



Demographic trends, Immigration and Abortion

Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Psalms 127:3 NIV

Children's children are a crown to the aged, Proverbs 17:6 NIV

Children are a blessing from God; they bring us honour, joy and comfort. But in Europe we have made bad moral choices about our attitude to having children and we are beginning to suffer the consequences. Let us repent and bring this before the Lord.

According to data published by Eurostat on 7 March 2024, the number of children born in the European Union has declined again, from 4.09 million in 2021 to 3.88 million in 2022. These figures illustrate a definite demographic trend in the whole of the European continent: low birth rates, ageing population and population decline. Since 2015, we have had negative natural growth and it is only due to the considerable number of immigrants from outside Europe that the population has remained stable.

The necessary birth rate to keep a population stable is 2.1 children per woman. However, birth rates have steadily declined since the mid-1960s. According to Eurostat, the total birth rate for the EU had dropped to 1.46 live births per woman by 2022. France had the highest total fertility in the EU in 2022 (1.79 live births per woman) and Malta had the lowest (1.08).



What story are these statistics telling?

Firstly, the demographic decline leads in the short term to the ageing of the population, and this puts at risk our whole social welfare system. There are fewer young people to contribute to the pension schemes of the growing proportion of retired people and to care for the elderly who need more medical care for a longer time because their average age is increasing. Secondly, our economies suffer for lack of personnel, which means they recruit workers from elsewhere. Our industries, service and public sectors have now become dependent on the continual influx of non-European immigrants, including illegals. Some years ago, the European Commission calculated that the EU member states need 1.6 million new immigrants per year to keep the population stable and the economy healthy. Immigration then becomes a major political issue, but as Christians, we should recognise the difficult dilemma our politicians face: listen to the calls to limit immigration, or recognise the need for more people?

This brings me to another aspect of this story that is seldomly considered: our moral choices. It is largely a matter of choice that European families have fewer children than is needed for the vitality of the population. Some say that having more children is too expensive, others say there are too many of us and we are threatening the 'survival of the planet'. (Actually, our level of consumption is the problem.) But these are all moral choices, they are not forced on us.

At the same time, a large number of future Europeans are simply not allowed to come into the world. We are talking about abortion, and this again is a moral choice, and is a real problem for Europe's demography. The exact number of abortions is difficult to verify. But to give an idea of the problem: the number of abortions in England and Wales rose to a record of 251,377 in 2022 (UK Department of Health and Social Care). In France the figure was 216,378 and in Germany 103,927, both also record figures. When we extrapolate these figures, we arrive at about 1.3 million for the EU and over 2 million for Europe as a whole!

This is very similar to the number of 1.6 million immigrants needed per year to make up for Europe's demographic deficit. You see that the political dilemma of immigration becomes quite another story when we take into consideration the moral problem of abortion. We are aborting future Europeans which means that we do not have enough children to continue our societies and then we complain about the immigrants coming in to make up for their loss!

How to Pray? Here are our suggestions:

1. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4). So start by simply mourning before the Lord that we have got into this unhealthy situation in Europe
2. Pray for wisdom and courage for our leaders. Popular anti-immigration policies may win votes, but they don't produce enough staff for our businesses and hospitals. And only a few politicians would speak against abortion in the current situation
3. Pray for Christian young people to see it as a calling to find a partner, marry, start a family and raise children in a Christian environment.

Further Prayer:-

The three main EU leadership jobs are being decided at the moment: President of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen is seeking re-election); President of the European Council (may be given to a Socialist); and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (may go to a Liberal).

Pray for God's choice of leaders who will lead the EU well in these uncertain times and will support Israel.

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