

## CONCLUSIONS

OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR FAMILY  
AFFAIRS MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

of 29 September 1989

regarding family policies

(89/C 277/02)

1. The last decades have been marked by profound demographic and socio-economic changes.

No Community country is immune, even if the changes take place with certain time lags and at different rates.

The demographic outlook raises the question of Europe's political, economic and cultural future in the world.

2. In short, the demographic trend is characterized by a lower fertility rate and an increase in life expectancy resulting in an ageing population, which will decline in the long term.

This change in age structure of the population will be accompanied by a change in family structure, a result of the decline in marriage and of the increase in the number of divorces.

The restructuring of the labour market, changes in working conditions and the increase in female employment are the principal factors in this new economic landscape.

3. In view of the impact of these economic and demographic changes on the family, it is important to ask what are the prospects for, and the objectives and methods of, Community action at family level.

The legitimacy of such Community interest is based less on ideological grounds than on the acknowledgement of such objective facts as the economic role of the family, the responsibility of families in bringing up children, the importance of the family as the touchstone for solidarity between generations, the irreversible desire for equality between men and women and the wish of women to have complete access to working life in order to provide the family

with a suitable environment in which it can develop harmoniously and in which its members can flourish, with due regard for freedom of choice as to the number of children.

Community action will have to be pragmatic in order to respect the special features of different national policies already created and the varying socio-economic contexts in which such policies operate.

4. In this context, the following activities will be started or continued at Community level:

- (a) information actions, particularly through the production and presentation of regular information on demography and measures concerning families (household structure, female employment rates, trend in birthrates, etc.), using to that effect the network of experts already set up by the Commission as well as thematic studies;
- (b) inclusion of the family dimension in the establishment of appropriate Community policies, for example in the freedom of movement of persons and equality between men and women;
- (c) a regular exchange of information and views at Community level on major themes of common interest as regards family policy and demography, with particular emphasis on:
  - the impact of other Community policies on the family,
  - measures making it possible to implement policies on equal opportunities for men and women, in particular access for women to the labour market,
  - measures in favour of families, including measures tailored to the characteristics or difficulties of some families,

taking account of activities in other international organizations, to avoid any duplication of effort.

5. The activities would be monitored by:

(a) regular assessment of the measures taken through regular consultation between the Commission and:

— the working party of senior national officials with responsibility for family affairs,

— organizations representing families at Community level on the basis of representative pluralist criteria;

(b) periodic assessment in the Council.

---