

Press Release

Strengthening Families to meet Challenges of Demographic Change

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Berlin, 14.05.2013 – In occasion of the Federal Government's *Demografiegipfel* (demography summit) today the family organizations underline that "strengthening the family as a community" needs to be the central approach to meet the challenges of the demographic change. Families provide the essential services for the aging society, from parenting to care of the elderly. The organizations regret however that in the context of the demographic strategy, much work was left uncompleted.

"Families need ample time for family life, adequate financial possibilities and good infrastructure, such as day care facilities", said the AGF's chairman Dr. Klaus Zeh, "but unfortunately the Federal Government very much limited the discussions to aspects of family time – even though there would have surely been many other issues to discuss as well." In this respect the Federal Government indeed made the right decision to set up the first of nine working groups on "Strengthening the family as a community". However, this goal was later not implemented consistently.

In order to successfully strengthen families, a change of perspective is needed. Much more than before, the focus should be put on the realities of families, for instance concerning workplace arrangements or conditions in local municipalities. Effective and permanent solutions to the everyday problems of families are necessary, such as nationwide, high-quality care services and a simpler changeover between full-time and part-time employment. Especially in the light of the demographic change the focus must be on the needs and wishes of families and not on the economy's demands.

Setting the right circumstances for families reaches a dual goal: it improves today's society and at the same time sees to it that future desires for children are realized more often.

The family organizations emphasize that they experienced the discussions within the working groups to be intensive and the participants to be open-minded, even with controversial topics. "Unfortunately, the Federal Government's scheduling only permitted two meetings. With more discussions, better and more detailed results would have been possible", states Dr. Zeh. "We thus hope that these talks will continue in the coming months and years, irrespective of the election results. We will certainly be at disposal and gladly participate in these important discussions", the Chairman of the AGF, Dr. Klaus Zeh stressed, regarding the future development of the demography strategy.

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