



CALL TO ACTION

SAVE EVERY *newborn*



THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT GROWING EUROPE 2025

Shaping Europe's demographic future by
investing in families and every new life

NOVEMBER 17 – World Prematurity Day

CALL TO ACTION

DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS – A THREAT TO EUROPE'S AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Europe stands at a historic crossroads. The demographic crisis is no longer a distant concern – it is an **existential threat to Europe's and national security**, eroding the foundations of prosperity, stability, and collective resilience.

Falling birth rates, ageing populations, and depopulating regions are warning signs of a continent in decline, risking the loss of innovation, vitality, and its very future.

Each year, more than **400,000 babies are born preterm or sick**, while millions of families face growing strain from fragile health systems, economic uncertainty, and inadequate support.

Families of small and sick newborns often face lifelong challenges – medical, psychological, and social – that require targeted and continuous support beyond the neonatal period. This is not a social challenge – it is a **strategic emergency** that will determine whether Europe remains a thriving, secure, and human continent.

The future of Europe depends on our collective will to ensure that every child – born healthy, preterm, or sick – not only survives but thrives.

Let us give preterm babies a strong start for a brighter future – and build a stronger, growing Europe for all.

WHY ACTION IS URGENT

- **Fertility rates** in nearly all EU countries remain **below replacement level**, many under **1.5 children per woman**, far from the 2.1 needed for renewal.
- By **2050**, Europe's **working-age population** will shrink by **over 50 million**, threatening the economy, public services, and community vitality.
- **Preterm birth** remains the **leading cause of death in children under five**, even in high-income countries – a sign that advanced medicine alone cannot solve all inequalities.
- **Thousands of newborns**, especially in **underserved regions**, lack access to quality neonatal and maternal care, while their families are left without systemic support.
- Too often, **parents of small and sick newborns**

face fragmented care systems, psychological stress, and a lack of continuity when their children grow up and enter education or adult care. Addressing these gaps must be part of Europe's demographic response.

- **Families face growing barriers** to having children: housing and job insecurity, inadequate parental leave, loss of income during childcare periods, lack of childcare and reintegration support
- These are **not projections – they are today's reality**.
- Inaction will deepen inequality and accelerate demographic decline.
- The future of Europe depends on the ability to **protect, empower, and support every new life and every family**.

OUR VISION: A EUROPE WHERE EVERY BIRTH COUNTS

- We envision a Europe where every birth is **welcomed and supported** by a compassionate, prepared, and human-centered system. Where parenthood is not a social or economic risk, but a **dignified choice and an act of trust in the future.**
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- In this Europe:
- Every child receives the best possible start in life.
- Every family, including those with small and sick

newborns, receives continuous, coordinated support – medical, emotional, and social – from birth to adulthood.

- Families are empowered, supported, and protected.
- Communities – urban and rural – thrive through solidarity, fairness, and inclusion.

This is the Europe that understands: **every new life is not just hope — it is our shared responsibility.**

STRATEGIC PILLARS FOR A GROWING AND HEALTHY EUROPE

1. Strong Start for Every Child

A Europe where high-quality, family-centered neonatal care is a universal and consistent standard, ensuring equal beginnings for every newborn.

This includes early parental involvement in care, mental health support, and follow-up programmes that ensure every small and sick newborn and their family can thrive beyond the hospital.

2. Parenthood Without Barriers

A social and economic environment where raising children strengthens, not threatens, family security and equality.

Tailored social protection and inclusive childcare systems should respond to the unique needs of families with small and sick newborns.

3. Thriving Communities Everywhere

Balanced territorial and demographic development that guarantees fair access to essential services and opportunities for all generations.

Ensure that local services are equipped to

support families caring for children with ongoing health or developmental needs.

4. Inclusive Workforce Participation

An adaptable labour market that values care, enables lifelong learning, and integrates demographic sustainability into workforce planning.

5. Leadership and Accountability

A European framework where demographic and family policies are recognised as strategic priorities, guided by transparent measurement and shared responsibility.

6. Collective Action for Growth

A culture of cross-sector collaboration uniting government, healthcare, education, NGOs, academia, and business toward a common goal – a thriving, growing Europe.

Parents' and patient organisations representing small and sick newborns must be recognised as expert partners in designing and implementing these strategies.



WHAT WE CALL ON LEADERS TO DO

• **First Ladies and Gentlemen**

- Champion newborn health and family well-being at the highest level, inspiring shared responsibility and solidarity.
- Use your voice to make visible the stories of families of small and sick newborns – turning compassion into national action.
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• **European Institutions**

- Embed newborn and family well-being into the EU Strategic Agenda.
- Allocate EU funds for family-friendly innovation.
- Strengthen cross-border collaboration to share best practices and scale impact.
- Establish a European framework for family-centred neonatal and follow-up care, ensuring equality across member states.
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• **National and Regional Governments**

- Integrate maternal and newborn health into demographic strategies.
- Invest in neonatal infrastructure and regional maternity care.
- Ensure coordination across health, social security, and education ministries.

- Include long-term support for children born preterm or sick and their families in national health and social strategies.

Health Systems and Civil Society

- Strengthen neonatal teams and training.
- Involve parents and NGOs in planning and evaluation.
- Mobilize communities to create family-friendly environments.
- Guarantee psychological and social support for parents during hospitalisation and after discharge, acknowledging their role as essential caregivers.

Academia, R&D and Philanthropy

- Develop evidence-based solutions, monitor policy outcomes, and train professionals.
- Support family-oriented innovations and align corporate responsibility with early childhood investment.
- Promote interdisciplinary research on long-term outcomes of preterm and sick newborns and effective family support models.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE BEGINS AT BIRTH

Europe's future depends on how we protect and strengthen **life from its very first moments**.

Every baby is a reflection of our **values, responsibility, and hope**.

Let us ensure that every small and sick newborn – and every family behind them – is not left behind

but **supported for life**.

We call on leaders across Europe to act **boldly, wisely, and together** – so that **every child has a future, and every family has a reason to believe in it**.

SILKE MADER

Co-Founder and CEO
GFCNI

ASTA RADZEVIČIENĖ

Founder and President
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CALL TO ACTION PRESENTED BY:



NEIŠNEŠIOTUKAS
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