



FAMILY FRIENDLY
HUNGARY

FAMILY ELSŐ FIRST A CSALÁD

BUDAPEST
DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMIT III
2019





INTRODUCTION

The State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs of Hungary's Ministry of Human Capacities organized the Budapest Demographic Summit on 5 and 6 September 2019 in Budapest for the third time.

The high-level international event, hosted by Várkert Bazár, was attended by dignitaries, politicians, decision-makers, church leaders, civil society leaders and representatives of the media and scientific circles. Professor Pál Demény, the initiator of the conference series, was also among the audience. The high-ranking politicians who attended the conference emphasized that importance of the family and the necessity for solving the demographic problems. Speakers included Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Aleksandar Vučić, President of Serbia, Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and Tony Abbot, former Prime Minister of Australia.

The conference presented an opportunity for state leaders to share their thoughts on, among others, the impact of family and population policies on competitiveness, sustainability and the elaboration of strategies for the future. The roundtable discussions shed light on various best practices and tools that incentivize having children; participants also shared their concepts and experience on demographic challenges. The conference offered decision-makers an excellent opportunity for thinking together. As Minister of State Katalin Novák put it, "It is important to get to know the newest practices so that the government of Hungary can take the information into account when designing the continuation of the Family Protection Action Plan."

○ ABOUT THE EVENT

This is the third time the Demographic Summit is organized in Budapest. The Summit is a high-level international forum, which offers political actors, decision-makers, heads of churches, leaders of NGOs and representatives of the scientific circles an opportunity to share their thoughts and experience.



Demographic processes have a profound impact on our future. Overpopulation and the threat of the disappearance of ageing and declining nations presents a major challenge for our communities. Therefore, demographic issues must be discussed openly.

The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries saw an unprecedented phenomenon: some nations seem to have renounced their own future. There are not enough children born. The cradles are empty.

By contrast, other regions of the world experience a demographic growth. In many countries, the population has doubled or multiplied within decades. Some see an

opportunity in these parallel processes, and would channel the demographic surplus of the thriving nations to countries with shrinking population.

But there are other countries, Hungary being one of them, which say that they can turn the trend and can stop population decline on their own. To address this difficult challenge, we need strong families and an efficient family policy. In 2010, Hungary announced a family-friendly shift. Now a growing number of countries are applying the same approach. Yet similar values and a family-focused approach do not necessarily imply uniformity. Different countries worked out different solutions and

best practices. A high-level conference, such as the Budapest Demographic Summit offers decision-makers an excellent opportunity for thinking together and for mutual learning.

The unique Hungarian model entails a value-driven and family-oriented policy. Among others, we enshrined the protection of family, marriage and parenthood in the Fundamental Law of Hungary. Within ten years, we have doubled the budgetary expenses allocated to families. We decided to solve the population decline of recent decades with strengthening Hungarian families instead of relying on migration.

Thanks to its success, the Hungarian model attracts growing attention of Hungary's foreign partners, and we are happy to share our experience and learn from others. At the Budapest Demographic Summit, Hungary's Prime Minister, heads of many states, decision-makers, church leaders, experts

and representatives of economic life, media and social organizations made presentations and shared their thoughts on the management of demographic processes, more specifically, on the role of families and the impact of family policy and population policy on competitiveness, sustainability and the elaboration of strategies for the future.

We are living in a changing and transformative era, when we need to make decisions about the forms of coexistence that are going to shape our future. Families, the building blocks of society, are strengthened and, therefore, the current unfavorable demographic phenomena become manageable. Otherwise, individual interests overcome community considerations, and jeopardize the future of nations, people and families. There is much at stake, but thinking together and acting together is the way forward. The Budapest Demographic Summit offers an excellent opportunity for that.





KATALIN NOVÁK

Minister of State for
Family and Youth Affairs,
Hungary

We Hungarians live life with an open heart and bold straightforwardness. This is why we speak openly about the issues of demography and family policy. What is more, we Hungarians love children, and family is important for us.

At this point, let me tell you a story. Once a Spanish friend of mine told me that he was puzzled, he did not understand Hungarian people. When he asked them how they were, which is “Qué tal?” in Spanish, Hungarians did not answer “Qué tal?”, as customary in Spain. The same holds true for France, where the customary answer for “Ça va?” is “Ça va?”, or in the United Kingdom, where the answer for “How are you?” is “How are you?”. But when you ask a Hungarian how he is, you must be prepared for an answer that takes at least five minutes. Because then we Hungarians tell about our grandmother’s illness, our mother-in-law’s retirement or our children’s successes or failures at school. That is, we start talking about our family when they ask us “how are you”? Personally, I would find it strange to do otherwise. This is a habit of us Hungarians.

Clearly, we Hungarians think that our family’s problems are our own problems, our family’s joys are our own joys.

We Hungarians love our children and value dearly our family and our family ties.

Hungary is hosting this high-level demographic conference for the third time, so we probably may say that we have established a tradition. This tradition may be regarded as off the mainstream, because nowadays we (and by that I mean, above all, actors of public life) do not speak much about demographic challenges. When the first conference was organized in 2015, we did not have many guests. In 2017, the number of the participants grew. And now, in 2019, I can say that there are quite many of us. There are many of us who put the family into focus, and think, live and work in a family-oriented way. There are many of us, and not only in the sphere of public life, but also in science, in churches, in communication, in the media and in every other walk of life, including art.

In 2019, demography is not just only one issue out of many. It is the single most important issue of us all. The way we respond to demographic challenges will shape our future culture, economy and society. Nowadays there is not a single country in Europe, where an adequate number of children are born, while the countries of Africa and Asia are facing the

challenges of population growth. At this conference, we share our experience and make attempts to find ways to respond to these challenges, being aware of the fact that the challenges are not identical and responses will not necessarily be identical either.

(Edited version of Katalin Novák's presentation)



BLESSINGS

At the beginning of the conference, the heads of Hungary's largest churches and denominations said blessings.

*From left to right:
Dr. Tamás Fabiny,
Dr. Péter Erdő,
József Steinbach,
Slomó Köves*

Cardinal Dr. Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest of the Roman Catholic Church prayed that every family may be a source of God's grace and a real shrine of life and love. He prayed that love may be stronger than weakness or any crisis that hits our families.

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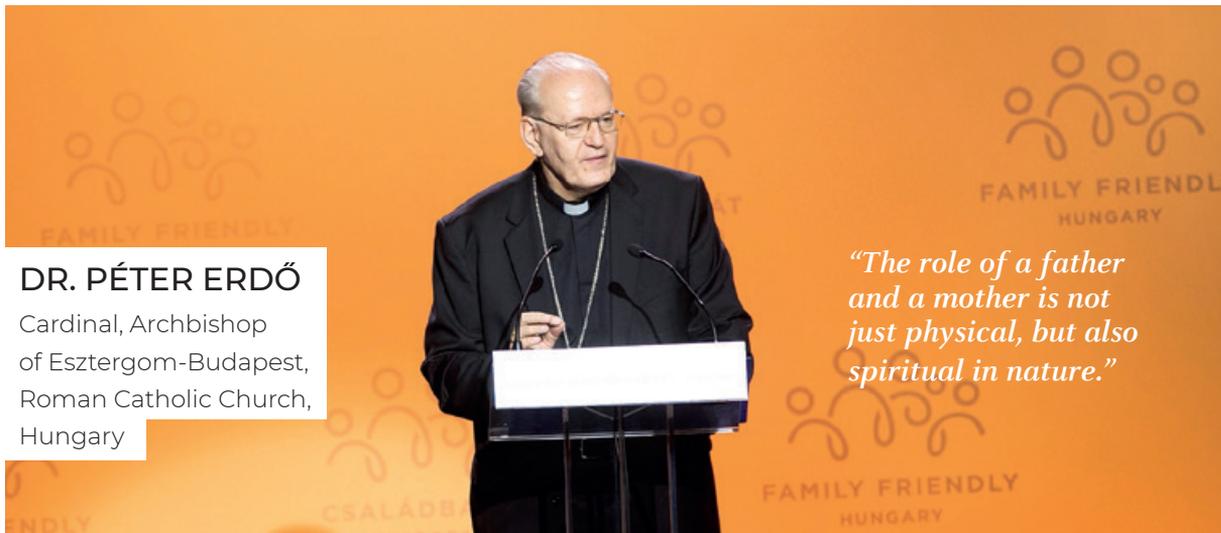
József Steinbach, Bishop of the Transdanubian District of the Reformed Church also prayed for God's blessing.

Tamás Fabiny, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Church of Hungary cited the Bible: "Be fruitful and multiply". He emphasized that a child is a gift from God and is born into the world with God's message that He still had not given up hope in man.

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Slomó Köves, Executive Rabbi of the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation, said that "be fruitful and multiply" is not only an option, but an obligation and a blessing as well.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES – THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY



DR. PÉTER ERDŐ

Cardinal, Archbishop
of Esztergom-Budapest,
Roman Catholic Church,
Hungary

*“The role of a father
and a mother is not
just physical, but also
spiritual in nature.”*

In his speech titled “Demography and family”, the Cardinal emphasized that “the role of a father and a mother is not just physical, but also spiritual in nature”. As he said,

“The family unites the physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of human life. It contributes to the community of generations and, thus, promotes the development of society in a substantial and indispensable manner.”

According to the Cardinal, this is why families are entitled to receive support from the society when having and raising children.

Péter Erdő cited a Europe-wide research on demographic issues and families, conducted by the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe (CCEE) in the early 2010s. The research explored the extent of interest societies take in demographic issues and their awareness of the details and consequences of demographic problems. The results showed that the Scottish, Greek and Spanish societies had failed to fully realize the economic and social consequences

of ageing societies. In Hungary, similarly to France, Switzerland or Belarus, “there was some general, although not very intense, awareness of the specific cause-and-effect links related to the problem”, he said. The Cardinal added that he assumes that the situation has changed somewhat in recent years. He also discussed the issue of the recognition of the role of parents. Parenthood was least recognized in Russia, Austria and Turkey, and Hungary also ranked at the bottom of the list. Since then, the prestige of parenthood and parental roles seems to have grown measurably in Hungary, pointed out Péter Erdő, adding that within the general perception of parental role, respect for motherhood is of special importance.

As families play a crucial role in accepting and raising children, the adoption of children who were removed from their families or have no families is critically important.

With regard to the role of grandparents, he pointed out that in many European countries grandparents feel that they are also responsible for raising their grandchildren, and, more specifically, for their religious upbringing.

Talking about family support organizations, he highlighted that most of them regard political and social actions in support of families important and that public opinion considers them as an indication of the attention and goodwill of the state and the society. In some countries, respondents stressed the need for such institutions or criticized that such actions extended to only some family members instead of whole families. In any event, many respondents opined that they find dedicated

family policy institutions useful and would like to have such an institution in their countries. Péter Erdő concluded that “the results of the European research conducted in the first half of the 2010s clearly evidence that in many countries the public opinion is aware of interrelations between demographic issues and family, and of related tasks, and, in many cases, in a way similar to the social teachings of the Catholic Church.”



Distinguished guests, Prime Minister Orbán, Prime Minister Babiš, Prime Minister Abbott, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen!

I feel I am not worthy of the wonderful words of yours about the relationship between Serbia and Hungary.

It is Prime Minister Orbán who deserves praise and recognition from all of us for the good relationship that Hungary and Serbia enjoy these days, in our overlapping terms of office. Prime Minister Orbán, I would like to thank you for your dedicated work for the relations between Serbia and Hungary, and we will remain a faithful friend of you and your country.

I am here at this conference not to lecture you but to learn from Cardinal Péter Erdő and from other leaders about a problem that poses a challenge to us every single day. Offering us this opportunity to think together in Budapest today, Prime Minister Orbán leads by example.

I think he is right when he prioritizes demographic challenges, because the situation is critical, and urgent action is needed. Two hundred and forty kilometers away from here, in Serbia, there is a town called Kikinda. Today, it has a population of 38,605. Last year Serbia’s population decreased by 37,680, which means that in 2018 Serbia lost a town of the size Kikinda, similar in size to Cegléd in Hungary. In Serbia, the average age is 43.2 years, and 20.2% of the population is above 65.

The Serbian language has a specific term for population decline: “white plague”. It sounds cruel, but it is very accurate. Since World War II, every generation has failed to sustain its population. These data tell a lot about the gist of the problem. In the last 75 years, Serbia has had economic ups and downs. It saw peace and war. There were periods of welfare but also of economic stagnation and downturn. Since the

pattern across the country. Every measure we have recently taken in this area has shown results first in the poorest regions instead of the richest ones. In the very center of Belgrade, the fertility rate remains by far the lowest. Does it concern the reason that the distinguished Cardinal mentioned in his speech?

Is it self-realization? Or, may I say, selfishness at the individual level? Or some big mistake we



Traditional Serbian costume

mid-1950s, the fertility rate in Serbia has been under the level necessary to sustain population levels. This means that if we would like maintain this year’s population level next year, the total fertility rate should be 2.1 children per woman. In Serbia, this rate is 1.48. Hungary’s total fertility rate is 1.49, which is almost identical to that of Serbia. Formerly it was 1.2, but thanks to Mr. Orbán’s measures, it has increased. This achievement is a source of satisfaction not only to Prime Minister Orbán, but also to the Hungarian population as a whole and to all Hungarians in the audience today. The same negative trend can be seen in poor and rich European countries alike. Let me give you some details about the situation in Serbia. The fertility rate is at its lowest in Serbia’s richest region, that is, the rich districts of Belgrade, while the poorest regions have the highest fertility rates. This is a common

made? I still do not know. This is why I said that I am here to learn from you a lot. Because this is a question no one can really answer to.

Whatever you do, you do not know whether you are going to see positive results or not, because the measures themselves will take us too far in some countries. Some measures brought positive results in some countries, but proved to be unsuccessful in others. This is why we need to learn from each other and address this issue together.

This is the common interest of Serbians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Czech – of us all. Our future, the future of Central Europe, the future of a whole continent is at stake.

Drawing on my own personal experience, I can tell you that I travel around Serbia every day and I try to offer young people hope and the opportunity of an organized, modern state, where they would want to and can indeed start a family. A state, where these families may live a comfortable life and have good living standards, as both members of the married couple will have jobs. A state where they can raise their 2.2–2.3 children without worrying about the future. Yet financial support, no matter how generous it may be, cannot change everything alone. The ongoing debate on stable and well-paying jobs contributes to long-term planning to a great extent. We think that we have done a lot, but still, the results do not show much improvement.

We, acting in positions of responsibility, we have tried to do everything we could to contribute personally to our society's growth. But what we see is that immigrants are participating in this process, and we have to fight for the future we want for Europe. Four or five years ago we launched difficult reforms, as Serbia was on the verge of state bankruptcy.

Our current growth rate is very good; we closed 2018 with a growth of 4.5%. This has been the fourth consecutive year for us to have budgetary surplus. The unemployment rate is the lowest ever, 10.3%, which is not as low as yours, but, to put it in perspective, let me highlight that six years ago it was 25.9%. In this context, the current rate marks a significant improvement, which is a result of our recent efforts. I am also proud to say that Serbia has major construction projects ongoing: we are building motorways. We are also constructing a state-of-the-art railway line between Belgrade and Budapest to ensure another mode of connection.

However, our problem is that although we started to introduce support and incentives for maternity wards, for mothers, for families, we still do not see many results. We have our first, minor achievements. This year is somewhat better than the last year, but I still cannot say that this is an established pattern or something we can rely on exclusively. In June 2018, we adopted a financial support measure for families

with children to increase support for the first, second, third and fourth children. We almost tripled the amount of these incentives, and we are beginning to see the first small results in the poorest regions of Serbia. Yet the same does not hold true for Serbia's richest parts. We have not been able to change the way middle-class people think, so I am not very optimistic... this is another reason why I am here. To listen to you, my dear friends, and to figure out what to do together, what to learn from each other and how to address this issue in the future.

You know, we have fought a lot. I think that Serbia or, rather we Serbians, took part in the most wars in the 20th century, although we always say that it was not our fault. And during those wars we have always focused on territorial issues.

Now we have shifted our focus from territorial issues to the issues of everyday people. We concentrate on our survival, and this I mean literally.

Most European countries are facing the same problem.

Similarly to Central European countries, Serbia is experiencing unfavorable demographic trends characterized by features of key importance, such as ageing population, late births and migration. All of those issues give much room for future cooperation in the field of demography, in the form of the exchange of ideas, experience and best practices. I believe in cooperation and I am convinced that we will do a lot to incentivize having children and to support families. Recently, this has been Serbia's core objective. As I have said, in the first seven months of 2019, 741 more babies were born than in the same period of 2018, which marks an increase of 2.1%. In 2018, the number of marriages increased slightly (by 1%) compared to the previous year. The number of first marriages grew by 0.5%. However, the problem is that average age is 34.2 years for bridegrooms and 31.1 for brides. We are losing half



In downtown Belgrade

a generation, or rather, almost a whole generation, compared to other countries, for example, Muslim countries. And we cannot catch up.

No measures can change these facts and figures. With regard to the education and employment of women with children, recent years have brought some slightly favorable changes. In 2018, one-fourth of women having their third children were highly qualified. A decade ago, this would have been unthinkable. In this regard, the state's decision to take such large-scale measures within the framework of a well-structured population policy constitutes our single real basis for the hope that our plan to achieve a high fertility rate will be successful.

We are convinced that for a population policy measure to be effective it must be carefully designed and then implemented with much attention and ceaseless efforts. When I was having a conversation with my friend Viktor, he told me that he does not know, he is not sure, but they are doing their very best. Real results will come after ten years, and that is something. In this policy area, one cannot expect tangible results in one or two years. Therefore, we need to work extremely hard and make immense efforts to ensure better results within ten years.

The issues of demography and population policy are issues that concern all of us.

It is the responsibility of the state to take birth-friendly measures, but to sustain attention, we will need the joint efforts of the state and citizens for a sustainable welfare of healthy and educated people.

I agree with the Cardinal: we must pay tribute to motherhood. Because this is something we have lost. There are other topical issues, and, in the meantime, we have forgotten something that is of the highest relevance for our future. The conflict between workplace responsibilities and parental responsibilities is one of the barriers families must face. Moreover, parenthood entails a big psychological burden. This burden falls on those mothers who strive to be successful in their profession and when they get home after work, they have to do everything other mothers do: pay attention to their children's education and health, care for sick family members, do the washing up, iron the clothes and cook. Therefore, all of us must work to preserve families as indispensable building blocks of our society. We need to make

efforts to strengthen the role of fathers and to support mothers. Because family remains our joy, happiness, refuge and a source of strength in all situations we may face in life. Our objective is to create conditions that will help parents make decisions about having their first, second, third child and beyond. We are going to work with full intensity to make available all financial resources that are needed for these children to be born and develop in our society. I sincerely hope that, in the spirit of brotherhood, the major representatives will help us find a solution for this terrible problem. An excellent Serbian poet, an Ambassador of Serbia to Hungary said in his last book:

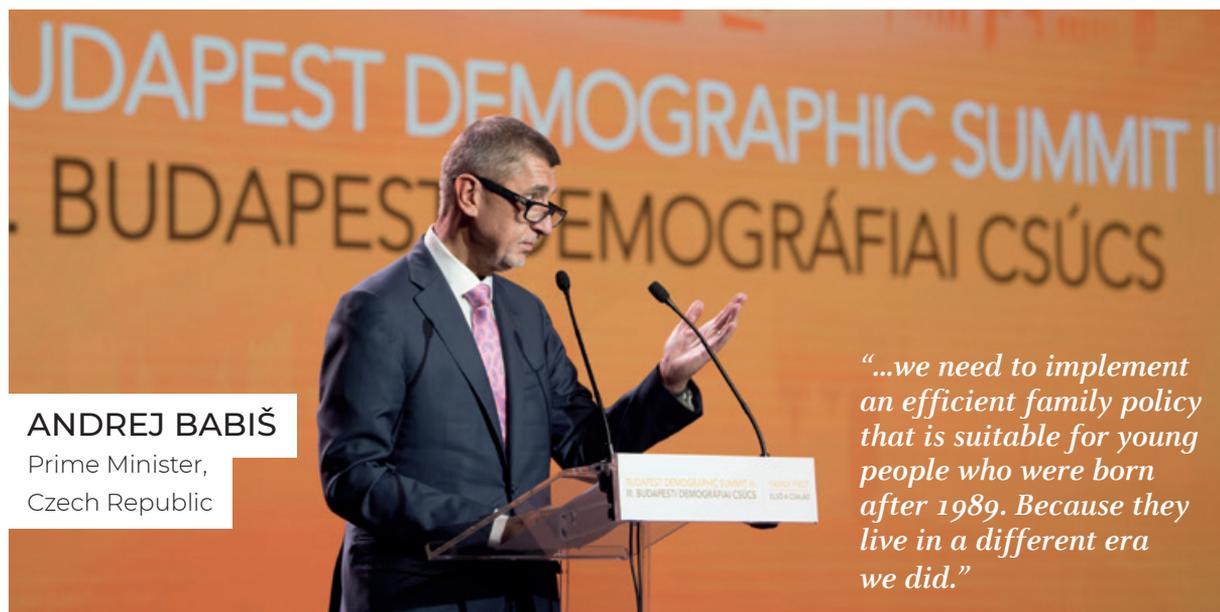
“I believe in God and the Serbian world.” I hope that his credo, which is similar to mine, will finally, after so many years, reach the people he

wanted to address. Again, I would like to thank you all, I would like to repeat that I am here to learn from you. I can guarantee one thing:

Serbia is ready to work together with Hungary and all other Central European countries. I am certain that if we work together, we will discover intuitively the possible solutions of the problem and get closer to the solution indeed.

Thank you again for your attention. I am very honored for being invited to deliver a speech today at this conference. Thank you.

(Edited version of Aleksandar Vučić's presentation)



ANDREJ BABIŠ

Prime Minister,
Czech Republic

“...we need to implement an efficient family policy that is suitable for young people who were born after 1989. Because they live in a different era we did.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for inviting me to this summit. I would also like to express my gratitude to Katalin Novák for her visit to Prague, where we discussed issues related to families and children, and spent much time

together. Therefore, I am very happy to be here with you today and give a presentation. The issue of demographic change is not as popular as that of climate change, but low population levels and low birth rates may have a significant impact on our countries.



In the centre of Prague

I am glad to see that the V4 countries want to dismantle this time bomb now, even if it would take decades for its destructive effects to appear. The Czech Republic and the V4 states have the opportunity to show that Central Europe is a safe region where it is good to live and raise children. I do not want to alarm you, but it is very clear that we need to talk about the fact that we are on the verge of extinction, although life expectancy is growing. The demographic situation is far from good. The number of retired persons is growing compared to the active population. In Europe, the number of people of 65 years of age or above is increasing, while that of children younger than 14 is decreasing. By 2060, the number of persons above the age of 65 is expected to increase fivefold for example in Slovakia and Romania, and fourfold in other countries. So, this conference is all about children. Let me emphasize it again: about children. I think that a good state is a state where people are not

afraid for their future. A good state is a state where the population is growing but not through immigration. I am convinced that we must implement an efficient family policy that is suitable for young people born after 1989. They are living in a different age. I am over 65 now, which means that I am a person of retirement age, although I have not yet retired. But these young people live in a different world than we do, and we need to adjust our solutions to that. In the Czech Republic, the total fertility rate is 1.7, which means that among the V4 countries we have the highest birth rate. We have not introduced any revolutionary family support measures, but Czechs love children, and since 2011, the number of births has been slightly increasing. Within the framework of family support measures, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland are introducing similar measures, such as various preferential loans or childcare institutions. Recently, the Czech government has increased the amount

of family allowance to 12,000 euros. Ideally, every family should have at least two children, but all the measures I mentioned were primarily targeted at families with only one child or two children. And those children would have been born without the measures as well, because parents do not decide to have children because of the financial support.

A child is a value. Parents know what raising a child means; they are also aware of the responsibility it entails.

As Katalin mentioned, I have four children. They are the meaning of my life. In the Czech Republic, the childcare fee is disbursed for a period of four years, which is among the longest ones in Europe. On the other hand, 65% of citizens with university qualification are women, who want to return to work. But incentivizing their return to employment would be, in a certain sense, an anti-family measure. We have 350,000 job vacancies. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Europe, and, at the same time, we have the highest number of working women. Many women decide to have more children, which means that their maternity leave is prolonged. At the same time, the number of female entrepreneurs is the highest or almost the highest in Europe. Our most famous obstetrician said that if we want to have more children, women should have their first children at the age of 25. But women also want to have some time to live their life independently, and do not want to have children immediately after finishing their higher education studies. The professor says that, from a medical perspective, it would be better to have children at the age of 25 but, of course, this depends on the individual's decision, and we are not going to tell them what to do. In the Czech Republic, we do not have enough opportunities for flexible employment, such as flexible working hours or teleworking. The number of jobs where teleworking is an option is below the European average, although improvements have been noted. Employers make efforts to offer more flexible forms of

employment, and it is important for us to make sure that such options are available, above all, to mothers. But it remains a challenge for us to identify the possible ways of supporting families where the parents would like to have three or more children. Therefore, as I have discussed with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the issue of the third child is of paramount importance. The details differ in every country, but the basis is the same. We know that not every person wants to have another child, but in the Czech Republic 5,000 families decide every year on induced abortion of third children for financial reasons. It is not that they do not want a third child. But they are afraid of losing their financial stability, as another child would mean that they would need a bigger flat and a bigger car. In a family's budget, these are considerable expenses, because in a family with two small children the birth of a third child would mean a decrease in the average per-person income. So something is needed to incentivize having a third child. And this is where the state plays a key role. We must support those families which voluntarily have a third child, and we need to combat phenomena that jeopardize families. In the Czech Republic, obstacles include, besides late births, expensive housing. Therefore, we support the construction of rental apartments, but this is not enough and the process is slow. We have strengthened anti-gambling measures and, more recently, we have taken measures with regard to personal bankruptcy and measures to support family enterprises.

As Katalin Novák mentioned, I come from the business world, and I think that every entrepreneur dreams of their children working for his or her enterprise. Unfortunately, I could not achieve this, because I was silly enough to become a politician. But I do think that family businesses are very important. It is important to have several generations working for a business. Personally, I wish that all countries, the whole region and all V4 countries implement very good family support policies.

(Edited version of Andrej Babiš's presentation)



TONY ABBOTT

former Prime Minister,
Australia

“...we should focus on what is important instead of what is only urgent, taking into consideration the world our grandchildren will live in.”

It is a pleasure to be here, in this excellent city, in this country which is so self-confident and which cannot be ignored by other countries. “In the long run, all of us are dead”, said the famous economist, John Maynard Keynes. This may explain why most of us tend to worry much more about what is going to happen tomorrow or next week than on what may happen in ten years’ time or let alone fifty years’ time. Still, sometimes we should focus on what is important instead of what is only urgent, taking into consideration the world our grandchildren will live in, taking into account our responsibility towards them. And this is exactly what Prime Minister Orbán and the Hungarian government did when organizing this conference. They urged all of us to analyze every country’s place in the world in the next decades, and consider what we can do to stay strong. I would like to thank you for that.

In a recent interview, Prince Harry said that he and Meghan Markle would like to have two children at most, because overpopulation is a major driver of climate change. Well, the members of the royal family, just like everyone else, have the right to have as few children as they wish, but the low number of children born in the Western countries are unlikely to have a favorable effect on climate change given the high number of children born elsewhere. But it will certainly make Western countries smaller and, most probably, weaker.

In a better world, it would not matter which countries are big or strong. Every country would respect each other, and every government would respect their own citizens. But in the real world where we have to live, countries (and individuals) cannot refrain from competing.

Competition, in most cases, is useful in sports, but we compete in trade and in geopolitics as well, which often has destructive effects. And this is why size does matter. Of course, it does not outweigh power, but it still matters.

Israel, a country of only eight million, was quite successful in holding back its much more populous neighbors, even if many of them could have destroyed Israel.

At the same time, without a dynamic economy, without excellent armed forces and without a population that is fully committed to boosting the prosperity of the Jewish state, Israel would have been exposed to its more populous enemies which could have pushed its citizens, quite literally, into the sea.

Although China is the world’s most populous state, before 1949 it was so poor and divided that it was experiencing its “century of humiliation”. Thanks to the government’s

focused efforts and the market reforms of Deng Xiaoping, China managed to uplift half a billion of its citizens from the third world to the middle class in one generation. In human history, this has been the biggest step forward in terms of welfare, and its results continue to have a positive impact for everyone else even today. A richer China, however, implies a stronger China. This is modifying the global power balance via soft alliances and, among others, via the self-confidence shown on the South China Sea.

In 1960, the per capita gross domestic product of China was 1/30 of that of the United States. Nowadays, it is one-sixth of the US GDP. In 1960, the per capita gross domestic product of Indonesia was 1/60 of that of the United States, now it is 1/15.

This means that the problem of the Western world is not that we are becoming smaller or poorer, but that other countries are becoming bigger and richer faster than we do.

All in all, in the majority of poorer countries more people live and have more wealth, while in the majority of rich countries, the population is smaller and, let me emphasize it, people are relatively less wealthy. For example, in 1960, eight of the 20 most populous countries of the world were in Europe. Today, only two of the world's 20 biggest countries are in Europe. On the list of the most populous countries, Russia dropped from the fourth place to the ninth, and Germany from the seventh to seventeenth. In 1960, seven of the economically most developed countries belonged to the twenty most populous ones. By now, their number has dropped to three. In 1960, seven of the most populous countries of the world belonged to the Western block. Their number has also dropped to three.

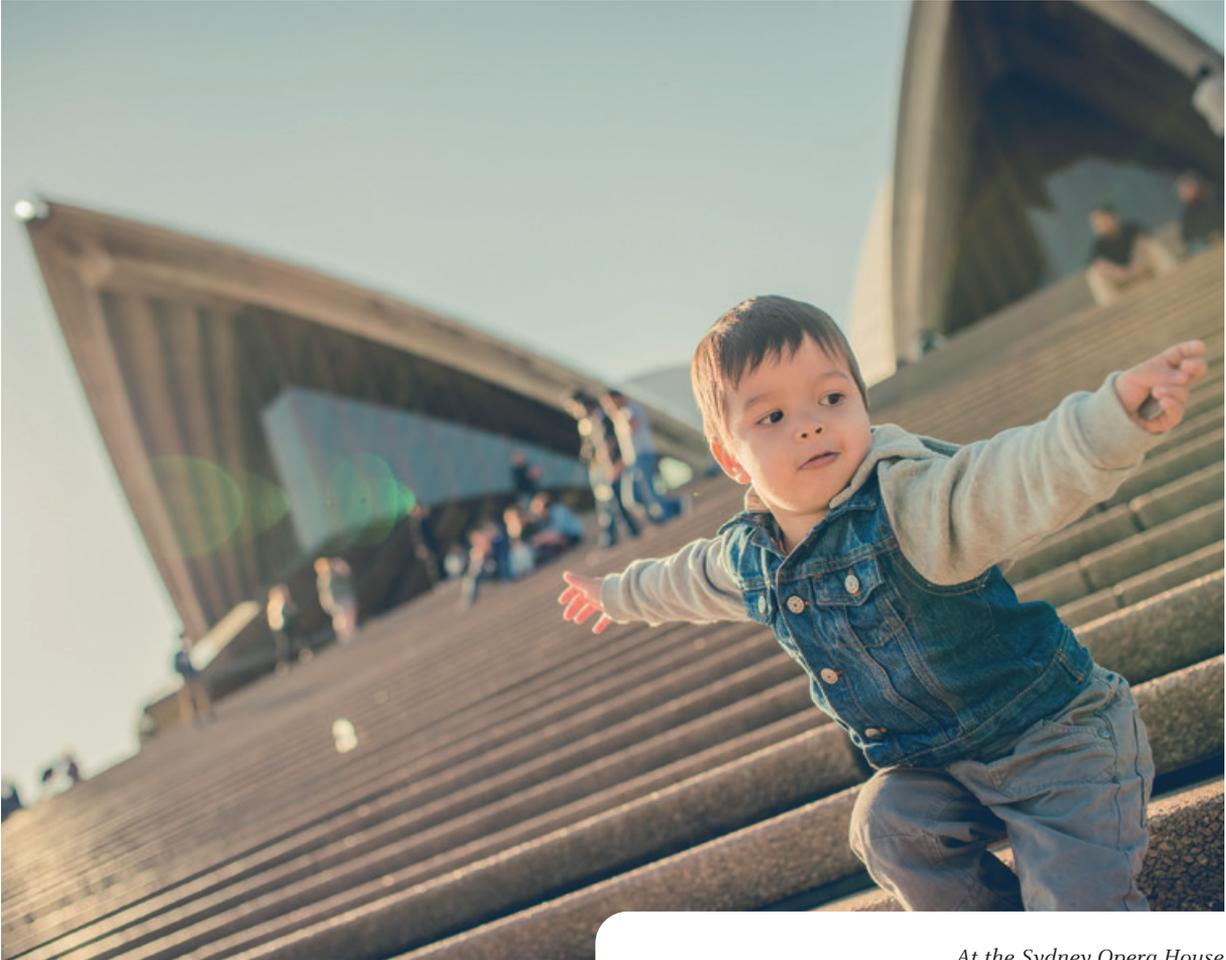
Undoubtedly, it must be welcomed that many people living in the once poorer countries are in a better situation, but in the long run this changes the global order. If the emerging and growing

countries were liberal pluralist democracies, committed to playing by the rules and acting with the double attitude of political freedom and equality towards their neighbors, then everything would be alright. But as far as we know, this is not the case, and the situation is unlikely to change in the near future. This holds true even if economic liberalism leads to a certain degree of political liberalism. And I must tell you that this decline of the Western world is going to accelerate.

According to UN forecasts, in 50 years' time, by 2075, the United States of America, which is currently the third most populous country of the world, will have dropped back to the fourth place with a projected population of approximately 400 million. In 2075, the estimated population will be 600 million in Nigeria, almost 400 million in Pakistan, and almost 200 million in Egypt and Bangladesh. The population of Germany, Russia, Japan and Italy will undergo a significant decline. In 2075, the population growth in every Western country will be attributable exclusively to immigration, which, by necessity, will originate in the third world. In my country, Australia, the modest population increase is entirely a result of immigration. As per current trends – and let me emphasize, as per current trends – in your country, Hungary, there is a population decline coupled with a very low level of migration. Yes, Hungary's population is expected to decrease to 7.5 million by 2075. This is only my second day here, but I have fallen in love with Hungary. I do hope that the next time and every other time I visit you I will find you bigger and stronger. Immigrants arriving from poorer countries to richer countries aspired to have a life that, in most cases, entailed the well-established social conventions and freedoms. People came to Australia – a country with a nation that was almost entirely established by immigrants – to join us rather than change us. But, as European countries have experienced, immigrants arriving in large numbers are difficult to integrate, which may put the nature of long-established and long-settled societies under pressure.

This means that, as shown by current trends, most Western countries are expected to change and become relatively (and often absolutely) smaller and relatively weaker.

people was inadequate. This is the reason for the renewed interest in measures, especially here in Hungary, to encourage people to have bigger families instead of relying on



At the Sydney Opera House

As Paul Keating, former Prime Minister of Australia said, “the best immigrants are our own children”.

The only problem is that in many Western countries there are not many children. Australia has always welcomed immigrants to populate uninhabited, open areas and to ensure that we as a nation can make use of the opportunities ever more efficiently. In Europe, by contrast, immigrants were expected to fill job vacancies, given that the number of European young

immigration to sustain population increase. I have always taken an interest in policies of this kind.

Twenty-five years ago, in my first address to the Australian parliament, I said that middle-income families with children are the new poor who would need more support from the state. But I also emphasized that such support must be given in the form of family tax breaks, rather than as middle-class welfare benefits.

As a party leader, I called for the establishment of a comprehensive parental leave system to help highly qualified women with professional careers do the most conservative thing, that is, to have children. Eventually, the measures were not introduced due to budgetary constraints, but the Howard government, where I served, introduced a universal baby bonus of 5,000 dollars. Unfortunately, this measure was revised and then revoked by the next government, because they opined that families should have never been given this type of flat-rate benefit. Yet, and this is the point here, this measure is related to a significant growth of the fertility rate in Australia (from 1.7 to 2), even if it was for only a short period of time.

Here in Hungary, the Orbán government has been establishing a family support system continuously, through the taxation system, with benefits for large families, funds for housing purposes, mortgages for large families, permanent tax exemption for mothers of four, and a car purchase subsidy scheme for large families. Some of these incentives were coupled with marriage, activity on the labor market and school attendance, which means that they have a positive impact on the human character and upkeep families. Consequently, in the last decade, the fertility rate has increased from a very low point (1.2) to approximately 1.5. It cannot yet be said to what extent this improvement is attributable to the policy measures, but it can be safely assumed that the enhanced support of families (and especially traditional families) results in more children. If we support something, it will almost always multiply. I would like to say that when I look around in the world, I see that Hungary's family-friendly program is indeed unique, because it takes real political courage to combat political correctness for a case that is worth fighting for. Every country which regards its own survival as important should study this program. As another Australian government Malcolm Turnbull correctly noted, I quote,

“The gravest threat to Western society over this century is neither global warming nor international terrorism. Rather it is the unprecedented, sustained decline in the birth rate in almost all developed countries to levels that are well below replacement rate.”
This means that great cultures such as those of Italy, Spain, Greece and Japan will practically die out within a century.

We can safely say that the greatest struggle is not about the reduction of CO₂ emissions but about who is going to have more children. This is an extinction fever; this is what we must combat.

Ladies and gentlemen, a common argument against measures supporting large families is: “Why should my taxes be channeled to supporting other people’s children?” And the irrefutable answer is: “If others do not have enough children, who is going to support you when you are old?” I am aware of the fact that in economically developed countries, there are some generations which, for the first time in human history, do not have to rely on their families for social security. But now that we have arrived at this point, which, most probably, would be the envy of all our predecessors, why do we not want more people to be born? Why do we not want our own citizens to enjoy these best ever times? Or, maybe, if we have nothing left to fight for, then we have nothing to live for? In almost every case, our children are our most important heritage. If we have children, they are our strongest tools in this fight for the future. If we have more children, it is the strongest expression of our hope that indeed there is a future where it is worth living. Mr. Orbán, it is wonderful to stand by your side. I am looking forward to your acts as a leader that you offer to your country and the wider world.

(Edited version of Tony Abbott’s presentation)



Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen!
Distinguished Cardinal and Bishops! President of the Republic! Prime Ministers and Ministers!

It is a wonderful feeling to meet you again, for the third time. I would like to thank the organizers for their indispensable work. I must specifically mention Professor Pál Demény, who is here with us today. He was the initiator of this conference series, and was and remains its mentor.

Ladies and gentlemen!
We have special guests, presidents and prime ministers from important countries. I would like to extend a particular welcome to the former Prime Minister of Australia. It is partly due to his powerful political work that we regard Australia as an example to follow. We especially appreciate their courageously straight and consistent Anglo-Saxon approach to the issue of migration and to the protection of the Australian nation. Thank you for visiting us.

President Vučić from Serbia is also here with us today. I am glad to welcome him. Every nation has some kind of perception of other nations, and this is especially true for neighboring countries. For example, we Hungarians think that Slavs have a big heart. This is especially true for Serbs, who are not only our neighbors, but also a nation with a fate similar to ours. Sometimes I feel that they do not have one heart, but two beating. If you do not believe

me, just have a look at the Serbian team at the Basketball World Cup. We wish the President that this team work miracles at this World Cup. The Prime Minister of the Czech Republic also joined us today. He has actually worked miracles – economic and financial miracles – in his home country, and his achievements are greatly valued in Hungary. Undoubtedly, Hungary is performing well, but we are still way behind our Czech colleagues. Prime Minister Babiš is a source of inspiration for us, because we Hungarians want to catch up with the Czechs, so the better he works, the more he inspires us Hungarians. Let me make a side note here. The strength of the Czech Republic is evidenced by the fact that it can afford the luxury of criticizing its Prime Minister instead of crowning him for his great achievements. He is the best economic politician of Europe. Here in Hungary we can only say that the Czech Republic is a happy country and we are jealous of its problems.

Ladies and gentlemen!
The subject of today’s conference is demography and families. We have heard excellent presentations. This puts me in a difficult situation. How can I contribute to what we have heard? Perhaps I can add one or two points. First, I would like to say a few words about the spiritual basis of Hungary’s family policy. Then I would like to call your attention to some key factors of the Hungarian family support model. Let me start with the spiritual basis.

When I was younger, a conference in demographic problems would have been strange. The reason for this is that everyone – literally everyone, regardless of educational achievements or origins – knew and understood a most important ancient truth: that human life is finite and those who enter life must eventually leave it behind. This is a law. In my experience, people are responding to or, so to say, looking for a way out from this law or difficult situation in three possible ways. The first is the world of psychoactive substances, a life of addiction and extreme consumption, which helps us ignore and avoid the question: if life is finite, then what is the meaning of it? This solution remedies the unpleasant fact of the finiteness of human life by offering an answer that negates the existence of the question itself. The other possibility is that man tries to find a way to his Creator who decided about the finiteness of human life and made it a law for us, trying to get closer to Him, looking for answers from Him and trying to find the remedy. This solution, this way, this direction contributed to enormous achievements of civilization, inspired great art, and created great cultures in the world. And the third option we have is that

we try to ensure that our life in this world continues. This is called starting a family, this is called parenthood. A child is blood from our blood, flesh from our flesh and, in some way, is the continuation of our life.

All in all, everyone used to understand this in Hungary. And, indeed, we never held demographic conferences, because we thought there was no need to urge a woodpecker to peck the wood. Since then, major changes have occurred that can be summed up in a single word: decline, the topic of today's presentations. When we, Hungarians were trying to clarify the spiritual basis for our family policy, we attempted, first of all, to understand the nature of the problem. To understand a social problem, the first step we need to take is to delineate the problem itself, to define its

extension. So, we asked if population decline was a universal, global phenomenon. And we concluded that no, it was not, given that the population is growing in Asia and in Africa. Next, we asked if population decline was a civilization disease, a characteristic of Christian civilization. And, again, we concluded that it was not, as the number of Christians is not declining, but increasing globally. It is estimated that their number will continue to grow in the coming decades. So, if decline is not a general human ill or something related to Christian civilization, then what causes it? And finally, we realized that this is a specifically European phenomenon. Obviously, there are some countries in other continents where the population is declining, for example, there are such countries in Asia,

but only in Europe does the phenomenon extend to a whole continent.

Therefore, we Hungarians think that it is a general European phenomenon and we must handle it accordingly. And what are the reasons for this trend? There are various alternative theories. I personally think that the reason is self-evident. Population decline has become a European problem, because Europe fought two cruel civil wars. The textbooks call them world wars, and indeed, they extended to other continents, but, in reality, they were European – or, to be more precise – Western civil wars, with terrible loss of human life. Calculations differ, but if I add up the European and American losses of the two world wars, without the American lives lost on the Asian fronts, then the number of all persons who died only in the European conflict alone will be around 50 million. I am convinced that we have never recovered completely from that loss of human lives. As the root of our current problem is an unnatural situation – two world wars, or, rather, two European civil wars –, an extreme situation, politics must take action in a sensitive area like demography without any hesitation. If population decline were not a consequence of

political conflicts and wars, then governments would, most probably, need to address demographic issues with more caution, because demography, after all, is an extremely sensitive issue.

them. The first one is migration. We definitely must refute the argument that, on a global scale, migration can solve the problem of Europe's population decline, because if we accepted this, then there would be nothing left for us to do.



On the bank of the Danube in Pest

However, it was politics itself that caused the problem. The governments caused the problem with the two world wars or European civil wars, which means that it cannot be addressed or solved without the states playing a powerful role. Therefore, Hungary and the Hungarian government opted for the implementation of a powerful demographic policy. This is our objective as a state, and this is a responsibility of the government.

Talking about the theoretical basis for our family policy, we must start with refuting two counterarguments. Our Australian guest, Prime Minister Abbott have already made mention of

But if we do not accept this, then there is something we need to do. If we accepted that Europe is not going to be populated by Europeans in the future, and if we accepted this as a natural fact, then, in effect, we would agree to a population exchange. We would agree to the process of the European population being changed. It is not closely related to the topic of today's debate, but let me add that, in my opinion, there are policies or political forces in Europe building on the option of population exchange for various reasons. They do so because of utilitarian, political and, to some extent, ideological considerations, but this is not the subject of today's conference. In any event,

we must spell out very clearly that if we want to engage in demographic policy, then we had

better keep away from the migration-based solution.

The second argument, which Prime Minister Abbot also made mention of, is a green and quite novel argument. Recently, I have been shocked to learn that it is possible to think about children and life as something opposed to nature, and it is possible to say that the Earth would be better off if less children were born. We could argue against this point, but I suggest that we should regard it as simple foolishness and reject it like that. We should simply say that, in harmony with the order of creation, man is a part of and not an enemy to the ecosystem, which the proponents of this argument want to protect from our children. Therefore, we should not regard man and the ecosystem as two contrasting things, but should, with intelligence, define the position of a growing mankind in the ecosystem. This is the correct approach, instead of contrasting nature with human life. Talking about the spiritual basis of Hungary's family policy, let me mention two positive things. Firstly,

Hungarians are convinced that every child has the right to have a mother and a father. So, when it comes to family support, let me highlight that we are supporting traditional families, and we are protecting the traditional family model.

Secondly, we are thinking within the framework of a nation, because we think that families and children are preconditions of the biological reproduction of a national community. When families do not function properly, when there are no children, national communities can disappear. Maybe this is difficult for Australians to imagine, because they belong to the big family of the Anglo-Saxon world. Most probably, a German cannot understand how it is possible to disappear completely. But for national communities of the size of the Czech, Serbian or Hungarian nations, it is not that

difficult to imagine, from a mathematical perspective, that if unfavorable demographic trends continue, there will be a last person who will have to turn off the lights. It is indeed possible for a nation to disappear. This vision is not a pathological dread or imaginary fear. It is a real danger which can be mathematically modelled: the number of persons in these nations may decrease to such an extent that eventually it becomes impossible to preserve the national identity. And we think that when a nation disappears from the world, then something irreplaceable is lost. Because we cannot be Serbs; only Serbs can be Serbs. Only Hungarians can see the world in a special Hungarian way, the Czechs cannot. Only the Czech people can create Czech culture, nobody else. So, when a nation disappears, then something irreplaceable disappears from the world. This is what the great Hungarian poet János Arany said so beautifully in two lines, which now form a part of the spiritual basis of Hungary's family policy:

***"If the tempest of times blows us away,
God will never have Hungarians again."***

This means that our family policy rests on national foundations.

Ladies and gentlemen! This is what I wanted to share with you about the spiritual basis of Hungary's family policy. Now, let me call your attention to some important details of the Hungarian model. I say some details, because there is a lot to say, our family policy is extraordinarily rich, and it is almost impossible to exhaust it. I do not want to discuss these details in the form of advice or a lecture, because there are many countries and many nations, all with a specific way of thinking of their own. Instead, I would like to offer you the Hungarian experience, a treasury of best practices, so that you may think about what you want to put to use in your home country. Firstly, the basis of the Hungarian model is constitutional in nature. I have already discussed the spiritual basis. The model has a constitutional basis as well, which is of paramount importance.

If the substance of demographic policy and the most important elements of a family policy are not enshrined in the constitution, then it becomes impossible to engage in a long-term family policy.

We need a constitutional basis, because only a constitutional basis can offer protection against anti-family court rulings. Courts are a different world. They do not belong to the part of state life controlled by the government. Courts are independent of the government and are operated by different considerations. Therefore, it is always possible to have court rulings which are clearly anti-family rulings, the best example being the United States. There is only one limitation for that: a clear constitutional basis. A constitutional basis is needed for family policies as well. Otherwise, international organizations, NGOs, networks and centers, which are all too often against families, can infiltrate into Hungarian state life and Hungarian decision-making. Let us say that decisions can be taken at the EU level if our constitution cannot protect us from them. And there may be EU decisions which are, unfortunately – let us face it – against families. If we want to defend ourselves, if we want to implement a firm family policy, then we need a constitutional basis. Secondly, let me call your attention to the fact that a good family policy presupposes sound economic foundations. Possibly, this does not hold true for other regions of the world, but as far as I can see and understand the current situation of the European civilization, I must say that in Europe, you need money for a successful family policy. Without money, you cannot turn around the unfavorable trends. Whether we like it or not, this is my experience. This is why within a period of ten years in Hungary, we have doubled the budgetary amount allocated to family support. When it comes to an economic basis, it is important for us to understand, from a family policy perspective, the significance of a secure and stable financial situation – again, hats off to Mr. Babiš –, because family policies are based on trust. Do families believe that the

measures introduced by a government will be maintained in the long run? Having children is not a matter of one moment, parents must raise their children. They will need reliable family support systems over many years. But if financial problems set in, then austerity measures are introduced, and any rationalization of the budget will, sooner or later, entail cutting family support expenses. Hungary is an example for that. The topic of today is not the work of the previous governments, but I could talk to you about how, on the pretext of crisis management, they deprived families of the support they would have needed for a stable and reliable family planning. This is to say that a stable and successful economic policy will need, besides a spiritual and a constitutional basis, sound finances and a growing economy, that is, an economic basis. Our experience (and probably this is not as useful in other countries as in Hungary) is that

in Hungary, family benefits should always be coupled with employment.

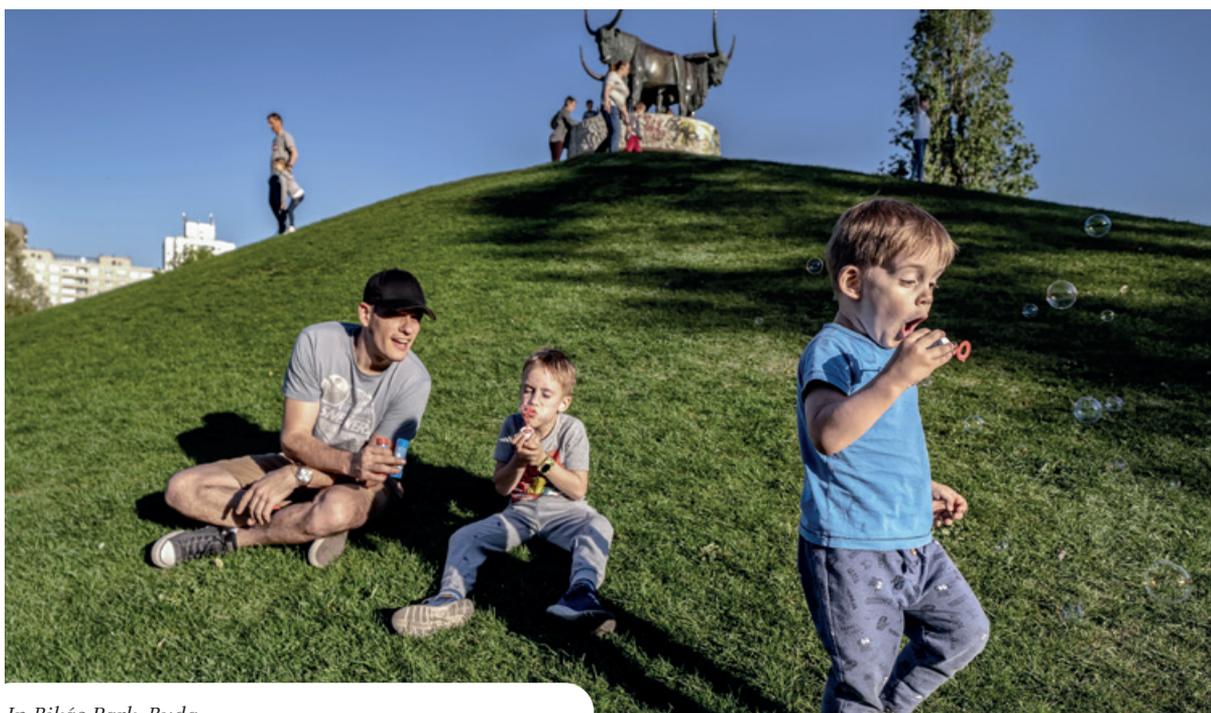
People are only human, and if they see that they can make a living from social benefits and other benefits, then many of them, many of us will tend to do so, and choose to make a living from such benefits instead of work. This, in turn, will lead to an economic recession, then financial problems set in – and here come austerity measures. Therefore,

if we want to implement a family policy that is stable in the long run, then as many elements of the family support as possible must be coupled with gainful employment.

There are specific techniques for that, and Hungary is glad to give you information on all, from the tax break regime to the childcare fee. In our opinion, it is equally important to couple the support given to children with the fulfilment of parental obligations. If parents fail to perform their duties, they are not entitled to

receive support from the state for their children. For example, if parents fail to ensure that their school-age children attend schools, then they are not entitled to family allowance. Coupling support with performance reasonably and humanely is another key element of Hungary's family policy. Also, we came to the conclusion that our family policy must include, as another important element, making kindergarten care accessible and compulsory from the age of three. However, parents may apply for exemption from this obligation. Nevertheless,

There is an important question: where is the turning point when we can safely say that our family support system has succeeded and, from now on, it will certainly (insofar as one can use this word in the world of politics at all) or almost certainly bring results, that is, more children will be born? What is more, is it possible to designate such a point at all? Let me share with you our experience in Hungary. I think it holds true for Europe. Maybe its validity does not extend beyond Europe, but I think that in Europe (and surely in Hungary)



In Bikás Park, Buda

Hungary is a country where children's public education starts at the age of three or four. Here, kindergartens are not facilities where children are simply placed during the day, but services that prepare children for school. This means that we extended the period of children's socialization, preparation and education. Of course, day nurseries are also available. In Hungary, the demand for day nurseries will be completely met by 2022. Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished Cardinal, President of the Republic, this is what we have already done. But, unfortunately, we have not reached the turning point yet. We have done a lot, but the results are still not irreversible.

we will win if we can establish a family support system where persons having children are guaranteed to have better living standards than they would without having children. This is the turning point, when having a child contributes to the improvement of living standards. It is not about being cared for by your children in your later life. It is about enjoying – right here and now, while you are still raising your children – a financial situation that is more favorable than the situation you would be in without having children.

That is the point we are looking for, that is what we want to achieve. This is where the Hungarian family support system will reach the tipping point. But we are still not there, we need years of sustained work to achieve that.

Ladies and gentlemen!

To conclude my speech, I would like to answer one question: is it possible at all? If I ask anyone in Europe, let us say, in high-level political fora, whether what we are doing will be successful, whether we can actually reach a fertility rate of 2.1, then nine out of ten will tell me that it is impossible. When nine out of ten say that something is impossible, then you must think it over. If eight said so, it would probably be too few, five would certainly be very few, but nine is pretty many. And then, you must consider very carefully whether you are aiming for the impossible. Indeed, is it possible to achieve the goal we set? I cannot give you an accurate answer for that.

However, I can tell you that I have heard this opinion in many other matters. When we decided to send the IMF home, nine out of ten told us that we could not succeed. When we said that banks should be involved in crisis management and taxed, then nine out of ten told us that it was impossible. When we introduced utility cost reduction or levied taxes on multinational companies, they told us that it could not be done.

When we decided to introduce a proportional income tax instead of the progressive income tax that was first announced and heralded in The Communist Manifesto (because that is where progressive income tax is discussed for the first time), we were told that we were bound to fail. When we set the goal of creating one million jobs in ten years, we were told that we could not succeed. When we said that we would stop the migrants on the Hungarian state border, no matter how many come, we were going to stop them, then we were told that it was impossible. When we decided to build a fence that cannot be brought down, we were told it was not possible.

So, I do not know whether our demographic objectives can be achieved; but I do know that we have eventually managed to achieve every single goal which we had set and which was important for the Hungarian nation, no matter that nine out of ten said that we were bound to fail.

This is reality. Let me tell our foreign guests this: on the one hand, Hungarian politics is very complex and difficult to understand, partly due to its language, but, on the other hand, it is extremely simple. It has a keyword, which needs to be understood properly.

The history of Hungarian politics revolves around a single word: "still". "Still" in the sense of "against all odds", meaning that if something must be done, then we must try it, even against the whole world and, in the end, we will succeed with a special Hungarian feat.

This is a key factor in understanding Hungarian history. Obviously, I am not saying that we will certainly succeed. There are some preconditions for that. Indeed, there are some preconditions for the success of Hungary's demographic policy or governmental policy. I cannot identify all of them, but I can point to three or four of them. These are what we need to ensure the success of Hungary's efforts. The first precondition for a successful Hungarian demographic policy is that Christianity must recover in Europe. If this does not happen, then Hungary, becoming isolated, will hardly be able to succeed. The second precondition is that we need partners, we cannot do it alone. Now, we have partners. President Vučić is here with us, Prime Minister Babiš is here with us. Now we do have partners. We have partners in Europe as well. We are cheering on the Austrians, and we hope that the turmoil in Italy is resolved in a manner that, finally, will be favorable for Hungary and we will have partners in Italy as well. We need partners in Europe as it is not possible to do this alone. In addition, I am certain that a financial basis is also needed. Therefore, a successful family policy is conditional on ensuring that

in the coming period of approximately ten years, that is, until 2030, Hungary's GNP exceeds the average economic growth of the European Union by at least 2% every year. If this happens, then enough resources are generated to finance a stable financial basis and an extended economic policy and family policy."

Finally, the fourth and most important precondition: we can succeed if we persevere. Go Hungary! Thank you for your attention.

(Edited version of Viktor Orbán's presentation)

II. BEST PRACTICES IN DEMOGRAPHY AND FAMILY POLICY



JAIME MAYOR OREJA

Former Minister of the Interior and Former Member of the European Parliament, President of the One of Us Federation, Spain

Mr. Oreja thinks that most Western European countries are facing confusion and instability.

"We are witnessing a new world order based on two components: globalism and ethical relativism, which, paradoxically, destroys the order and leads us to confusion."

The reason for that is that some countries fail to understand the processes of their own societies. Mr. Oreja cited Cardinal Sarah, who said that if the West continues to walk down this catastrophic road of low birth rates, then it risks disappearance: foreigners will invade the West just as barbarians invaded Rome.

Mr. Oreja stated that Europe is confronted with the inventors of the new world order. He opines that a very special superstition has evolved in the Western world, according to which human beings can start again everything and can re-create human nature, society and the opportunity for happiness, without concerning themselves with the knowledge and experience of their predecessors.

Moral power and social cohesion are indispensable factors in our ability to fight against migration and address demographic challenges.

Mr. Oreja says that the confusion of our days makes it impossible to elaborate a joint European policy to address such issues. The new world order has prioritized migration and uses the concept of the family as a weapon to push everyone who are unwilling to accept these world views into the background. Many Europeans feel alone in the debate, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find allies.

He called attention to the courage and moral strength of the Hungarian Prime Minister, who has assessed the current civilization crisis correctly. We need to understand the ongoing real inner crisis, Mr. Oreja emphasized. This crisis is cultural anthropological in nature. We need a vision for the future that strengthens these values again and again, Mr. Oreja said in summary of his presentation. In conclusion, he announced that on 18 October 2019 the One of Us Association organizes a cultural platform where a declaration is planned to be issued on a Europe that is faithful to human dignity. The greatest problem is the crisis of values and the crisis of transcendental values.



MARIYANA NIKOLOVA

Deputy Prime Minister,
Bulgaria

Bulgaria's demographic situation is identical to that of other European countries, the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister said. In Bulgaria, demographic policy is an integrated and inter-institutional area. Ms. Nikolova

highlighted that Bulgaria is the only member state of the European Union that has long-term programs to address demographic issues. Bulgaria's strategic objective is to stop population decline and create long-term stability. She emphasized that

“Our government has introduced numerous measures to support families and increase the birth rate.”

With regard to Bulgaria's family policy, Ms. Nikolova informed the audience that Bulgaria allocated a large amount to family support, raising children, child protection, tax breaks, as well as maternity support. She opined that, from the perspective of families, it is important to note that the average wage has increased by 9.4% in the last year, which presupposes the improvement of living standards. She highlighted that the conditions for starting a family continue to improve in Bulgaria. Reforms were introduced in education and healthcare; more attention is paid to environmental protection. All those measures have an implication on the demographic problem. The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the positive results achieved in demographic policy and the drastic decrease of child mortality.



DAMARES REGINA ALVES

Minister, Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, Federative Republic of Brazil

Minister Damares highlighted that Brazil's current policy is intended to invest in families, which, hopefully, may bring the end of the wave of violence and may result in a more peaceful era. Even this vast country needs to pay

attention to migration, ageing population and the decelerating population increase, she added. She highlighted that Brazil's population is 200 million, and it is growing by 0.8 every year. Yet the growth rate is gradually decreasing. The population will reach a plateau between 2045 and 2060, and then it will start decreasing. There has never been and there will never be so many young people in Brazil. Ms. Damares thinks that this is a demographic bonus which offers and opportunity that must be seized. Approximately 29 million elderly people live in Brazil. This is 14% of the total population, and is expected to double over the next two decades. She emphasized that

Brazil is focusing on strengthening the family structure and family ties, paying special attention to vulnerable families and trying to promote intergenerational solidarity.

One of its greatest challenges is to solve the issue of public safety, which is the biggest obstacle to the happiness of families. Ms. Damares highlighted that Brazil respects life from conception and condemns induced abortion. Brazil is trying to promote a policy that contributes to healthy births and ease adoptions.



BOŻENA BORYS-SZOPA

Minister, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, Republic of Poland

The Minister said that Poland has been struggling with demographic challenges for decades now: the number of births is low, the society is ageing, and in 2050 40% of the population will be over the age of 60. She informed the audience that the last three years have seen a major improvement in the citizens' willingness to have children.

The right-wing family policy of Poland focuses on three areas. It intends to improve the demographic situation, to combat extreme poverty and to implement family investments in the wide sense of the word.

These amounts will make up 4% of the GDP in 2020. Bożena Borys-Szopa also discussed the program “500 Plus”, a pillar of Poland’s family support. The program helps families to improve their financial situation and, at the same time, combats poverty. As she said, this has a great impact on improving the demographic situation: between 2015 and 2017, the fertility rate increased from 1.29 to 1.45. The number of births is still decreasing, but this is a consequence, among others, of a significant decrease of the number of women of child-

bearing age. Unfortunately, this trend is expected to continue. Ms. Borys-Szopa also highlighted that Poland spends a great deal on the extension of day nursery and kindergarten capacities. Such measures are coupled with flexible working hours, which marks a good direction. The unemployment rate has never been so low; Poland’s economy is on a stable growth path. Yet, at the same time, the government is aware of the fact that about 700,000 dwellings are missing, which can be a major economic obstacle preventing young families from having children. In response to the problem, the government launched the New Home Plus Program, which is intended to support apartment rentals. To conclude her speech, Ms. Borys-Szopa highlighted that young people are exempt from the personal income tax until the age of 26.



ZAHID MALEQUE

Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh

In his welcome address, Minister Maleque cited the words of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán: there is a need for traditional family values, they cannot be substituted, and their disappearance must be prevented. Mr. Maleque emphasized that, for Bangladesh,

“the family comes first, because families are the building block of a nation.”

Accordingly, a significant share of the budget is used to cover family policy expenses. He thanked for the successful separation of the Bangladeshi twins, which contributed to the further strengthening of relations between Bangladesh and Hungary, elevating them to a new level.

Discussing the achievements of Bangladesh, the Minister highlighted that, as a result of consistent planning, population growth has slowed down, and a big breakthrough was made in child mortality and maternal mortality.

He emphasized that, thanks to the efforts of Prime Minister Sheik Hasina, in the last 12 years the budget has increased fivefold, favorable environment has been created for domestic and foreign investment, productivity has been boosted and the number of jobs has increased. Yet despite the successes, Bangladesh still faces difficulties. It is an extremely difficult job to invest in education, create adequate jobs and improve social security. A growing life expectancy results in a growing rate of the elderly, which will pose a major social problem and challenge in the future for Bangladesh. Women's labor market participation increases

continuously; therefore, adequate childcare options are needed. Mr. Maleque mentioned, that in the last decade, the traditional form of the family has undergone a continuous change. He highlighted that it is time for the government to introduce initiatives to help child-raising, reconcile family and work, and establish childcare institutions.

The Minister is convinced that the individual states must play a key role in resolving the demographic situation. Coordination must be enhanced. The public and the civil sectors need to be involved in the process alike.



MARITZA ROSABAL

Minister, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Family and Social Inclusion, Republic of Cabo Verde

In the introduction to her speech, the Minister gave a summary of the history of the Republic of Cabo Verde. She pointed out that slavery existed in the country until 1879, which meant that a significant part of the population did

not have the right to have a family. Obviously, this right is now enshrined in the constitution. Ms. Rosabal highlighted that the last 40 years have seen major changes in the situation of the Republic of Cabo Verde: from 1970 to 2019 the fertility rate decreased from 6.3 to 2.4, which means that in 1970 an average family had seven members, while now it has four. She pointed out that attention must be paid to the situation of women because, in many families, women are the breadwinners, bearing all the financial and other burdens of fending for their families. Therefore, it is not by chance that the legislature decided to focus on families.

“The unique needs of families need to be taken into account in every field of governance,”

she emphasized.

Ms. Rosabal added that investment efforts should focus on the prevention of the reproduction of poverty, given that currently 8,000 families live in extreme poverty. Such families must be offered the opportunity to have a proper income and access to basic services. For that purpose, the tax burden was removed from the prices of commodities, such as diapers. Moreover, support must be provided for the

active population with the construction of housing facilities, the development of lighting and transport and supporting child healthcare and education. In the field of education, the Ministry of Education introduced various measures: pre-school education became universal, and schooling is obligatory at the age of 8 onwards and remains free of charge until secondary education.

Ms. Rosabal pointed out, in particular, that the Republic of Cabo Verde currently has a demographic opportunity window, which means

that the number of the active population exceeds that of the inactive population. Yet this demographic window is going to close soon, which will result in the growth of the number of the elderly. She informed the audience that they have many plans for the future:

“We want to ensure the reproduction – the biological, cultural and social reproduction – of mankind. And without women, there is no reproduction.”



RAMONA PETRAVIČA

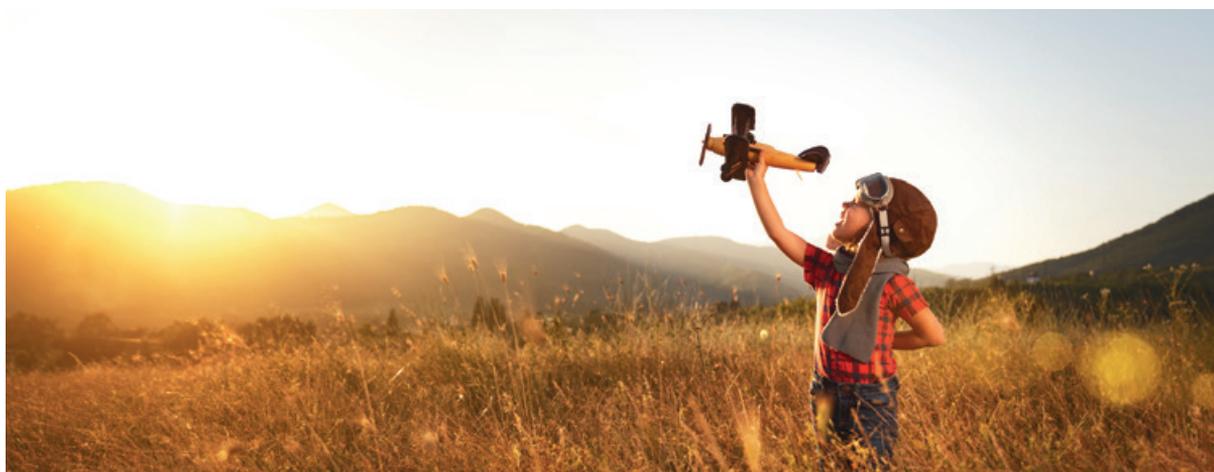
Minister, Ministry of Welfare,
Latvia

The Minister explained that they would like to improve Latvia’s demographic situation, characterized by an ageing population and declining birth rates. Therefore, they launched reforms in their family support system. Significant progress has been made in ensuring the recognition of children’s rights and in helping orphaned children. The number of children living in foster homes is decreasing; more and more of them are placed in families.

Ms. Petraviča opines that demography and family policy represent a difficult challenge for any government. “It is very difficult to strike a balance between the support of younger generations and older generations.” As she highlighted,

“There is a need for intergenerational respect and tolerance.”

Ms. Petraviča informed the audience that Latvia is devoting a great deal of attention to the protection of parents with small children and to the support of children up to the age of 18 months. There are public and private daycare facilities and kindergartens to ensure that parents can return to work. Paternity and maternity allowance, family benefits and family allowances are also available.



PROF. DR. MIKLÓS KÁSLER

Minister, Ministry of Human Capacities,
Hungary

The Minister of Human Capacities pointed out that although every country faces a different demographic situation, the objective is always to find adequate solutions.

“Monitoring, evaluating and interpreting demographic processes are indispensable. The future of our nations and the fate of our children are at stake.”

Mr. Kásler said that Western countries often experience a loosening of classical values, which has led to the disintegration of social values, as opposed to countries of “the Orient”, which preserve their great traditions and religions, and enjoy an improving demographic situation. He reaffirmed his conviction that it would be possible to solve demographic problems very quickly if – as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said – Western countries returned to the classical European, Christian and human values: to faith, family, traditions and respect for ancestors and descendants.

Moreover, the Minister underlined that the government can ensure the material conditions for having children, but a spiritual background is also needed. To this end, the Hungarian government has been implementing a family-friendly policy since 2010, which means that the impacts of political decisions on families are always prioritized. With the rights enshrined in Hungary’s Fundamental Law and with a wide scale of family support measures, the government ensures that the demographic problem will be solved, and promotes families in many fields of education and social attitudes.

“There is increasing talk of the nine-year-old Hungarian model, because it has proved to be successful, and because more and more countries would like to know more about its elements, our expectations and the future results,”

Miklós Kásler concluded.

III. DEMOGRAPHY AND POLITICS, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, VALUES



LÁSZLÓ KÖVÉR

Speaker, National
Assembly, Hungary

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,
my friends,

On behalf of Hungary's National Assembly,
I would like to welcome the foreign and
Hungarian participants of the third Budapest
Demographic Summit. I am glad to be here with
you today, and I would like to thank you for
inviting me.

I asked the organizers of the conference why
they invited me to give a speech, whether they
wanted to upset the Hungarian left-wing
liberal opposition press. But they said no, quite
the opposite: they wanted to provide an
atmosphere that supports contemplation and
thinking together; thus, I was quite happy to
accept the invitation, as I am convinced that
thinking is not harmful, not even to left-wing
liberals.

To give our foreign guests a bit of background:
the Hungarian opposition press has recently
tried to make a scandal out of me mentioning in

passing in a public speech that I would like
my children to give me as many grandchildren
as possible, as soon as possible, and I would
like every Hungarian person who has the
opportunity to do so, to give the Hungarian
nation 3–4 children, and, through their families,
9–16 grandchildren. Well, after mentioning
these heartfelt desires very briefly, now I have
the chance to share my thoughts in a little more
detail, in about ten minutes, on the topic the
organizers chose, i.e. the way the values of
politics and demography, public and private
matters intersect.

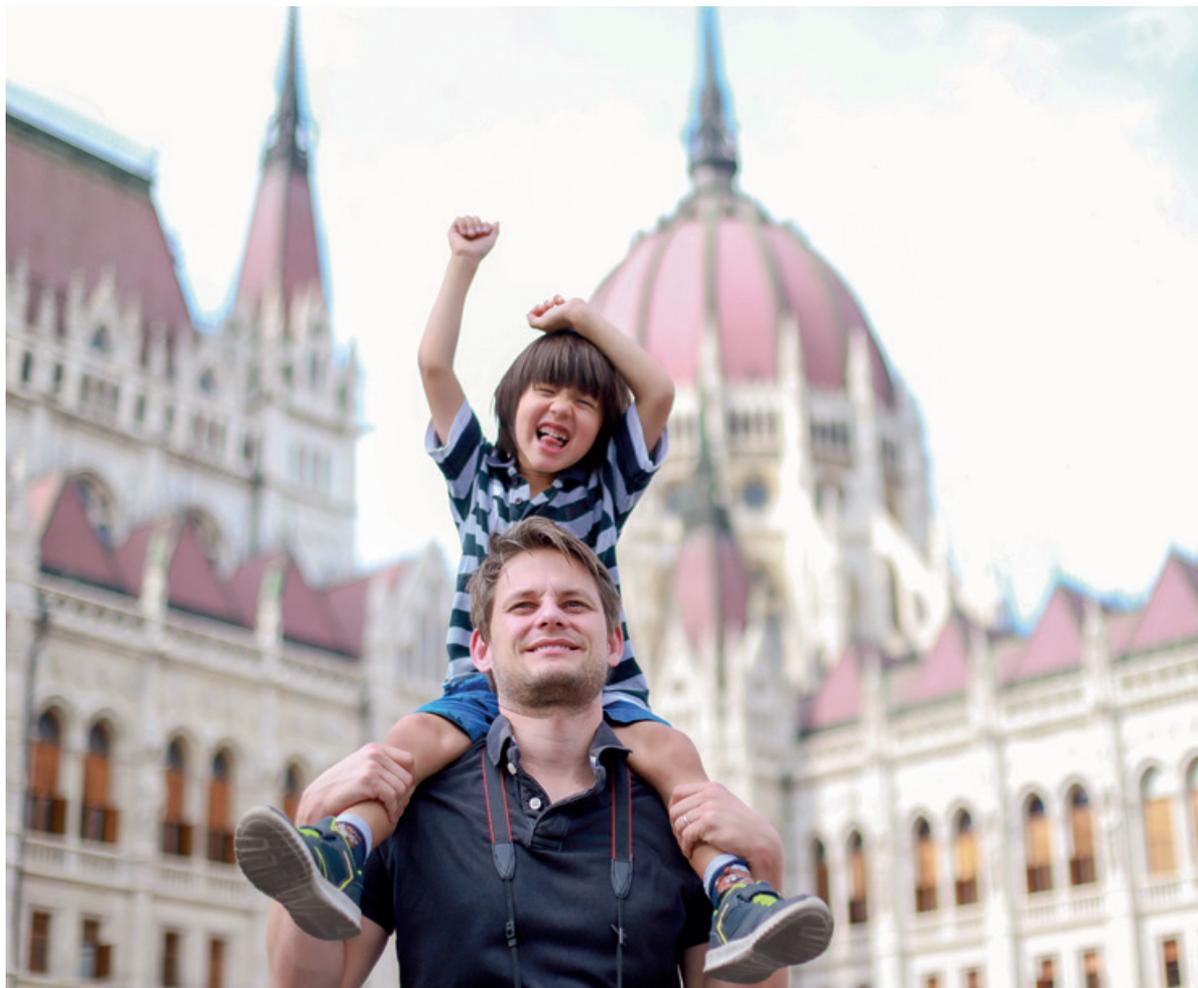
This conference is held in the heart of Europe,
a continent with Christian cultural roots, in
the capital of Hungary, a country with
a thousand-year Christian history. Therefore,
I would like to specifically greet our non-
European and non-Christian guests. Thank you
for joining us. Please allow me – as the Speaker
of the House under a Christian democrat
government – to quote the words of Jesus Christ
as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: “Every
kingdom divided against itself is laid waste,
and no city or house divided against itself
will stand.”

The phrase “divided against itself” has a rich and
deep meaning in Hungarian, as I am sure it does
in many languages. If you are divided against
yourself, you are in grave conflict with yourself,
with your instincts, your consciousness, your

principles, and thus, losing your mental balance, you become defenseless and vulnerable.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, I propose to you: is there a graver way of being divided against oneself than for us as a person or a community

of life is to pass it on – as we received the chance of life from our parents. This is not just an individual ethical and moral-philosophical duty, but – from the point of view of the community – a social and economic necessity.



to – in the biological sense – give up our future for the sake of prosperity in the present, to be at odds with our survival instincts and fatally suppress them, to turn against our values inherited from our ancestors and irrevocably renounce them? This is not a rhetorical question; it awaits an answer. Our answer here in Hungary is that there is no worse way of being divided against ourselves as individuals or as a community than not wanting to pass on life. Béla Hamvas, a 20th-century Hungarian philosopher says that life does not have a purpose, it has a meaning. The main point

Demographic data shows, with the ruthless precision of the natural sciences, that our European and Hungarian community is at risk of being divided against itself. This is the danger of becoming the countries and houses of caskets as opposed to the countries and houses of cradles, that the number of Europeans will fall, and the European soul will weaken and might not be able to get back into balance.

.....
 We are here today with the best experts of European and Hungarian demography.

Therefore, it is not up to me to describe the current demographic situation and the frightening possibilities; you all know these things better than politicians do. I will only describe some facts of 20th-century Hungarian demography and their causal relationships for the sake of our foreign guests. Hungary is the only country in Europe where

areas Hungary lost to other countries in the 1920 peace agreement signed under duress, and the 200,000 people who escaped from Hungary after the failure of the 1956 anti-communist revolution, all combined!

I believe these numbers speak for themselves, and explain and justify the shift in population policy that Hungary undertook after the



the number of deaths has exceeded the number of births for close to four decades, since 1981. This is connected to the fact that, in June 1956, Hungary was the first country in the world where the anti-national communist leadership – as a measure aimed at improving the population’s mood – legalized abortion with no preconditions. Thus – what cynicism, ladies and gentlemen! – in a nation under complete repression, freedom was granted in a single area: collective suicide. As a result of this, as an example, in 1962, Hungary had the lowest number of births per capita in the world, and there were more abortions than births between 1959 and 1973. Six million legal abortions were carried out in Hungary between 1956 and 2017. This number is higher than the number of people Hungary lost in the first and second World War, the 3 million people living in the

democratic end of the post-communist era in 2010. Representatives of the government have been explaining the contents of this – the so-called Hungarian model – and will continue to do so. The aim of this shift in population policy is to reach a fertility rate of 2.1 by 2030, that is, to ensure the sustainability of our society by reproduction on our own, without migration – and especially without illegal forced migration. The signs are promising: we started with a fertility rate of 1.25 in 2010, and we are at 1.49 now. The number of marriages has increased compared to 2010, the number of divorces and abortions is falling, and last year the rate of population loss was significantly – almost 80% – lower than in 2010.

Distinguished guests,
In 1995, Saint Pope John Paul II predicted in his

encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* that “This situation [...] ought to make us all fully aware that we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between Good and Evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life’.” Close to 25 years later, we can all see in our everyday life that this clash has started in Europe and is unfolding in front of our eyes. As predicted, this is a dramatic battle. It will become tragic if we lose. In order to achieve a European demographic turnaround, and in order to avoid us Europeans being divided against ourselves, we all – politicians, who plan in four-year cycles and demographic experts, who look forty years ahead, scientists, intellectuals – need to pick a side: do we want to be on the side of the culture of life, or the culture of death? Are we contributing to building our communities or to destroying them?

The goal of the destroyers is to make all natural communities crumble, to tear people away from God, and to strip people of each other’s community.

.....

If there are no more natural communities, if there are no families, if there are no religious or national communities, then private interests cannot be subjected to rules in the name of the public good, the public interest or even public security.

.....

If the concept of public benefit becomes meaningless, then public morality will be gone as well, and if there is no such thing as public interest anymore, then the state based on the public will become pointless, as does democracy itself; thus, there can be no limits on private interest or private will. Thus, states based on public will and public interest are eroded away by private will and private interest. As the new slogan of one of the world’s most powerful entrepreneurs and money men says: “Future is private!” Globalism becomes the new ideology of the strong plundering the weak, as a result of which Europe sinks into dictatorship or anarchy, and European communities become fatally divided against themselves.

In Europe, the culture of death is served by all those who claim that parenthood is a private issue that the national politics should treat it as a taboo – even if this leads to the state, the highest body set up to protect the interests of the community, giving up on protecting the most vital interests of the community, that is, ensuring its very survival.

However, all this is utter nonsense, absurdity. It is an extreme contrast of the individual and the community, a way of playing them off against each other, completely subjecting one to the other, in a similar fashion – in the opposite direction – to what was done under communism and Nazism. The consequences will be similarly horrific: another violent program of total human liberation, which will end up being totalitarian, but with no liberty.

It must be clear to all that parenthood is the most private of public affairs, certainly from a historical perspective. Europe can only avoid being divided against itself if all European countries make it the most important public affair, in social, economic, cultural and political terms. In order to achieve this, the balance of the Individual and the Community, Freedom and Responsibility, Right and Obligation, Faith and Reason has to be restored, so that we can tell Right from Wrong, Virtue from Sin, True from False, Beautiful from Ugly, Good from Evil.

This cannot be achieved through political means alone, even with the greatest democratic mandate. It requires a mental shift in our societies through which people who are attached to traditional values – one might say, normalcy – (who, at the moment, are still a majority) are willing to actively defend their values and their lifestyle against the increasingly open and powerful attacks that now occur in almost all areas of life: mass communications, the consciousness industry, politics inside and outside Parliaments, lawmaking, international organizations and the so-called NGOs, and even the activities of corrupted representatives of science. But if those who have a democratic mandate to represent the community do not use the political tools made available to them for

this purpose, they commit a sin against the next generation.

All those serve the culture of death in Europe who manipulate natural sexual differences in unnatural ways, who claim that homosexuality is an immutable biological trait while male and female heterosexuality is only a changeable social role, and that children have to be taught this when they are still in kindergarten. Those also serve the culture of death in Europe who do not see men and women as partners who support each other and complement each other due to their differences, becoming as one, but rather as rivals who abandon their differences in the course of their battle; who want to abolish the Christian concept of the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman; who want to depict families as source not of love, but of violence.

Distinguished guests,
Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told the participants of the 2nd Budapest Demographic Forum that it is possible to make progress

against the wind in Hungarian demographic matters, if we know what port we are headed to. We should add: if we build a good ship and we have a good crew on board, then we can sail in any wind. We, Hungarians are determined to survive and remain what we have been for a thousand years: members of a nation that enriches Christian Europe through their unique, irreplaceable culture.

“She has a future”, this is the translation of an ancient Hungarian expression that was used to refer to a pregnant woman. I wish for all of us who serve a culture of life in Europe, in Hungary and all around the world that our joined intellectual and political fight, perseverance and sacrifice may be fruitful, and our children and grandchildren may say that they have a safe future in their homeland.

(Edited version of László Kövér’s presentation)



ANDY HARRIS

Congressman, United States of America

Mr. Harris said that ageing population is one of the biggest challenges for Europe and the USA, given that by 2060 the ratio of people above the age of 65 will have increased from today’s 16% to 23% if the current trends continue. This process puts a considerable burden on social security systems and healthcare systems alike.

Mr. Harris is concerned about the fact that in the USA 70% of the children were born out of wedlock in 2018, while in 2011 their rate was 40%. Children born out of wedlock have more unfavorable health and learning indicators, and are at a higher risk of becoming juvenile offenders.

Therefore, the traditional family model is beneficial not only for the society, but for the children themselves. For this very reason, we need to come up with arguments to defend the traditional family model.

Mr. Harris welcomed Hungary's leading role in the field of family policies.



KEVIN ANDREWS

Member of the House of Representatives, Former Minister, Australia

Mr. Andrews opined that the greatest challenge for our society is the situation of families, marriages and communities.

Families are threatened by a global phenomenon. Between 1970 and the 2000s, the rate of unmarried couples increased. Couples live together before marrying, and many decide to marry much later, at an older age. In parallel, the number of divorces, single-parent families and children born out of wedlock also grew.

Mr. Andrews discussed a population myth according to which the global population would have grown indefinitely. These forecasts, however, proved to be inaccurate. Nowadays, the population is growing due to increased life expectancy, because life expectancy has been sky-rocketing since the 1900s. Raw birth data evidence a decline. Mr. Andrews cited the example of Singapore to illustrate how difficult it is to intervene in demographic processes with central measures. The controlled democracy of Singapore offers, among others, financial support upon the birth of the second and the third child, yet the fertility rate continues to decline. Hungary has taken steps in the right direction. Since 2010, the number of divorces has decreased, while the number of marriages and the fertility rate have increased. Mr. Andrews expressed his hope that the demographic processes can be turned around in Europe, Australia and other regions of the world.



URSZULA RUSECKA

Member of the Sejm, President of the Social and Family Policy Committee of the Sejm, Poland

Similarly to many European countries, Poland also has an ageing population, which calls for decisive action on the part of decision-makers

“We need a family policy that offers real answers to the problems of families. We must support young people in having their first, second and third child.”

Four years ago, the government of Law and Justice proclaimed that family is the basic building block of society. A key objective of the government was to improve the social status of families and large families. Urszula Rusecka presented the government initiatives to support families, such as the

“500 Plus” program, within which families have so far received a monthly support of 500 zlotys per child for 6,800,000 children, starting with the birth of the first child. With the continuous expansion of the capacity of day nurseries, the government intends to convey the message to young people that the conciliation of professional life and family life is possible. Supporting child-raising is regarded as an investment, rather than as an expenditure, and this attitude is represented to the society as a whole.

This objective is also served by the introduction of the card for large families, which grants large families access to various discounts at more than 6,000 partners. In 2015, family policy expenses made up 1.7% of the GDP. In 2020, this rate will increase to 4%, which is an enormous change. The first results of Poland’s comprehensive family policy are now clear to see. The fertility rate was 1.29 in 2012. By 2018, it had increased to 1.44. There is an unfavorable trend: in the 21st century, the number of women of child-bearing age started to fall sharply, declining by 70,000 every year. Therefore, it is especially important to ensure that families raise more children.



DR. LETICIA ADELAIDE APPIAH

Executive Director, National Population Council, Republic of Ghana

In Africa, the birth rate continues to be high, and girls get pregnant at the very young age. The human capital fails to grow; therefore, competitiveness remains at a low level, as does

life expectancy. Ms. Appiah opines that competitive countries adapt and develop, while less competitive ones start lagging behind and fail to adjust. Therefore, the representatives of the government must create an inclusive and sustainable global economic growth. At this point, we need leaders with a long-term and clear vision, leaders who are willing to face demographic challenges. Sustainable families serve as a model for sustainable countries.

“Frequent attempts are made to counterbalance the impacts of the population loss with migrants. However, we need other interventions, because migration is like blood transfusion: it does not tackle the problem at its roots, only postpones a solution. I highly appreciate the family-centered Hungarian model. It represents unique values.”

Ms. Appiah is convinced that in Africa a decline of fertility rate would result in economic growth. By contrast, European countries must increase the rate of young people to counterbalance the impacts of ageing populations.



KINGA GÁL

Member of the European Parliament, Hungary

Ms. Gál opines that in Europe there are two competing visions of a European future. The first one presumes that the problem of population decline must be solved with supporting migration and offering legal pathways. By contrast, the national Christian democrat approach focuses on the renewal of

family policies and on strengthening and promoting families to respond to demographic challenges. Family is the context where we get to know ourselves, where we learn how to co-exist with others, take responsibility for each other, where we are offered the values that guide us throughout life.

“Evidence shows that the willingness to have children has grown since 2010. We are proud that we dared to be bold, because we know that this is the way to the future and that these measures constitute a responsible thinking about the future.”

We must strengthen our common values, which are the achievements of centuries-long struggles that have created the Europe we know and love.

“We cannot give up our Europe. Today, we must preserve these values at all costs. Only strong families can form a strong nation, and only nations can make Europe stronger.”



VALERIE HUBER
Senior Policy Advisor, Department for Health and Human Services (HHS), United States of America

Ms. Huber welcomed Hungary’s innovative and creative work which, she said, gave absolute priority to families. She emphasized that each life must be valued equally.

“Hungary has a friend in the United States. The Trump government also professes the values of family and life in domestic and international fora alike.”

The pillar of the American nature is family, and this is why it must be strengthened. In America, children start to learn the principles of responsible decision-making at an early age. It is about the adequate timing of their first sexual intercourse, preparing for marriage and setting goals in life.

Ms. Huber emphasized that, in spite of criticisms, the USA does not oppose the work of the UN. The USA is one of the UN’s biggest donors, but it will always stand up for ensuring that no international organizations overstep its mandate. They support education programs on sexuality, but sex education must take place within the family, in harmony with the family’s norms and religious beliefs.

IV. HAVING CHILDREN: IS IT A FINANCIAL MATTER?



MIHÁLY VARGA

Minister, Ministry of Finance,
Hungary

In the introduction to his presentation, the Minister said that he is convinced that if a country has adequate conditions, then families will have more children. No one has the right to intervene in such decisions. Yet it has become an issue at the level of the society as a whole whether Hungary will be a rising nation in 50 years' time. Therefore,

“long-term policies should focus on demographic issues and on the shaping of population processes.”

From the perspective of practical policies, this means that we must build a country where people feel safe and feel that the country as a whole, employment and families are secure, where work leads to growing welfare, where services promoting child-raising are accessible and of good quality, and child-raising is contributed to by a family support system. At the same time, one must mention the fact that

“only a properly functioning economy can create a basis which ensures steps forward in family and child-raising issues. Among others, this is why it is important that Hungary’s economy is performing better and better.”

The changes of employment data evidence this improvement. Yet economic achievements are not ends in themselves. Families and raising children are in the focus. This is shown by the fact that the first measures included the launch of a tax regime that supports one million families. Since 2010, budgetary resources allocated to the strengthening of families and supporting child-raising have been increased continuously. From 2010 to 2020, the amount allocated to the support of families in Hungary’s central budget has grown by HUF 1,293 billion. By now, it is clearly visible that these are steps in the right direction, as the popularity of the Family Protection Action Plan is growing. So far, more than 36,000 applications have been submitted for some form of support. Over 23,000 applications have been filed for the subsidy for young married couples, and more than 11,000 applied for being involved in the car purchase program for large families. Many say, Mr. Varga continued, that one of the hindrances of having children is that women with small children need to choose between family and career. He emphasized that the objective is to ensure that this decision depends on the family’s choice and not on the circumstances. In that regard, easy access to day nursery services is a key element. Many measures were taken to increase day nursery capacities. Among others, this intervention helped to double the 2009 capacity of day nurseries. Hungary’s population processes are of paramount importance with regard to our national policy and our economy. We must not lose sight of the fact that every step taken to support families and child-raising builds our future.



PHILLIP BLOND

Political philosopher, Anglican theologian, Director of ResPublica, United Kingdom

Mr. Blond is convinced that, for generations, extreme liberalism has reigned in Europe. Liberals hold the opinion that autonomy,

independence, individual freedom and the pursuit of individual pleasure are important, and, in effect, this approach is represented in every field of culture. This is the economy’s interest, because it boosts sales and, in the meantime, a narcissist culture evolves. Mr. Blond opines that

“Extreme independence and autonomy have infected us. It is ingrained in us that children are obstacles to our self-realization.”

The society teaches us to be alone, because otherwise we deprive ourselves of so many enjoyments. We must reveal this lie, because it leads to isolation and bad health. Clear evidence shows that married couples and people living in families with children are much happier. We must realize that this is a war of values. Values are fundamental; they tell us whom to respect or how to reward each other. The inherent values of marriage orientate us towards a behavior that will increase the likelihood of having children.



OBIANUJU EKEOCHA

expert, writer, author of *Target Africa*,
Nigeria

In her presentation, Ms. Ekeocha gave a detailed introduction to Africa's population control project. She cited several Western sources which, for instance, opine that "the famine in Ethiopia is a result of too many people living in a small territory" or that "one of the key global problems is the exponential population growth in Africa". She added that other countries are offering support not only for education, healthcare, water supply, water purification or the establishment of governance and a civil

society, but also for population control measures. Ms. Ekeocha explained that the problem with the latter is that while in 1996 there was hardly any amount allocated to population programs, in 2013 it was the most widely supported program as opposed to Africa's all other problems. Between 1993 and 2012, the amount of population control aids and related healthcare aids increased from 610 million dollars to 12.4 billion dollars. Ms. Ekeocha highlighted that in the last 35 years the fertility rate has decreased significantly, by almost 25%. Still, in Western countries many think that the rate of decrease is inadequate. Population density in Africa is approximately 36.4 persons per square kilometer. In Europe, it is 72.9. It is true that in 25–50 years' time, far more people will live in Africa and far less in Europe. To conclude her speech, Ms. Ekeocha asked: what does Africa really need?

"Child marriage must be abolished. If a girl has her first child at the age of 13, 14 or 15, she may have six or seven more children."

Childcare and education must be prioritized, along with the sex education of African girls. These are topics which are all too often forgotten.



FRANK FÜREDI

sociologist, Professor Emeritus,
University of Kent, Senior Research
Fellow, 21st Century Institute,
United Kingdom/Hungary

Mr. Füredi says that we must ask ourselves: is having children a financial or an economic matter? Or is it something else? He pointed out that we are facing a problem that seems to be universal in the Western European society and starts spilling over to Eastern and Central

Europe. The problem is that the concept of family life started to have increasingly negative connotations. Motherhood, instead of being a celebrated status, is often associated with pain and with the end of independent life. Young people are also affected by the argument that having children has a negative effect on the environment. Some say that those who have a second child should pay some kind of a CO2 tax, given that children born will use an extreme amount of resources. So, this is today's trend: a narcissist self-love that avoids responsibility and is corroborated by a misanthropic, extreme environmentalist argument that human beings are parasites to the Earth. Overall, this conveys extremely negative messages to the society. Mr. Füredi is convinced that we can do something to counteract this trend and, in the end, this is a battle of morality. He opines that this, in effect, means that having children, starting a family, or other demographic issues are not only technical matters.

“When we talk about children, we talk about our future. Having a child, we contribute to the birth of a better world,”

he concluded.



ZSOLT SPÉDER

Demographer, Director, Hungarian
Demographic Research Institute of the
Hungarian Central Statistical Office,
Professor, University of Pécs, Hungary

In his speech, Mr. Spéder discussed to what extent having children is a financial matter or whether it is a financial matter at all. He presented the evolution of the total fertility rate (TFR) in Europe and specifically in Hungary. He underlined that, from the perspective of the

topic of the conference, the key piece of information is that people living in post-socialist countries are significantly less likely to have as many children as they want than people living in Western countries are. Highlighting a widely known correlation, he noted the downward trend of the rate of married persons, and the upward trend of the rate of persons living in partnerships. Yet there is a third trend, which is of the highest significance with regard to having children: the number of persons living alone is growing.

.....

“A precondition of having and raising children is a happy, stable and reliable relationship,”

Mr. Spéder said. This means that having children is not only a financial matter. He added that some family support measures have a measurable incentivizing effect on having children. In Hungary, thanks to the family tax break of 1999, which supported in particular having a third child and beyond, the willingness to have children increased significantly among the population with higher education qualification as compared to that of the reference population.

That is, the willingness of families with two children to have more children increased when the tax break was introduced. It is thus concluded that having children is a financial matter as well.

V. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY



DR. LÁSZLÓ PALKOVICS

Minister, Ministry for Innovation and Technology, Hungary

In his speech, Mr. Palkovics cited those measures which in the last nine years have ensured that having children in Hungary is a safe and attractive option in a sustainable environment. He specifically mentioned five areas: the sustainability of the financial and business environment, work, education, the environment, and infrastructural issues. He pointed out that Hungary's economic growth has been outstanding recently. He reminded the audience that

.....

“some of those people who were born in Hungary and tried their luck abroad decided to come back, including many highly-skilled young people. Typically, they returned because they found the housing support and life-start support programs attractive.”

.....

Mr. Palkovics mentioned that in Europe Hungary is one of the countries with the

highest added high-tech value: high-tech represents 80% in the manufacturing sector. He highlighted that Hungary's government is committed to the further improvement of the innovation environment and, for example, in the 2020 budget it increased the governmental support allocated to research, development and innovation by 25%. Moreover, the implementation of further reforms of the

vocational training system is ongoing, which is far from being a simple task. With regard to digitalization, he opined that every society must relate somehow to the changes brought about by digitalization and, therefore, the Hungarian government started the socialization of such technologies, that is, started preparing the society and the economy for the transition to ensure that we can relate to the changes.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Having children is an issue related to sustainability, given that young people need to make coordinated decisions in several dimensions to feel that the conditions are suitable for having children. **Therefore, policies should center on the sustainability of families, communities and societies.** The issue was discussed by Imants Parādnieks, Advisor of the Prime Minister of Latvia; Dr. Maria Rita Testa, Senior Researcher of the Vienna Institute of Demography (Austrian Academy of Sciences); Dr. George Blair-West, Australian psychiatrist and writer, and Dr. Gabriella Vukovich, President of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. The roundtable discussion at the III. Budapest Demographic Summit was moderated by Deputy Minister Balázs Orbán.

Dr. Testa pointed out that her research results show that those individuals who would like to have a large family find sustainable development and environmental protection important, because they would like to secure better living conditions for their children. An indispensable condition of sustainable society is to be able to support the decision-making of couples and to identify those elements, adjusted to individual life situations, that will encourage them to live in large families.

Dr. Blair-West highlighted that, as evidenced by his research on divorce prevention, a stable marriage is important for being a good parent. Although around the turn of the millennium some were sceptical about this theory (many of them being children born out of wedlock or raised by divorced parents), they do not think in stereotypes and are open to the research results and the alternative way of life outlined by such results.

Dr. Gabriella Vukovich said that, with regard to the question why young people (especially



(From left to right: Imants Parādnieks, Balázs Orbán, Dr. Maria Rita Testa; Dr. George Blair-West, Dr. Gabriella Vukovich)

middle-class young people) decide not to have children, we must ask who is responsible for that: those young people themselves or the previous generation who failed to pass on values to them? In other words, in what ways can we comfort worried millennials?

Mr. Parādnieks opined that everyday needs must be met, but, at the same time, a long-term

perspective must be offered. A supporting institutional system must be established where policies approach the issue from various dimensions, such as from a personal, an intellectual and a rational aspect. Best practices include, for example, taxation policies that offer tax reductions to married couples and certain advantages to companies that support their employees in having children.

VI. FAMILY, MEDIA, COMMUNICATION



CSABA DÖMÖTÖR

Deputy Minister, Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, Hungary

In his speech, Mr. Dömötör emphasized that we need to speak frankly about the preserving role of families and about threats to families, and we must spell out that families cannot be subjected to ideological experiments. All the more so, because Hungary's Fundamental Law specifies that "the family constitutes the principal framework of our coexistence". Mr. Dömötör

called attention to the fact that this approach is apparent in the family policy communication of Hungary’s government, and families have always been in the focus. He also underlined that

“the government sees the future in the targeted support of families with children rather than in immigration.”

He stated that when it comes to family policy communication, the Hungarian government thinks it is very important to take every life situation into consideration. The Hungarian government knows that starting a family does not depend on pecuniary support only. It also depends on whether the general public and the social environment convey the message that it is worth starting a family and having children. Mr. Dömötör pointed out that currently there are two extreme perceptions of families. One of

them is about conflicts, problematic breakups and violence. This is the world of news and tabloids. The other one is an idyllic, glittery picture of unnatural photographs; this is the world of advertisements. Those who lived or live in families know that the reality of family life is somewhere between the two. This is a middle way and, at the same time, the way of normalcy. It is also the most beautiful way of living, because it conveys the message that it is good to live in a family, and that family can preserve the individuals, because it is about life. And, therefore it is a value that is worthy of protection. Mr. Dömötör highlighted that nowadays many feel that this is not mainstream thinking in Europe, and this is why

“we need to support and incentivize those who advocate the traditional concept of the family, normalcy and reason.”



DR. EDUARD HABSBURG-LOTHRINGEN
 Hungary’s Ambassador to the Holy See and the Sovereign Order of Malta

In his speech, the Ambassador discussed the way the issue of the family should be presented on Twitter. He pointed out that in Hungary most people prefer Facebook, although Twitter is a very good option, because it gives an opportunity for informal and friendly communication. It is a fantastic tool to reach out to people, he opined, and called attention to the fact that since the beginning of the Demographic Summit he had been receiving many positive reactions via Twitter. He said that it was uplifting to read that Hungary is Europe’s hope or that Hungary is a fantastic country which offers support to families.

“With Twitter, we can put across the message in social media that is possible to start a family and that if we do so we can be happy,”

he added. He pointed out that all of us are aware of the fact that if we start talking about family in the social media, on Twitter, then we are going to receive some aggressive responses as well. With that regard, he emphasized that we should

not forget what Jesus said in the Bible: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” And let us not forget what Peter asked from Jesus: “How many times do I have not to

block my enemies on Twitter?” “Seven times.” “Seven times?” “No”, said Jesus. “Seventy-seven times.”



ERZSÉBET SCHÄFFER

Pulitzer Prize-winner journalist,
Hungary

Ms. Schaffer shared a personal story. She was travelling on a crowded train, full of strangers who, by chance, had to share a compartment and spend some hours together. They kept on ignoring each other. The tension and awkwardness was suddenly resolved when a hungry baby started crying and his mother fed him. As Erzsébet Schaffer put it,

“when a mother is breastfeeding her child, it is not only about feeding. Above all, it is something sacred. The transcendence of the situation in that compartment moved everyone. Because at the bottom of hearts, everybody is in order”



MIKLÓS SZÁNTHÓ

Chairman of the Board, Central European
Press and Media Foundation, Hungary

Mr. Szánthó highlighted that

“the objective of this conference and our Foundation is to contribute to the representation of marriage between a man and a woman and of the family as natural values, and to serve their protection.”

Nowadays, unfortunately, protection must be given even to the most natural forms of normalcy, he added. Sadly, the warriors of progression, that is, liberals, promise libertinage instead of liberty. Liberty can be approached from a Christian perspective, based on altruism, sacrifice and faithfulness. More specifically, our individual interests and desires can be controlled for the interest of our community or for the greater good. And it is exactly this ability for and experience of self-control that leads us to real freedom. The ability to distinguish happiness from enjoyment shows us that we

can in fact control our own lives. Clearly, the social institution of marriage and family is like that: I feel that my wife and my children come before me. My family comes before me. Due to its very nature, the institution of the family is under attack in our postmodern era. Mr. Szánthó said that this is why the objective of the Foundation, as owner of national conservative and Christian press products, so to say, to advertise the institution of family, the most important building block of society, and represent it as something which is inherently the source of real freedom and real happiness.



DWIGHT STITT

Founder, Nonprofit Organization
 "Fathers Fighting for Their Children's Hearts",
 United States of America

In a passionate presentation, Mr. Stitt related that after his divorce how difficult it was for him to re-establish his relationship with his son. He pointed out that now he completely understands how divorce affects children and how to mitigate its impact. He said that three

years ago he could spend time with his son only every second weekend, but sometimes even this was impossible due to his work and travels, and due to conflicts with his ex-wife. He recalled a day from his own childhood, when his father took him camping. He is never going to forget that weekend, and the jokes his father told him in the evening beside the fire, he added. Thinking of that memory, he took his son camping to a lakeside, and he felt some positive change in his son's attitude. Mr. Stitt knew that it had not been a result of fishing together but of spending time together. He felt that everything was going to be alright between him and his son, and decided to help other fathers who find themselves in the same situation. He established Fathers Fighting for Their Children's Hearts, which organizes camps for fathers and their children.

Camping with his son made him understand that fatherhood is not only an important factor in the development of children, but also helps overcome problems.

"The bond between a father and a newborn baby can be just as strong as that between a mother and her child."

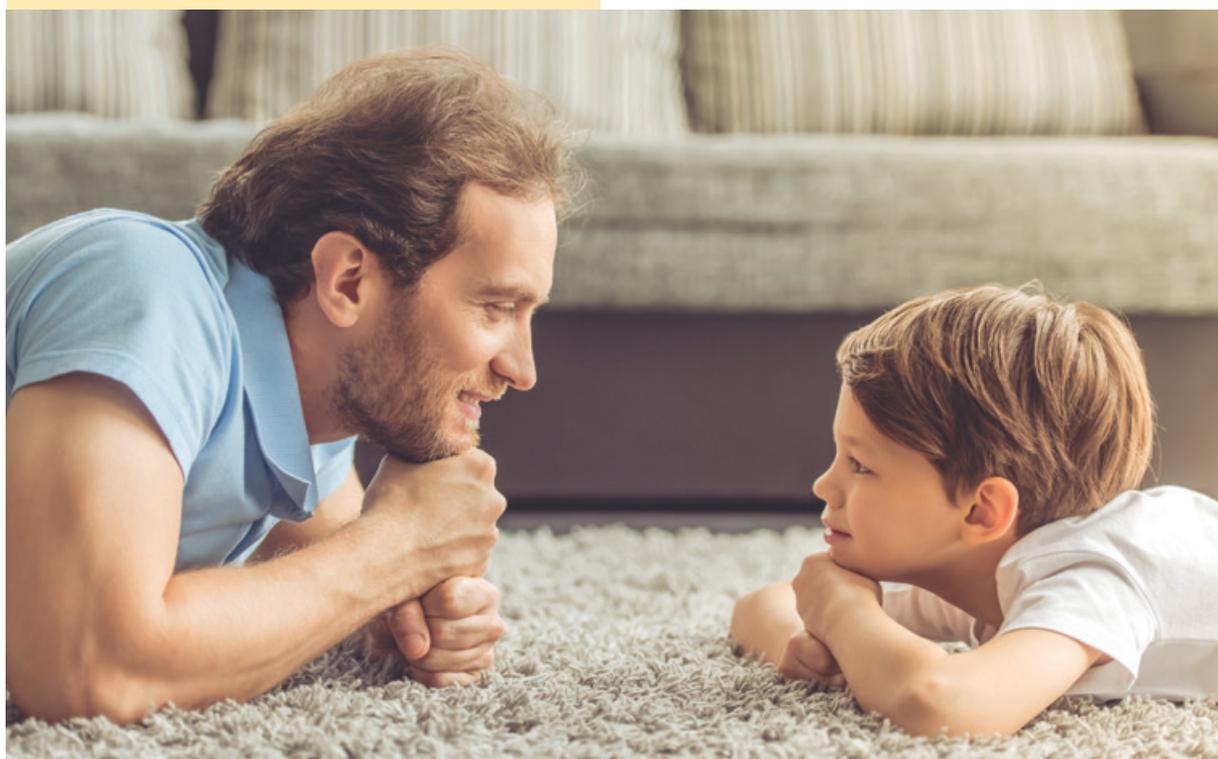


CSABA AZURÁK

communications expert, journalist,
Hungary

Mr. Azurák pointed out that nowadays it seems to be a global trend that only interesting and sensational events make news, important and meaningful things do not. He added that when he was working as an anchorman, he was shocked to see that if a news program started with an important issue of public life, such as the issue of families, hundreds of thousands of viewers switched to another channel. This is why, he said, such topics were pushed to the background in the mass media and were regarded as “boring” by professionals. Meaningful subject matters and debates were replaced by political media actions and performances. Viewers who demanded high-quality content were channeled to marginalized, less accessible media platforms. Mr. Azurák opined that viewers must be informed and amused at the same time, they must be made emotionally involved and interested, and such contents must be made attractive for them. He noted that

“you must market well what you want to say. In my opinion, in today’s media noise you do not have to be louder, you have to be smarter. That is your only chance.”



VII. DEMOGRAPHY AS A FACTOR STRENGTHENING COMPETITIVENESS



TAMÁS SCHANDA

State Secretary, Ministry for
Innovation and Technology
Hungary

The State Secretary highlighted that

“by demographically focused governing the Hungarian government, unlike its predecessors, decided to do its utmost socially, culturally and economically to leave our children the legacy of a country whose competitiveness is sustainable.”

The State Secretary pointed out four criteria that need to be explored in the context of demography and competitiveness: quantity, quality, community and will. As regards quantity, he emphasized that the additional budgetary funds resulting from a double-digit reduction in public debt and tax reform covered the incentives to have children, family support and to enhancing the welfare of families. Quality primarily means the promotion of employability, which comprises children’s education and socialization. In this context, he emphasized the public works scheme which led almost 150,000 people back to the primary labor market. Speaking about the criterion of community, he stated that the Hungarian government uses all means available to support and strengthen traditional family, religious and local civil society communities. The fourth and perhaps most important criterion is the common will based on our shared values and national and Christian identity. Since 2010, the coalition of Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People’s Party have won the support of a majority of the Hungarian voters three times, securing a solid basis for the societal turn indispensable for a competitive and successful country.



STÉPHANE BUFFETAUT

Member of the European Economic and Social Committee, Board Member of Thomas More Institute, France

Mr. Buffetaut explained that the demographic winter phenomenon impinged on the European continent: fertility rates are evidently and persistently below the level required for population replacement.

“The demographic winter negatively affects the dynamics of the economy, competitiveness, society, and everyday life,”

he added. In his contribution, he paid special attention to investment and savings issues; specifically, while younger generations basically need investment, should it be education, housing or transport infrastructure, these needs are less in an ageing society with a smaller proportion of young people, and this slows down the dynamics of the economy. He underlined that economic development had never been experienced in a society where demographic indicators were declining.

To conclude his presentation, he noted that the measures taken by the Hungarian government had a beneficial effect on birth rates, which gives cause for optimism.

“Eastern Europe and Central Europe have a lot to teach to Western Europe. Eastern Europe trusts itself and advocates for the culture of life, whereas Western Europe seems to have decided in favor of passing.”



TOUFIC BAAKLINI

President, In Defense of Christians (IDC), United States of America

Mr. Baaklini expounded on Lebanon and the Lebanese–Syrian relations. He accentuated that Lebanon is the last stronghold of the safety of Christians in the Middle East. Currently, 40% of the Lebanese population is Christian (compared to 80% a hundred year ago). In the wake of the crisis in Syria, in 2011 the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon soared. In the President’s opinion, Syria constitutes danger for Lebanon from three aspects: economically, politically, and in terms of security. He revealed that the number of Syrians who fled their home country boosted the workforce by 30%, many

of the Lebanese have lost their jobs; poverty and unemployment have been on the rise. Mr. Baaklini said that 87% of the Christians driven out of Syria would like to return to their country, and it is important that

“these people, including 95,000 Syrian babies born last year, could start a new life in Syria. This requires broad international efforts.”



SLOMO KÖVES

Executive Rabbi, Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation, Hungary

Rabbi Köves explained that according to data published by the World Bank declining fertility rates affect not just Europe but the whole world. Instead of an economic approach, in his presentation he focused on the spiritual side of starting a family. He said that

“man has a mission on Earth, and if we have a mission, a mission in our own personal lives, then it is well worth it to undertake all the transitional and occasional privation, humility and even economic hardships that giving birth to and raising children may involve.”



PROF. DR. JÓZSEF MÉSZÁROS

President, Hungarian State Treasury,
Hungary

In the President's opinion, it is illusory to think that inter-civilization migration will solve demographic problems. Speaking about the connection between demography and the pension and social security system, he said that over the past 15 years the official retirement

age has been pushed out by an average of four years in the new member states of the European Union, which is a drastic figure, but it helps to compensate for the demographic imbalance to some extent.

In this regard the President pointed out that due to an increasing investment into human capital people today are better trained and able to respond to the demands of the changing labor market more quickly; thus, training and qualification, investment into human capital and education can be seen as escape routes from the demographic ebb. He specifically mentioned that Western European societies including the so-called core countries of the European Union balance some of their demographic ebb by migration from the new member states. However, the countries of origin will be missing out on the social security contributions and taxes of people, mainly young persons, who migrate to work in Western European host countries. In conclusion, the President of the State Treasury said that

“every society has a duty to resolve the demographic issue, as migration will not be a permanent viable solution for the problem.”



DR. MARIE-THERES THIELL

Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Innogy Hungária Kft., Vice President, German-Hungarian Chamber of Commerce

In her presentation titled “Family-friendly business, family-friendly company”, Dr. Thiehl wanted to build bridges between demographic challenges and the economy. Addressing labor market aspects, she highlighted work-life balance as an increasingly important factor. It is imperative that this should create a win-win situation for both employers and employees.

She presented her own example to illustrate work-life balance: when her father fell ill in Germany, she worked in a senior position in Hungary, but with a substitute and the help of her company she managed to stay with her father and look after him as long as he needed her. She emphasized how this situation brought her family even closer. In her opinion, this showed “the importance of the policy measures a government takes to assist families.” As Vice

President of the Chamber, she outlined the agreement between the German–Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary; so far, forty companies joined the agreement.

The agreement is aimed at exchanging best practices and providing information on opportunities extended by the Hungarian government’s policies.

VIII. EXPERIENCES AND TASKS IN FAMILY POLICY

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

HAVING CHILDREN IS A MATTER OF VALUES

Low birth rates are a problem also in Central and Eastern European countries; therefore, the governments of Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic are taking different steps to encourage having children. Representatives of the four countries outlined their governments’ family support measures in the framework of a roundtable discussion at the third Budapest Demographic Summit.



From left to right: Lea Danilson-Järg, Ivica Bošnjak, Tünde Bartha, Gaila Matulyte, Tünde Fűrész

The moderator, *Tünde Fűrész, President of Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families* introduced the policy analyses and research the Institute deploys to promote Hungarian family policy making. She presented the family policy ranking based on the Institute's research findings showing that out of 45 countries the Central and Eastern European and the Baltic countries are among the best performers.

In Croatia, the amount of child allowance that can be applied for was doubled over the past three years, a family tax break was introduced, 5,000 young families were given help to acquire their first home, and 300 kindergartens were renovated, reported *Ivica Bošnjak, State Secretary in the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy*.

Women's employment rate has increased in Estonia in recent years, so women can afford to have children. A monthly allowance of 300

euros is allocated to families where a third child is born; it has proved to be greatly beneficial since its introduction in 2017. The Estonian school system is excellent; education is free up to university, emphasized *Lea Danilson-Jürg, Head of the Population and Family Policy Department in the Ministry of the Interior*.

In Lithuania, poverty is the biggest obstacle to having children, therefore the government grants pecuniary benefits, pre-school education and extra health care provisions to families with children, said *Gaila Matulyte, Advisor to the Minister of Social Security and Labour*.

The Czech Republic tries to promote having children with tax breaks, free school textbooks and a four-year maternity leave. Young people should be better involved in decision-making, as they would be more willing to have children if they saw a secure future for them, stressed *Tünde Bartha, Director of the Office of the Government*.

IX. BEYOND THE STATE (1.)



EMILIE KAO

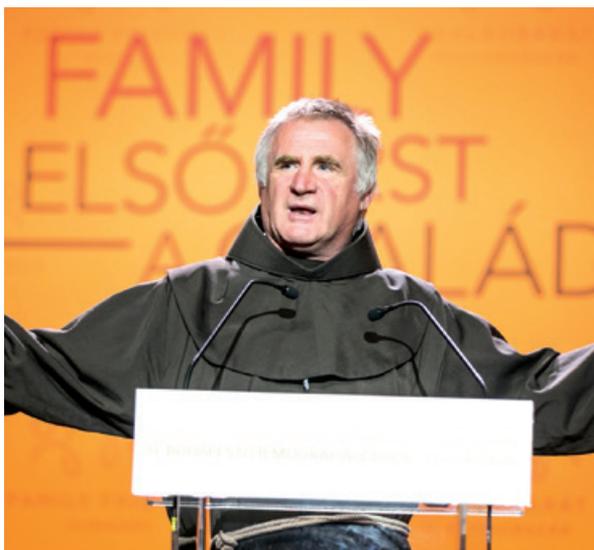
Director, DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society of The Heritage Foundation, United States of America

In her presentation, Director Kao quoted research conducted by Brookings Institution in the United States finding that those who started work after high school, married and had children have a 98% chance to avoid poverty; in other words, marriage is crucial for both adults and children. She specifically emphasized that single parenting is increasingly spreading in the United States and concerns a growing number of children: 40% of children are born out of wedlock. According to the Director, attacks against marriage have become frequent

in the United State. The turning point in the definition of marriage took place when advocates of same-sex marriage began to question the role of father and mother. They started flouting the view that same-sex parents were raising children in the same way as heterosexual parents. Ms. Kao underlined that they are not saying that same-sex couples cannot

be good parents, but they are of the opinion that children’s interests should be put ahead of adults’ interests. In conclusion, she drew attention to the fact that

“every child deserves both a mother and a father.”



CSABA BÖJTE

Franciscan friar, Founder of the Saint Francis Foundation of Deva, Transylvania

(...) I think the good Lord bestows ever new joys upon us as we grow and develop.

And wise is the man who is happy to receive the gift God has offered unto him. This is what I want to tell children, and also my colleagues, that we should venture to move on, to step forward. Adulthood, creative manhood is beautiful, let’s not go back to childhood. Now, that means we should dare to reach out for the joys of adulthood. We took in a teenage boy, brought him up; he grew up nicely, then he

got married. One night at 1 a.m. my phone rings. It’s him; he says, Brother Csaba, I’m a father! Well, great, I congratulated, then I went back to bed. In half an hour the phone rings again: I forgot to tell you, the baby is 3,200 grams. Well, I thought to myself, this could have waited until the morning, but wow, it’s great! I asked all the details: color of hair, and all, I thought I’d better get it all lest he should be on the phone time and time again. Needless to say, I couldn’t go back to sleep. I was tossing and turning in my bed and I was thinking, this is a kid I’ve known since he was a young boy. From the spotty youth he has grown up to be a man. Something changed. I don’t know what else could have induced him to call me twice in close succession in the middle of the night.

It is good to become a father. It is good to start a family. It is good to decide in favor of life.

(...) I have often been asked where I found the strength to look after 6,000 children. I always say, well, in the morning I’m so tired I don’t feel like doing anything. Then I walk out of the building and there’s a tiny little girl coming towards me, she looks at me and in her eyes I can read, my priest is the strongest and cleverest man in the world. He will fix everything; he is that smart. So, do I disappoint this little girl, do I leave her in the lurch? I’d better try to be the way she sees me, hadn’t I? I go and break through the wall because that child trusts me.

So I think we should undertake to have children not just to add to society's numbers, but because having children is a crucial part of human development, of our fulfilment. We must venture to decide. (...)

I wrote once, and it was published in different forums that a man who doesn't have a child becomes, in a way, incomplete, unfinished; a poor person who doesn't dare to choose life; how to put it – a sketch. Of course, I got a lot of flak for it, everybody was at me, how could I say something like that; yet I am convinced that

we were born to choose life along the way of the ministry of love.

And just like Mary, who gave life to Baby Jesus, or like Saint Joseph who was called upon the Heavenly Father to adopt that baby boy, and he said yes. By all means, our duty is to say yes to life. And it is also important to dare exhort each other along this road. It is good to be a mother, it is good to be a father, it is good to decide in favor of life. It is so wonderful to see a child grow and develop. (...) I know no money, prize, rank or whatever that would pour the same kind of warmth and joy in our hearts.

So, I am not saying that those who don't want to have children should be punished; rather I am saying, I would like to see each of my brethren to have the gift of fatherhood or motherhood, even in the same sense as Joseph was a father.



KATALIN KARDOSNÉ GYURKÓ

President, National Association of Large Families (NOE), Hungary

active family policy. In her view, results can be expected and society will become more family-friendly if the state and civil society organizations cooperate to make the most of all the opportunities inherent in the system.

The President specifically addressed opinions and groups that doubt the importance of the family, and contrast large families with other groups and values. In her opinion,

In her presentation, the President of NOE stressed that thanks to the government's firm steps, in recent years the decline of the total fertility rate conspicuous, since the 1980s was stopped and reversed. She stressed that NOE welcomed these government measures, as a conscious state policy is indispensable for an

“we cannot allow that large families should be set against other groups of society. We must stand up for our values in a national as well as international environment. Humanism is one of

the determining elements of European culture. Those who are opposed to parenthood, those who consider man or humanity something bad or harmful are opposed to the basic value of humanism.”

To conclude her speech, she said she considered it a fundamental right that the community of love between a man and a woman should engender as many children as they want, and they should not be limited in their intention.



LEONIDS MUCENIEKS

Chairman, Union of Latvian Large Families Associations, Latvia

He shared the message of the new Latvian President of the Republic, and expressed his hope that it would become reality:

“Strong families are our countries’ pride and strength. The larger families with long traditions, the stronger and more united our state.”

Concluding his presentation, he said that

“we must create a family-friendly and safe environment which will induce our children and other families to raise as many children as they want and prevent this demographic catastrophe.”

In his presentation, Chairman Mucenieks highlighted the fact that their Union’s relations with the Hungarian National Association of Large Families go back to 23 years. During that time, they acquainted Latvian politicians with the efforts and measures of their Hungarian counterparts. He said they had drawn the attention of the successive Latvian governments at many forums to the importance of support to families. As a result, in a declaration in 2016 the government undertook to improve demography, to enhance the quality of life of families, to promote having a second and even a third child and beyond, to develop comprehensive and targeted support packages to families raising children, and to start create a family-friendly Latvia.





MARIA REGINA MARONCELLI

President, European Large Families
Confederation (ELFAC)

In the opinion of ELFAC's President, the role of family associations is to be the voice of real people beyond states and figures. She pointed out that the family image of the recent past was quite negative: those who lived in large families

were poor, ignorant or had a low level of education – in other words, there was something wrong with them, they were not like “normal” people. She emphasized that in Germany 61% of the decline in birth rates is imputed to the fact that the number of large families is falling, and only 26% is contributed by the fact that the number of couples not having children is growing. In recent years, the perception of large families has improved, mainly thanks to family associations. Ms. Maroncelli thinks that

“large families play a crucial role in society as they build a strong network, a community with deep roots, not by election but by networking.”

Moreover, they convey many important personal, social and labor market values and skills, and can serve as examples for others to learn from, regarding how to live in a community, how to share, how to show solidarity, and how to multitask. In addition, large families have ecological values (for instance, hand-me-down clothes).

○ BEYOND THE STATE (2.)



BÉLA KATÓ

Bishop, Transylvanian Reformed Church
District, Transylvania

In his presentation, Bishop Kató sought an answer to the question of how to survive, to be precise, how to survive the crisis by which humankind is hit. In his opinion, this issue should be approached from a global as well as a local angle. The most important part of our

identity is what we were born with (language, place of birth, religion). They can be given up, renounced, but they cannot be made undone. It is our responsibility to preserve and pass on our culture and values. It is self-righteous to think that our shortcomings should be supplemented from where there is a surplus. It is not fair either, given that the most talented emigrate, which makes the countries of origin poorer. Moreover, neither assimilation nor parallel societies augur good in the host country.

“The only form to transmit life is to take sacrifices for it. Every life can only live on if someone sacrifices a bit of their lives so that we can survive,”

the Bishop added. Therefore, this is not something that can be bought – every people and every community must espouse it and pass it on. He expressed his wish that we can kindle this sacrifice in ourselves and in others too.



ANTOINE RENARD

President, Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)

culturally understood and accepted. Family associations can be the state’s partners in this in two respects. Firstly, every policy that does not rely on the family is doomed to failure; secondly, no matter what happens, the family will not disappear. This conviction stems from our Christian faith in Jesus.

In the view of the President of FAFCE, Europe experiences a demographic winter (one million divorces and one million abortions per year), one reason being the dissolution of the family. Mr. Renard said,

“European civilization can only be revived through the family.”

He emphasized that Hungary had understood this, and also that it should assume international responsibility in this process. The family, therefore, must be protected in every respect (marriage, raising children, family-focused economy, housing, job opportunities, and family time). This requires a family policy that is





RAUL SANCHEZ

Secretary General, European Large Families Confederation (ELFAC)

Secretary General Sanchez put the question whether it was us who decided we did not want any children or whether it happened because we were not in the position to have children. All research findings show that everybody wants a lot more children that they actually have. In his view,

“the social model we live in today forces us not to have children or to have fewer children, and rather later than sooner.”

The reasons include high housing costs, the disappearance of the family’s supportive role due to geographical distances, global competitors in the labor market, and discrimination against mothers on the labor market. This is exacerbated by the prevailing European Union policy whereby only individuals have rights, families do not. In this spirit policy measures are focused on the individual; families are non-existent for them.



SHARON SLATER

President, Family Watch International, United States of America

Sharon Slater first presented the rather worrisome international efforts in the sex education of children championed by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), as well as the UN and its specialized agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO). Their approach is that children have the right to sexual gratification as it is part of their welfare, happiness and balance. Therefore, they consider children’s education on various sexual practices and awareness of their sexual rights to

be important. Ms. Slater said these organizations stress the need to make a distinction between the values children consider important and those that their parents consider important.

Decriminalization of induced abortion is also part of the propaganda. As opposed to these

voices, Ms. Slater’s message is that there are nations and NGOs that have the courage to counter these trends and are strongly opposed to these UN designs.

Finally, she called on the audience to join them in the fight to protect children’s innocence and health.



DR. SHEA GARRISON
Vice President of Concerned Women for America, United States of America

The Vice President highlighted that family protection and the protection of the dignity of human life, including that of yet unborn children, is among the main issues addressed by CWA, an organization advocating for Christian and conservative values. Ms. Garrison spoke about how to achieve quality of sustainability for families. Her main message is that

“the individual skills and abilities that a woman contributes to sustaining a family should be taken into consideration, as they can also be utilized at the level of society.”

Governments and NGOs can provide for stronger and more sustainable families and communities by taking firmer steps to ensure that women are involved in every field of society in a real and meaningful fashion.



ANNA NAGY

President, Single Parents' Center Foundation,
Hungary

The President of Foundation pointed at research findings highlighting that at present almost one-third of European children are raised by single parents, and this rate will certainly reach one-third in the next generation. There are many reasons why a family becomes a single-parent

family. But all single-parent families have in common that

one parent shoulders double the responsibility, double the tasks, and gives double the attention and love to children.

Not only is it difficult for the parent; growing up in a single-parent family is also more difficult for the child. Opened in Budapest in 2018 and presented before the United Nations in the spring of 2019, Single Parents' Centre functions as a community place where parents have access to a wide range of support services (including, for instance, psychological support, legal assistance in crisis situations, clothes and food donations, job seekers' skills enhancement programs, and programs for children). In addition, community building is paramount, as parents often feel lonely and isolated. Anna Nagy concluded her speech by drawing attention to our personal responsibility. All of us have at least one, probably several single-parent families around us, and we should take note when they need help.



IMRE BEDŐ

President, Men's Club,
Hungary

We cannot strengthen families without strengthening men and women. In this context, Mr. Bedő drew attention to the role of men within the family. Men's problems must be addressed specifically, in their language, and we should reach out to them specially, and lead them back to their families, because today, for the most part, men are present at their workplaces; they are not there to take responsibility in the family or in society. Mr. Bedő is convinced that it is not women who should be exhorted to have children; rather, it is men who should be helped along their road to manhood so that they become stable and dependable partners giving mothers the emotional security they long for. The state's role in this process is to implement an economic policy that allows time for families. Educating to family life is not a state or school task; it is the task of the family, and it can never be undertaken by the state.

So the state should not take over the responsibilities of parents; instead, the state should grant time for parents to do their parenting.



PRO FAMILIIS AWARD CEREMONY



BENCE RÉTVÁRI

Deputy Minister, Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Human Capacities, Hungary

At the beginning of the award ceremony concluding the conference, Deputy Minister Rétvári stressed that the participants spoke many different languages and represented many different customs and traditions, yet they had one thing in common. They all agree that the family comes first, and parenthood is the key to the future. He continued to say that those who do not embrace this idea conduct a kind of human experiment on the social group in which

they have a leading role. We can clearly see a new trend, adopted mainly by liberal and left-wing thinkers, which in effect wants to dismantle the elements of identity. This trend could be rooted in the idea to promote eradicating differences in society, and eliminating everything that gives grounds to discrimination. This basic idea appeals to us, too (as this is the principle of creating equal opportunities). Only in some cases it becomes decidedly anti-human, wanting to eliminate every distinctive mark (man and woman, their nationality, their religion), wanting to make them insignificant, or making them appear negative or as something that is only good for discriminating against some people. He said, by contrast, that instead of aligning with the liberal and left-wing thought, they follow the conservative Christian democratic ideology and think that these elements of identity are naturally parts of human life.

Then he proceeded to extol the Pro Familiis Award laureates. Those who receive the Award today play an important role for the very reason that they show the Hungarian state is not alone in bravely standing up for family values. They receive the Award because of the way they live their lives and also because the message they convey is important for the strengthening of Hungarian families. He thanks for the work of the people who give priority to the cause of families in their everyday life, in whatever place fate or the good Lord put them.



ZSOLT SEMJÉN

Deputy Prime Minister for National Policy,
Church Affairs and Nationalities, Hungary

The Deputy Prime Minister stated that every nation is a one-off, unrepeatable value; if any nation were to disappear from history, universal mankind would be forever poorer. The meaning

and purpose of the Hungarian state is to make the Hungarian nation survive and to improve the quality of life of Hungarians.

State measures should be directed to promoting the development of families, so that having children should mean an improved quality of life for the family.

This stems from the fact that society is not seen as atomistic with people standing alone in the world, responsible only for themselves; society is regarded as a community of families, a community of communities. Therefore, when the Hungarian state supports the institution of marriage with symbolic and financial preferences it supports the idea that children should be born into families, and they should grow up to be working and taxpaying citizens, thereby sustaining the Hungarian nation. At the same time, mere pecuniary benefits are not enough in terms of family support; spiritual support, including supporting the dignity of the woman and motherhood and pro-life movements is equally crucial.



TWO DAYS IN PICTURES









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