



# Navigating demographic dynamics: Strategies for tomorrow

European View  
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We are ageing and the trend will continue. Declining birth rates, increasing life expectancy and lifestyle shifts have created long-term hurdles. Eurostat predicts a 6% decline in the EU's population by 2100, which translates to 27.3 million fewer people.

While large-scale migration since 2015, including that of Ukrainian refugees, has offered some relief, the EU is facing challenges that are quite distinct from those confronting countries with population booms. The shrinking workforce strains social programmes, jeopardising pensions and health care. Additionally, labour shortages in key sectors could hinder economic growth and innovation.

Factors that have undeniably contributed to the decline in birth rates include changes in Europe's social fabric linked to women in particular: increased education, better career prospects and a focus on personal fulfilment. Empowered by higher education and careers, women often delay starting families. Furthermore, the high cost of living, especially housing, coupled with the perceived difficulty of raising children in a demanding work environment, discourages larger families. This prioritisation of individual goals is a positive step for gender equality and personal achievement, and has been pushing national governments to focus on accessible childcare and affordable housing.

Thus, these changes are in many ways positive developments. But as mentioned, they are also contributing to the demographic challenges the EU is currently facing. There are also opportunities within these challenges, but the way forward will not be easy. Swift

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action is needed to address the ethical and economic implications of these demographic changes. In the EU we must foster a spirit of intergenerational solidarity and ensure a fair distribution of resources and opportunities. By harnessing the potential of its diverse population and promoting sustainable growth, Europe can turn these demographic challenges into a catalyst for a sustainable and more dynamic future.

The centre–right has a history of addressing crises by prioritising the concerns and interests of Europe’s citizens. We at the Martens Centre want to contribute to a process of reflection that aims to identify options and come up with concrete proposals for political action for the next parliamentary term in 2024–9. We have been working on a project called The 7Ds for Sustainability, which aims to set forth proposals on how the EU should be transformed so that it can act more effectively and powerfully. We believe in completing the process of European integration by developing a genuine federation based on subsidiarity and sustainability, with demography being a key focus area.

This issue of the *European View* delves into the complexities of Europe’s demographic landscape, examining how compounding crises have exacerbated existing issues. We explore the strain on public finances as the working-age population shrinks, the pre-conditions for successful migration and integration policies, and the often-forgotten issues of brain drain and depopulation, which have been affecting some of our regions. We also present a holistic approach to the demographic changes and their consequences, with innovative solutions aimed at tapping the potential of all generations and categories of the population.

To guarantee the EU’s economic strength and social security, all of us must be involved. We need to find ways to make sure the Union is stable for the long term so that everyone gets the support they need, both current and future generations.

### Author biography



**Mikuláš Dzurinda** is President of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and a former Prime Minister of Slovakia (1998–2006). He has also held the positions of Minister of Transport and Minister for Foreign Affairs.