

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002124/24
to the Commission
Fredis Beleris (PPE)
(16 October 2024)**

Subject: Funding instruments needed to resolve the demographic crisis

In the conclusions adopted by the European Council in June 2023, the Commission was invited to present a toolbox to support Member States in addressing demographic challenges and their impact on Europe's competitive edge.

Its philosophy is based on supporting parents through better paid work, ensuring access to high-quality childcare services, access to the labour market and to affordable housing.

Unfortunately, without the required financial support, these targets cannot reverse the decline in Europe's population (since 2015, more deaths than births have been registered on our continent). The cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility must incorporate the demographic crisis into their priorities, with clear targeting, and must adopt policies based on long-term strategic planning.

We need to protect our European regions by boosting their infrastructure and incentivising business activity there.

In view of this:

1. Does the Commission intend to create a special funding strand targeted at the demographic problem?
2. Does it intend to use the above-mentioned resources to boost the European Regional Development Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Facility for initiatives linked to demographics?
3. Does it intend to implement specific de-urbanisation measures and at the same time to focus on regional development through the creation and modernisation of infrastructure?

Submitted: 16.10.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(10 January 2025)**

In response to Council conclusions of June 2023, the Commission adopted the communication 'Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action' ⁽¹⁾ to help Member States address demographic change.

It highlights the key EU investment instruments that already provide support, namely the Cohesion policy Funds and the Recovery and Resilient Facility.

In the political guidelines of the Commission for 2024-2029, the President of the Commission sets out the intention for a more focused, impactful and simpler budget.

Cohesion policy focuses on regional disparities, especially in least developed regions traditionally more exposed to emigration or underemployment.

Among other objectives, the investments aim to increase regional attractiveness, foster productivity and labour participation to offset, at least in part, the impact of shrinking labour forces. It also seeks to underpin reforms, steered by the European Semester.

Over the period 2021-2027, EUR 7.2 billion from the European Regional Development Fund will be invested in healthcare and long-term care, EUR 5.6 billion in education and training, and EUR 40.5 billion will support connectivity and access to well-functioning transport systems which are all important factors to foster territorial cohesion.

EUR 41 billion will be invested in territorial strategies fostering urban and rural linkages, new economic opportunities and access to essential services vital for people to work and live in all territories across the EU.

The European Social Fund Plus invests a total of EUR 142 billion in access to employment, long-term care and childcare services, education and skills.

⁽¹⁾ COM/2023/577 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A577%3AFIN>

The Commission also supports Member States in addressing demographic change through the Technical Support Instrument.
