

## EPP GROUP POSITION PAPER ON

# DEMOGRAPHY:

## SECURING EUROPE'S FUTURE THROUGH FAMILY, SOLIDARITY, AND INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

June 2025

As the late Pope Francis reminded us: *"One cannot speak of sustainable development without solidarity between generations."*

Demographic changes present one of the most significant strategic challenges for Europe's future. Declining birth rates, population ageing, population changes linked to migratory movements, societal shifts, rising unplanned childlessness, and increased depopulation in rural areas threaten our social and economic fabric. These trends place an increasing strain on labour markets, social and pension systems, and healthcare services across Member States. There is no future for Europe without sustainable demography.

The EPP Group stands firmly as the party that champions families as a fundamental cell of society. We reject narratives that treat children as burdens. Building a family can be a vital part of a full and meaningful life. Our commitment is to a Europe that safeguards intergenerational solidarity and secures long-term sustainability. It is our duty to preserve a world where human life is valued, where future generations are welcomed with hope and responsibility, and where mutual trust and relationships, especially within families, are the cornerstones of our social structure. If we fail to act now, the costs to our way of life, competitiveness, and cohesion will be profound.

### Forging a Family and Child-Friendly Society

- > **Support for Working Families and Creating Conditions for Family Well-being:**  
It is imperative that European governments invest in public services and infrastructure that allow families, particularly working-age parents, to thrive. We must ensure that families have access to financial stability, time, and the resources they need to raise their children. The EPP Group is committed to policies that help reconcile work and family life. A family-friendly Europe is one that creates conditions where young Europeans are not only encouraged to start families, but also empowered to build their lives at home with security, opportunity and a sense of belonging, rather than being discouraged by insecurity or uncertainty.
- > **Raising Living Standards for Families:**  
We must create a Europe where new families can flourish, with affordable housing, job security, and family benefits. The EPP Group will fight to provide universal child benefits and ensure families have stable and adequate incomes to protect children's well-being and reduce child poverty across Europe. A pan-European parental leave policy, built on existing cornerstone European legislation, will enable parents to bond with their children during crucial early years without sacrificing their professional future.
- > **Support for the Rights of Children and Youth:**  
The EPP Group calls for policies that guarantee that children and young people have the best possible start in life. We will promote family-friendly

workplace policies that allow both parents to contribute equally to child-rearing, and we will ensure employers support flexible work arrangements and a healthy work-life balance that accommodates family responsibilities. The EPP Group calls for innovative solutions such as a European Card for large families.

> **Leaving No One Behind:**

The EPP Group pays specific attention to persons with special needs, such as disabilities. The EPP Group supports independent living instead of institutionalisation and promotes accessible transportation; accessible public and private buildings; accessible sports and tourist facilities; and simplified administrative procedures enhanced by digitalisation and online data platforms.

## Improving Women's Work-Life Balance

> **Shared Responsibility for Care:**

Care responsibilities should not fall solely on women. We advocate for policies that promote equal participation by men and women in childcare and elderly care, as well as care for family members with disabilities, ensuring that care is shared equitably. The EPP Group supports the expansion of paternity leave and alternative support options for mothers after birth.

> **Affordable and Flexible Care Services:**

With the aim of reducing the disproportionate care burden of women, Member States must provide universal access to affordable, full-time, and flexible child and elderly care. Member States should improve standards of care services. Employers should also promote flexible work arrangements such as teleworking for all employees, irrespective of gender or location, to support working parents' work-life balance equally in urban, rural, outermost and insular areas.

> **Women's Health in the Workforce:**

It is essential that we adapt work environments to the health needs of women, ensuring that they remain productive and engaged in the workforce throughout their lives. Policies must go beyond maternity leave and address women's health at various stages of life. For both employed and unemployed women, high-quality healthcare shall be available, including infertility treatments,

prevention of endometriosis, social and mental health care, with particular focus on challenging situations.

> **Enhancing Women's Skills and Career Progression:**

The EPP Group supports targeted skill-enhancement programs for women to address career breaks due to caregiving responsibilities, ensuring their continuous professional development and equal opportunities in the workforce. The EPP Group supports incentives for enterprises to improve the conditions and opportunities for women to return to the labor market and combating maternal mobbing. The EPP Group attaches great importance to closing the employment and pay gap between men and women.

## Boosting the Participation of Older People

> **Active Ageing and Lifelong Learning:**

The EPP Group promotes active ageing and better lifelong learning opportunities for the elderly, empowering them to stay engaged in both the workforce and society, and tackling loneliness. Digital inclusion must be an important part of this agenda. The EPP Group supports alternative family solutions and recognises the special role of grandparents, taking care of their grandchildren to support working parents.

> **Flexible Retirement and Workforce Inclusivity for Older Citizens:**

To address demographic challenges, we advocate for flexible retirement options that enable individuals to extend their careers if desired, ensuring pension system sustainability. We aim to create a Europe where the elderly who wish to remain active in the labour market can do so, supported by policies that promote their continued employment and ongoing skills development.

> **Longevity Economy:**

The ageing population presents significant opportunities, notably if coupled with healthy ageing. The EPP Group emphasises the opportunities and importance of investing in policies that harness the economic potential of older generations, fostering a "silver economy" that supports their active participation in economic life.

## Addressing Depopulation and Labour shortages

### > **A Demographic Pillar in Decision-Making:**

The EPP Group calls for the incorporation of a demographic perspective into all EU policies, including tax, social and investment policies related to critical infrastructure. The EPP Group calls for the inclusion of the demographic challenge among the criteria of cohesion funds. This includes addressing the demographic disparities between regions and ensuring that policies reflect the urgent need to support areas facing population decline, or the so-called “talent development trap”, including islands and the Outermost Regions. Those areas must be given special attention, mainly through dedicated EU funding and tailored policy instruments, such as data collection and best-practice sharing. The EPP Group encourages Member States and the European Commission to set up dedicated institutions responsible for demographic revitalisation.

### > **Revitalising Rural Areas and Combating Brain Drain:**

We propose comprehensive strategies to enhance rural attractiveness and retain talent. This includes creating a favourable environment for business development and job creation, expanding broadband internet and remote connectivity, improving public transport, increasing access to quality public services, mobile healthcare, distance learning, and remote work opportunities. Additionally, we will introduce policies that encourage skilled young people to stay in or return to their hometowns, offering them career opportunities and fostering regional development and economic prosperity.

### > **Incentives for Generational Renewal in Rural Areas:**

Targeted policy interventions are needed to encourage the next generation to take up opportunities in the primary sector and foster a successful generational renewal. These include facilitating access to resources by means of tax exemptions and low-interest loans for young people who choose to train and work in the primary sector. Rural development must recognise women's key role in reversing depopulation, as limited opportunities often drive them to cities. Empowering women through targeted strategies, better services, and recognition of their work can help retain them in rural areas.

### > **Migration policies Based on Employability:**

Well-managed legal migration can help respond to evolving labour market needs, meet current and future skills demands, and ensure a dynamic economy. However, legal migration should complement - and not replace - long-term demographic revitalisation policies. It can only compensate for the decline in native workforces if the talents and skills of the newly arrived people are compatible with Member States' needs, with support from EU schemes. Differences in educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds can pose social challenges. To maximise the benefits of legal migration, Member States must pair talent attraction policies and migration pathways with robust short- and long-term measures to support inclusion and integration. The EPP Group acknowledges that legal migration must remain under full national control and should be designed to serve the long-term interests of the local population.