formed by the EEA Agreement, which entered into force on 1st January 1994. Its entry into force was delayed during 1993, but all the same, it was thanks to the EEA Agreement that the EFTA countries were invited, in July 1992, to take part in work on the EU Older People Programme and for the European Year of Older People 1993. Up until the end of 1993, the EFTA countries took part in an observer capacity.

During 1994 the EFTA states are taking part as full members, except in decision-making on the distribution of funding. During the year the EFTA countries will take part in the planning of the new Older People Programme, to be inaugurated in 1995.

The Year of Older People in Sweden – part of a long-term activity

The Swedish Government resolved on 26th November 1992 to appoint a committee to co-ordinate Sweden's participation in the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993.

The Committee took the name of the Committee (S 1992:12) for the European Year of Older People 1993. It has had nine members and nine special advisers, representing pensioners' organisations and other NGOs, trade unions, gerontology research, youth activities, caring services for the elderly, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Federation of County Councils, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Administration.

The Committee held its first meeting on 13th January 1993, and its plan of action for the Year was presented a week later, simultaneously with the grand inauguration of European Year 1993 in Brussels on 19th-20th January.

As the main theme for Sweden's implementation we chose *Solidarity between Generations*. The action plan stated that this work was to be viewed as part of a more long-term activity, to one side of the more campaign-like parts of the assignment.

National Activity Week

To facilitate, notwithstanding the shortage of planning time, a more concerted manifestation of the European Year of Older People, we proclaimed a National Activity Week for 1st-10th October 1993.

The opening of the Activity Week, on Friday, 1st October, was timed to coincide with the UN International Day of Older People. At the formal inauguration of the Week, at government office Rosenbad in Stockholm, the Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Mr Bengt Westerberg, made it clear that the question of older persons at European level had to be viewed in its international context, being a question, not only of solidarity between generations but also of solidarity across national boundaries.

Two-stage co-operation

The main role of the Committee was to co-ordinate and initiate activities and arrangements of various kinds and to act as an information centre and service agency.

The limited resources at the Committee's disposal made it natural for work to be based on a two-stage model, in the sense of inviting the relevant national organisations and authorities to co-operate closely with the Committee and asking in what way active participation in the 1993 European Year could serve the ends of their own activities and be viewed as part and parcel of their regular work.

This proved to be a highly successful approach. For one thing, many organisations and national authorities were represented on the Committee, and secondly we expanded the circle to include another 60 or so relevant organisations, e.g. pensioners' and youth organisations, sports, immigrant, women's, cultural organisations, associations of the disabled, union organisations, housing and research organisations, adult education associations and so on, as well as a number of national authorities.

In the course of the Year these various bodies were invited to three major national briefings and for discussions of activities planned and completed.

Local activities

Activities in the country at large culminated with National Activity Week, 1st-10th October, for which over a hundred principal organisers at local level presented lists of activities planned.

It was common, for example, for a municipality (principal organiser) to conduct activities in based on collaboration between the social welfare authorities, pensioners' associations, libraries, schools, day nurseries and service accommodation units etc.

Consequently the number of activities varied a great deal from one principal organiser to another, ranging from the odd one to fifty or more.

National activities

The Activity Week was also accompanied by a number of national manifestations of the Year of Older People, on the lines of *Solidarity between Generations*.

All the national organisations and authorities concerned were invited by the Minister of Health and Social Affairs and the Swedish Committee to a ceremonial inauguration of the Activity Week at Rosenbad, the Government Chancery in Stockholm. The Minister for Youth Affairs presented some thirty development projects mounted by societies and NGOs on the theme of Solidarity between Generations, for which the Government had allocated a total of MSEK 1. The results of the Swedish Eurobarometer, *Older People in Sweden and Europe*, were announced, and prizes were presented for the *Old and Young* photographic competition and for good examples of neighbourhood senior housing measuring up to the motto of *Solidarity between Generations*.

Young persons and pensioners gathered at Fryshuset, Stockholm, under the watchword *Dance with Your Grandma*. Other activities included a national research conference, entitled *By Virtue of Age*, and a national conference on *Co-ordinated residential services and voluntary work*.

Catalogues of activities, bulletins, official reports etc.

During the Year, the Committee has published a lot of material in order to advertise the Year and to help the various National Organisations and National Authorities to stimulate the implementation of the Year within their own respective areas at local and regional levels.

A Swedish logotype, clearly expressing the main theme of the Year in our country – Solidarity between Generations – was created. The logo proved to be a success; some 25 000 labels and 6 000 posters were delivered to order. However, ever since that time we got permission to use the European common logo, it has been advertised in all reports, bulletins etc. published by the Committee.

Two catalogues of activities were published based upon inquiries made by the Committee: *This will happen in Sweden in 1993*, 29 pp. (April) and *Activities from North to South*, 30 pp. (October) and two bulletins (20 pp.) were published at the same time. Altogether 8 500 catalogues and 28 000 bulletins were delivered to order.

On 15th December, 1993, the Committee delivered a report in the official Government SOU series to the Minister of Social Affairs, with the title "*No place like home? Facts about older persons in Europe*", 140 pp. (SOU 1993:111). The report contains detailed summaries in Swedish of some European studies, inter alia the EC Observatory Report on Older People and the Eurobarometer on Age and Attitudes and also the results of its Swedish counterpart.

At the same time, the Swedish Council for Social Research, together with the Committee, published a survey of Swedish research projects in the field of elderly (78 pp.). The report is available in English and, hopefully, will be useful in different kinds of European networks aiming at improving the exchange of knowledge and experiences in this field.

On 3rd March, 1994, the Committee delivered its final report in the official Government SOU series, to the Minister of Health and Social Affairs with the title "*The old are youngsters who have grown older. Solidarity between generations in the European Year of Older People 1993*", 149 pp. (SOU 1994:39). As already has been pointed out, this summary is based on the account given in that final report.

The Year of Older People – Swedish experiences and reflections

The European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations is now over. What has it meant to us in Sweden and what have we learned from it? What marks has it made? Or was it just like any other year?

At the time of writing, February 1994, it is hard to say what the more abiding results of the European Year 1993 are likely to be in Sweden.

Follow-up

The Swedish Committee has attempted a rudimentary follow-up, with special emphasis on the main theme of the Year, *Solidarity between Generations*:

- At the beginning of December 1993 we conducted a questionnaire sample survey of 70 local co-ordinators, mostly representing municipalities and pensioners' associations.
- To shed a more comprehensive light on conceivable effects of the Year of Older People, we selected five places/municipalities from north to south for closer study. Group interviews have been conducted there with people directly involved in activities during the Year of Older People.
- As a means of slanting the theme of Solidarity between Generations from various angles, we have also interviewed Committee members and special advisers, all of whom represent a wide variety of competencies.
- We have also studied personal narratives from the Swedish people on the theme of *Old and Young*, taken from a Swedish Radio programme entitled *Senioren*.
- In addition, we have compiled a descriptive summary of national and local activities during the Year.

The overall results of our follow-up are presented in our final report.

Low expectations

When work for Sweden's participation in the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations began in January 1993, little was expected to come of it.

Sweden does not have a real tradition of campaigns where success depends on such a high degree of local mobilisation as was now the case. There is much that stands or falls by voluntary involvement. In this respect other European countries, where voluntary work is much more organised and accounts for a larger share of elderly care than in Sweden, may seem to have a head start on us.

In value terms as well, campaigns and proclamations of special years in the caring sector cannot be said to have much keudos in Sweden, due possibly to the high degree of professionalisation and governmental commitment characterising the Swedish caring sector.

On top of all this, the Year of Older People came at a time of spending cuts and restructuring measures, not only in public caring services but also in other vital sectors of the community, such as the labour market.

All things considered, the picture now emerging of Swedish experiences and results in connection with the European Year of Older People is an amazingly bright one. The response exceeded all expectations. How come?

Paradoxically enough, the very circumstances which, to begin with, seemed most inauspicious turned out, in a manner of speaking, to be incentivising.

The municipalities and pensioners

The strongest participants in the Year came from the public sector – caring services for the elderly, libraries, child care services, schools and leisure centres. A large number of Sweden's municipalities took upon themselves the co-ordination of local manifestations and activities. Together with very active organisations of pensioners up and down the country, they were responsible for most of Sweden's implementation of the Year of Older People.

County council involvement was mainly channelled through the new mandators – the municipalities; this came as a consequence of the Ädel reform, the effect of which was to make large areas of elderly care a municipal responsibility.

By contrast, the response from certain NGOs at national level was surprisingly faint, not least in view of the emphasis placed in the Government's terms of reference on the importance of voluntary measures. The same goes for established organisations of and for children and young persons.

The main theme of Solidarity between Generations has not been looked on by these organisations as a priority issue. Can the lack of interest perhaps also be taken to reflect a sectorialised working approach which is also characteristic of so many associations and of large areas of NGO activity?

On the other hand, much of the local work put in for the Year of Older People was done on a voluntary basis.

Financial constraints a galvanising influence

Summing up, at local level, great dedication to the cause of the European Year of Older People was shown by municipal employees. Adverse conditions, in the form of spending cuts and threatening unemployment, were if anything a galvanising influence, giving people an opportunity of exercising their creativity, working across the convention sectorial boundaries, both within the administration and in relation to voluntary organisations, and this resulted in dedication far beyond the call of (salaried) duty.

Austerity has also created an appetite for debate and critical discussion for which the Year of Older People provided a focal point. Thus a large number of conferences, seminars, debates etc. took place in this connection.

The Year of Older People and the media

To publicise the Year of Older People, the press were invited to each of the three national briefings already mentioned, and also to the presentation of our interim report to the Minister of Health and Social Affairs on 15th December. Full press information was at the same time (i.e. on four separate occasions) circulated to all national and local newspaper offices.

Despite this systematic canvassing of the press, radio and television, we regret to say that the Year of Older People did not really attract the media coverage it deserved. This has been a consistent point of criticism in our follow-up of the Year.

Lack of interest was shown above all by the national media. In connection with the National Activity Week (1st-10th October 1993), however, the local dailies took a very close interest in the activities arranged on their home ground.

The Committee has followed this through by calling on a number of local organisers to send in press clippings. The result was impressive: hundreds of clippings were received, testifying to the great dedication and resourcefulness of local organisers. Quite clearly, the Year of Older People and its main theme of Solidarity between Generations were a source of inspiration for eminently crowd-pulling arrangements.

Many of the organisers, however, wished that the Year of Older People had already been given more media coverage at the beginning of 1993, to give them a much-needed impetus.

Passed with flying colours

The follow-up of the Year of Older People has shown, among other things, that roughly three-quarters of the local organisers in the questionnaire survey felt that the response to their activities during the Year had been very good or fairly good, both within their own circle (employees, members etc.) and among people in general.

Virtually all the respondents also felt that the Year of Older People had given them ideas and inspiration for continuing activities. Eighty per cent of the respondents felt that work for increasing solidarity between generations should be a priority field in present-day society, especially in schools and caring services.

One also finds that, in the opinion of municipal employees, work in connection with the Year of Older People lent added impetus to the Ädel reform, partly by giving them an opportunity of developing working methods better calculated to harness the available voluntary forces, not least in the immediate community – the housing area, the neighbourhood, the local district.

Pensioners' associations and other organisations appreciated the opportunity which the Year of Older People had provided for collaborating on equal terms with municipal authorities: staff in caring services for the elderly, schools etc. are needed as catalysts and intermediaries, while on the other hand neighbour-to-neighbour services and other activities are best left to the associations themselves. What is more, collaboration in itself is a constant generator of new ideas on the best way of pooling resources.

Experience has shown that campaigns and ostensibly more gimmicky arrangements, properly used, can play a useful part in day-to-day work. This is reflected, not least, by the appreciation and happiness which many organisers have noted among people taking part in the activities: older people themselves, children, youngsters and the general public.

Concluding discussion and overall assessment

Now that the time has come for drawing conclusions from observations during the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, we will take as our starting point the Government's terms of reference (Dir. 1992:102) for our Committee.

Those terms of reference indicated that Sweden's participation in the European Year of Older People was to be basically concerned with observing, in various ways, the social situation of older persons, with special emphasis on the importance of solidarity, better knowledge and interaction between generations.

First of all we can note that the European Year of Older People has evoked a massive response in our country. The interest and dedication shown by national authorities, municipalities, county councils, associations, organisations etc. have greatly exceeded our expectations.

All the means of implementation mentioned in the terms of reference – conferences, voluntary measures to increase the interaction between generations, drawing and photographic competitions, literary activities etc. – have been assiduously employed both locally and centrally.

The working approach in itself has resulted in a very large number of people taking part in various activities – seniors, young persons, school classes, day nursery groups, homehelp service staff, librarians, politicians, researchers, entrepreneurs and the general public.

Furthermore, through the distribution of bulletins and catalogues of activities, the Committee, as the terms of reference put it, has helped to bring existing projects to the notice of organisations, municipalities, county councils etc.

With the wisdom of hindsight we can say that, in spite of an initial shortage of time for planning and preparations, both locally and centrally, the practical implementation of the Year of Older People has amply measured up to the Government's terms of reference.

Points of departure for further measures

Our interpretation of the remit, however, goes further than this. The terms of reference issued by the Government refer to additional conditions which should be taken into account.

For example, "An ageing population presents great challenges to a society which is no longer able to expand publicly funded caring services as in pre-

vious decades. Sweden, like many other Western European countries, needs to develop solidarity between generations, partly by supporting mutual and voluntary measures, but also by highlighting and reducing the mythologising which occurs between different groups in society."

And furthermore: "Sweden has developed a model for the care of the elderly which has acquired a very good reputation both in Europe and in other parts of the world. Participation in European Older People Year can give Sweden further valuable international contacts and contribute towards a mutual exchange of experience relating to an ageing European population."

Work in connection with the European Year of Older People, and the results of that work, must therefore be viewed in a more long-term context. How feasible are measures of this kind?

At European level, perhaps the most important starting points are as follows:

- (a) The European Year of Older People 1993, which formed part of the first EU Programme for Older People 1991-1993, is to have a sequel in the form of a new Older People programme within the EU, starting in 1995 and with 1994 as a year of preparation.
- (b) The EFTA countries, Sweden included, are taking part in the preparations by virtue of the EEA Agreement and are expected to take part in the new Older People programme.
- (c) Questions concerning older persons and solidarity between generations figure prominently in the new European Social Policy which is now emerging within the EU. The EFTA countries have been invited to convey viewpoints as this work proceeds (Green Paper on Social Policy, European Commission, Brussels 1993).

The following factors may be an important starting point at national level:

- (a) Under the EEA Agreement, Sweden, as an EFTA member, is already playing an active part in EU work in the seniors sector. That work is likely to be intensified with the inauguration of the EU's second Older People programme.
- (b) Regardless of whether or not Sweden joins the EU, there is a pronounced need for wider and deeper interchange of knowledge and information between Sweden and other European countries, but also with the rest of the world.
- (c) Continuing, intensified co-operation of this kind with reference to older persons will obviously make additional demands on the Swedish national authorities, organisations and institutions concerned.

At local level, the following will be an important point of departure for assessing the need for further measures:

- (a) Implementation of the Year of Older People, and especially of its main theme, Solidarity between Generations, has helped to bring important fields of activity relating to older persons and to contacts between generations to the attention of a wider public.

- (b) The Year of Older People has been a source of inspiration to many and, not least, has pointed to ways of developing contacts between voluntary and employed personnel.
- (c) The local work which has started in many quarters should be encouraged and disseminated.

Our overall assessment

The European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, originated with European co-operation within the EU, a co-operation in which Sweden and the other EFTA signatories of the EEA Agreement have come to be more and more closely involved.

It is only natural, then, that the Swedish Committee's overall assessment should focus primarily on the question of Sweden's role in a continuing reciprocal European, and international, exchange of knowledge and experience in the elderly sector.

Swedish participation in the Second EU Older People Programme – approach and specific issues

On the basis of the partly new knowledge concerning conditions for older persons in Europe which has been one of the main results of the European Year of Older People, we can begin with the following observation. The Swedish welfare model has scored very good marks in a European comparison. The Swedish Eurobarometer, the results of which were presented in our report *Borta bra men hemma bäst? Fakta om äldre i Europa* (SOU 1993:11), showed among other things the following:

In the debate on welfare, it has been maintained from time to time that the standard of welfare may be higher in Sweden (and the rest of Scandinavia) but that well-being is higher, for example, in the Mediterranean countries. This is not borne out by the Swedish Eurobarometer. On the contrary, the findings show the prosperity and well-being of older people to be higher in our part of the world. Practically all comparisons convey a brighter image of the older Swede (or Dane) than of older persons on the Continent. The picture emerges of a person who has no money problems, is active and participates in the life of the community, is contented with his or her life, is treated with respect, is on good terms with his or her family and does not feel lonely.

At the same time, as our interim report makes clear, the Swedish Eurobarometer also reveals signs of an incipient fear of worsening conditions. Medical and caring services are given very high marks by older persons, but an incontestable minority has experienced deteriorations during the past year. It is above all older persons in big cities who are most critical and feel that their difficulties are greatest.

The Committee wishes to reaffirm that the right to dignified, independent living, with good access to services, care and attention, is an indispensable quality to all elderly members of the community. This calls for collective, public measures and implies demands on each and every one of us, ranging all the way from personal response to practical assistance and support.

The Swedish model for the care of the elderly and for their conditions in society is an important point of departure for Sweden's active participation in future European co-operation.

Another important point of departure lies in the fact that the second EU Older People programme will be operating within the framework of the new European social policy (see the European Commission's Green Paper on the subject).

The consequences of an ageing population figure prominently in the Green Paper scenario of the social challenges which Europe is facing, and the question of solidarity between generations is a constantly recurring theme of the strategies for a future Europe in which economic and social progress must go hand in hand.

European policy for older people, and accordingly the EU Programme for Older People, can thus be expected to play an important part within the EU's new action policy on social policy and in its work for the social dimension in Europe. We wish to highlight the importance of questions relating to older people being taken into account in Sweden's statement on the Green paper.

As regards the concrete issues and subject fields which should be included in the coming European Programme for Older People, the basic criterion should be that of matters of vital common concern to Sweden, the other EFTA countries and the EU.

Accordingly, it is our opinion that the following specific points, among others, should receive attention in the course of continuing co-operation at European level:

Solidarity between generations – a crucial issue for the future of all European welfare states, e.g. in view of rising unemployment and the direction in which willingness to contribute towards collective social welfare is going to develop.

Recurrent studies are needed here, also at European level, e.g. concerning changes in the value patterns of young persons, together with an analysis of conceivable effects. Practical measures are also needed, to augment contacts between generations in different fields, for the further strengthening of solidarity.

On the strength of Sweden's experience, we feel that the question of solidarity between generations should be allotted a prominent position in future European work relating to older people. *Solidarity between generations* has proved capable of inspiring widespread enthusiasm, highlighting participation and civic responsibility and indicating, to professionals and volunteers alike, new and constructive approaches to work in what was previously taken to be a well-known subject field.

Thus the question of solidarity between generations should be an integral part of the various themes or parts of the new Older People programme, i.e. should constitute a basic attitude and a practical tool for analysis in the general fabric of work rather than a separate theme in itself.

Demographic developments – Demographically speaking, Sweden can be said to have a lead on the other countries, in the sense of our already having such a large percentage of older persons (17.6 per cent). Many other European countries have now entered a phase in which the older population is increasing dramatically. The next bulge in Sweden's demographic development will come in 2005 and onwards, with the retirement of the generation of the 1940s.

There is a need here for comparative analyses of European countries at different stages of elderly population growth. Perhaps we in Sweden can share with others our solutions and our way of meeting the growing demands which an ageing population entails?

Pensions, employment and social exclusion – These have long been the really big problem fields in Europe at large and have also become a growing problem in Sweden. Older people are prominently affected, and these fields are of such a kind as to highlight the question of solidarity between generations, e.g. unemployment among young and older persons respectively.

There is a great need here for an exchange of information and knowledge concerning, for example, revised pension systems, the view taken of job opportunities for older persons, and equality between the sexes – for example, the fact of older women bearing the brunt of European poverty.

The changed structure of the family – Sweden already has a very large percentage of economically active women, which partly accounts for the relatively good coverage of its caring services for children and the elderly. Family structures in Europe are now quickly changing, with women going out to work and the family care base diminishing. How will informal/in-family care and public care be affected by this? The gender equality aspect is important here.

In-family care – This is closely bound up with the preceding question. There is a certain amount of scope in Sweden for carers to obtain both financial support and relief services, but in Sweden too, in-family care is a vulnerable field, not least in the current process of social development.

There is a need here for European surveys and problem analyses of the situation for carers, bearing in mind the equal opportunities aspect and with comparisons between different public supportive systems.

Voluntary measures – In Europe at large, work of this kind is done on a considerable scale and by tradition occupies a strong position. The voluntary or NGO sector, however, is attracting growing attention in Sweden too, as an adjunct to public services. Voluntary work can be termed a relatively new field of knowledge in Sweden, and so both national studies and analyses and European comparative studies are called for.

Homehelp services and housing for the elderly – general services, care and residential care make up one of the cornerstones of the caring sector. In view of the efforts which have been and are being devoted to the question of housing for older persons, Sweden should have a good deal to contribute in a European interchange of experience. This applies particularly to the possibilities of supporting ordinary housing accommodation, but also to the development of special forms of housing for older persons.

It is important to observe housing arrangements – both in ordinary housing and in the diversity of special forms of housing – which encourage contacts between generations and serve to strengthen the independence of the individual.

Gerontology, geriatrics and rehabilitation – There is a need for better knowledge and dissemination of important developments in gerontology and geriatric care and of practical experience of what can be achieved through preventive measures and through rehabilitative care. On these points Sweden should, for example, be able to contribute new working methods and organisational models to facilitate the return of older persons from medical care to independent living.

Public caring services – More comparative studies and knowledge interchange are needed concerning various welfare models, e.g. between on the one hand the Nordic/Scandinavian model, which is distinguished by its large proportion of publicly funded care, and on the other hand the Southern European model, which emanates more the family as the main provider of elderly care.

Elderly questions in an international perspective

The interchange of knowledge, understandably, has focused on the European countries, but questions concerning older people, and the question of solidarity between generations, must of course be related to an international context as well. As work has progressed, this point has been made, both within the EU and here in Sweden.

Mention can be made here of several occasions when questions concerning older persons and the question of solidarity between generations could be addressed in the course of international work under UN auspices. The work of the UN in various fields and the international conferences which are held can also provide important sources of knowledge for widening the frame of reference for work at European level:

- The UN International Year of the Family 1994.
- The UN Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, September 1994.
- The UN World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, March 1995.
- The UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995.

- The UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, June 1996.

Of the UN arrangements mentioned above, the UN Year of the Family, work on which is now in full swing in Sweden, constitutes a natural forum for continuing the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993.

Solidarity between generations is also an important theme of this work. The family must be viewed within its widest circle, which means paying attention to its role and interplay with the outside community, to questions of contacts with grandparents and to the question of in-family care. This is in fact being done, against the background of changes occurring in family structure all over the world.

In our opinion, therefore, the work done during the European Year of Older People 1993, with special emphasis on Solidarity between Generations should have a direct sequel within the UN Year of the Family. For example, the need for development projects on the theme of solidarity can be addressed in the distribution of the special project funds, totalling MSEK 10, which have been allotted from the State Inheritance Fund, for implementation of the UN Year of the Family in Sweden.

Who does what?

A number and variety of Swedish national authorities, organisations etc. are affected by the specific issues/subject fields presented above. The ultimate decision on how this work is to continue rests of course with the party concerned.

Where the national administration (i.e. national authorities and government departments) is concerned, however, and its adjustment to the requirements which may stem from an expansion of European co-operation in the gerontology sector, we wish to draw attention to the following policy decisions by the Swedish Government.

With reference to the report *Statsförvaltningen och EG* ("The national administration and the EC") (SOU 1993:80), the Government gave orders, on 30th September 1993, for a survey of the implications for the Swedish national administration of Sweden joining the EC.

On 20th January 1994 the Government resolved to set up a working committee which, partly in the light of the survey, will be recommending changes in the resources, organisation, working procedures and management of the national administration as a consequence of the EEA and the possibility of Sweden joining the EU. Other international conditions judged to be of consequence to the national administration are also to be taken into account.

Partly with reference to these policy decisions, the Committee wishes to underline the importance of the authorities and government departments concerned developing their activities in order to measure up to continuing European co-operation in the elderly sector.

Summing up, however, we feel that organisations etc., as well as the national authorities concerned, should also adapt their regular activities to the demands, expectations, possibilities etc. which can follow in the wake of intensified interchange of knowledge, experience and information at European level in the gerontological sector – between countries, organisations, municipalities, county councils, researchers, projects etc.

Forms of co-operation

The more detailed forms of Swedish participation in European co-operation should be discussed during 1994. Experience accruing from the EU's first Older People programme and from the European Year of Older People and for Solidarity between Generations should form a vital basis of these deliberations. Experience from the planning of other programme activities within the EU (HELIOS II, i.e. questions concerning the disabled, and Equal Opportunities questions) should also be taken into account, as well as linkages between these programmes on practical issues.

The more detailed procedures for continuing work should be discussed within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, which should be allotted a co-ordinating role.

As guidance for these deliberations, we offer the following viewpoints.

With regard to continuing EU/EFTA co-operation in the gerontology sector, we wish, briefly, to stress the need for an interchange of knowledge and experience, supported by R&D, inquiries, surveys etc. Accordingly, we feel that Sweden, as an EFTA country and by virtue of the EEA Agreement, should be represented in the new EU Observatory which is likely to be established on questions relating to older people.

We also feel that Sweden should be included in the European networking which was inaugurated under the first Older People programme and in the expansion into new fields which the next step may entail.

Research needs

Furthermore, the overview of Swedish gerontology research prepared by the Council for Social Research (SFR) in association with the Committee of the European Year of Older People 1993, should be followed up. A digest should be prepared of all gerontology research with European and/or international ramifications. That digest should also include existing and planned networks of researchers etc. within the various sub-fields/themes of gerontology research, and the need for new research inputs should be considered in the light of the information thus gathered.

This assignment should also be viewed in the light of the following. SFR, as a national authority, is included in the Swedish EC Council for R&D Co-operation set up by the Government in June 1992. The Council co-ordinates Sweden's participation in the EU outline programme of R&D. In its "Fourth

Research Programme", for 1994-1998, the EU has resolved on a new research field – *targeted socio-economic research*. Socio-economic research is thus, for the first time, being given a place of its own in the EU's wide-ranging research effort, albeit with limited funding. SFR will be Sweden's co-ordinator for this research field, in association with the EU. Swedish gerontology research has its appointed place in this connection.

On the subject of research, we would like to end by referring to the Government's Science Policy Bill (1992/93:170), on the basis of which work is currently in progress to draw up a national interdisciplinary research programme concerning voluntary work and the public sector. This task has been entrusted to the Government-appointed Advisory Panel on the Promotion of Voluntary Sector Development (C93/440FOK).

It will be recalled that our own remit draws attention to the question of voluntary work, among other matters. Given this background, and bearing the relevance which these questions have acquired in Sweden, as well as European experience, there would seem to be an urgent need in the gerontology sector for deeper knowledge and more facts about voluntary, unpaid inputs in relation to public sector activities. This ought therefore, as we see it, to be made a specific theme of the research programme, mentioned above, which is now in the process of compilation.

Continuing work at national and local levels

The continuation and dissemination of local initiatives taken during the Year of Older People should be encouraged. The Committee's follow-up of work at local level (e.g. through its questionnaire survey and in-depth studies) has in fact shown that many people have been given ideas and inspiration for continuing work with partly new elements.

For example, experience from the thirty local development projects on the theme of Solidarity which were initiated with the support of MSEK 1 from the State Inheritance Fund, by Government resolution, through the Child and Youth Advisory Committee should be followed up and should form the basis of deliberations concerning the need for further development.

One consistent lesson of work at local level is that the Year of Older People opened the door to an inter-sectorial working approach. Activities on the main theme of solidarity between generations by definition required contacts, for example, between schools, caring services for the elderly, municipal employees, active members of clubs and societies, professional activities and the general public.

One important conclusion is that the immediate environment, the housing estate or the neighbourhood is a flexible platform for mobilising and co-ordinating both public and voluntary efforts.

The immediate environment also appears to be exactly the setting in which voluntary, unorganised measures based on spontaneity and community of interest can be effectively utilised. The inter-sectorial approach in itself also

appears to imply a revitalisation of local democracy – greater civic participation and closer insight into the decision-making process by which the allocation of local, public resources is governed.

These findings are corroborated by the evaluation jointly undertaken on the Government's behalf by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and the National Board of Health and Welfare. That evaluation concerns about a hundred local development projects for co-ordinated residential services to older persons, the disabled etc. A full report is to be presented to the Government in April 1994.

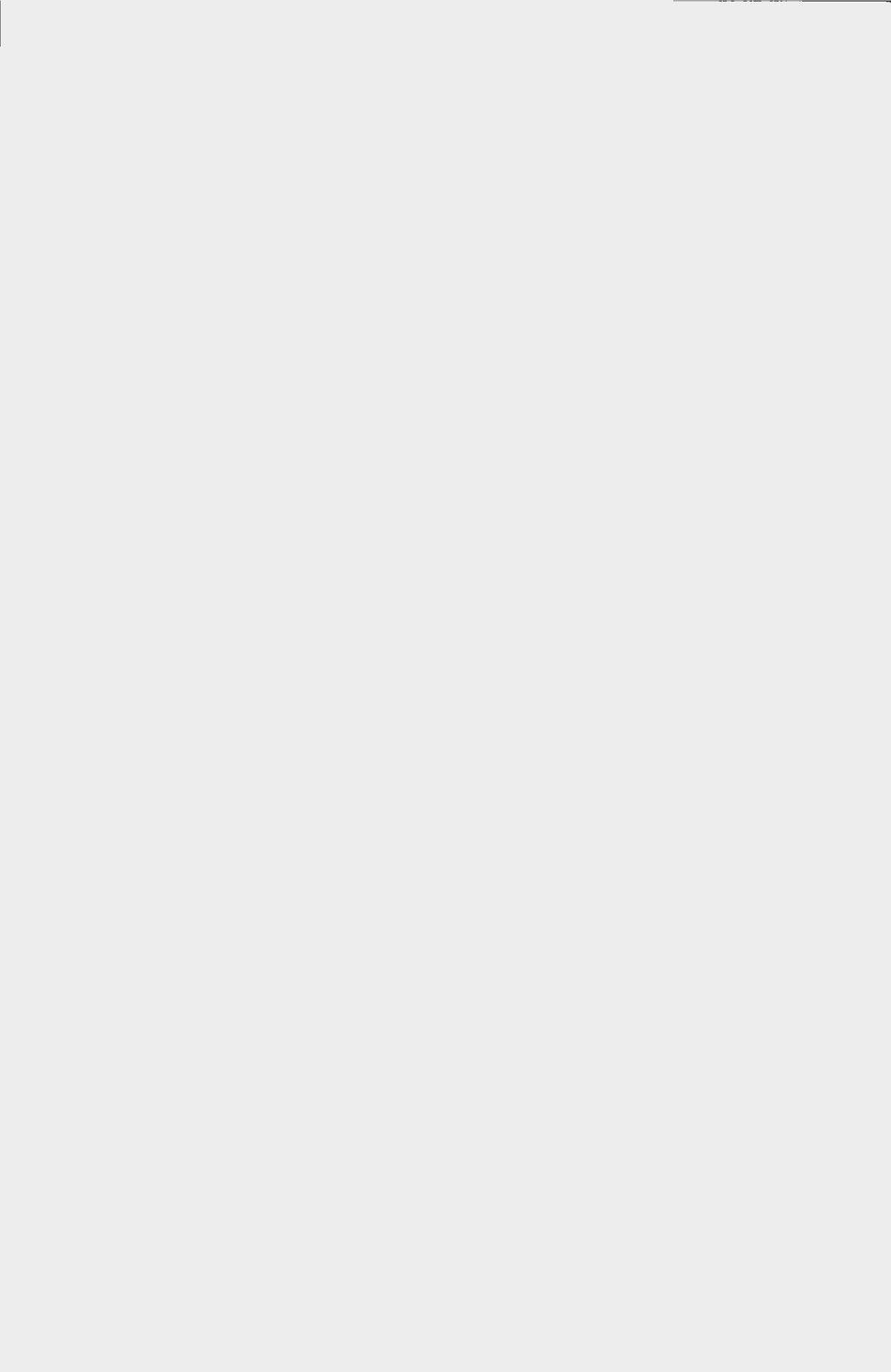
There are many practical examples here of ways in which public, commercial and voluntary resources for various target groups – children, young adults, older persons etc. – can be efficiently pooled and co-ordinated. As described with reference to the European Year of Older People, 1993, the result has been a sampler of practical examples of solidarity between generations. The evaluation and the book of ideas now planned are also fully in line with ongoing European work in the gerontology sector and should therefore be disseminated both nationally and internationally.

Summing up, it is our opinion that the national authorities, organisations, municipalities, county councils etc. which have taken part in or followed work in connection with the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, ought as far as possible to merge the experience thus gained with their regular activities and take necessary measures for actively encouraging further development of the work already done.

Lastly, we hope that the result of Sweden's participation in the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993, will be widely disseminated and will come to be used as study and training material by adult education associations, organisations etc., and within the regular education system.

We trust that our report *Borta bra men hemma bäst? Fakta om äldre i Europa* ("No place like home? Facts about older persons in Europe") (SOU 1993:111, 140 pp.) has conveyed some interesting glimpses of the lives of older people in Europe. Part of the purpose of our final report, *Gamla är unga som blivit äldre. Om solidaritet mellan generationerna Europeiska äldreåret 1993* ("The old are youngsters who have grown older. Solidarity between generations in the European Year of Older People 1993") (SOU 1994:39), was to create inspiration for the vital and unceasing work which is being done in our country to enable young and old alike to experience satisfaction, happiness and security in all the changing scenes and phases of life.





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EUROPEAN YEAR
OF OLDER PEOPLE AND
SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

1993