

FAMILY 7 DECLARATION

FAMILY7 DEMANDS TO BUILD AN INTERGENERATIONAL, SOLIDARISTIC, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

F7 ITALY 2024

Together, we call on G7 leaders to build on their commitments to ensure intergenerational solidarity through the **following recommendations** for a sustainable society:

- 1) **Developing effective demographic and family policies to generate a demographic spring.** The world is in the midst of a demographic winter, resulting from an increasingly ageing society and a severe decline in birth rates;
- 2) **Drawing more attention on the difficult situation of working parents**, especially mothers, whose unpaid work for the common good is often overlooked;
- 3) **Implement reconciliation measures of work and family life**, including flexible work arrangements and parental leave schemes;
- 4) **Developing a family impact assessment (FIA)** in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluating of all legislative, political and strategic initiatives.
- 5) **Establishing a synchronised weekly day of rest.** Mothers and fathers need a balance between work and family life, for the sake of their children, themselves, and society at large. The **right to disconnect** must also be promoted, establishing a common day of rest.

I. EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

“Equality between women and men in the economy is a precondition for advances in other spheres, including public and political life. Accordingly, maternity and motherhood must be supported and protected within the workplace and must not be treated as though they were impediments for a woman's career. Equal treatment of men and women within the economy is essential to society”¹.

In line with the G7-leaders goal to “**work with global partners to advance gender equality**”, we call on G7-leaders to:

1. **End discrimination of women in the workplace;** defending and protecting motherhood, and equality between men and women in the workplace;
2. **Recognise that maternity and parenthood are essential and positive contributions to society.** Parenthood should not be treated negatively or in any way as an impediment to career progression by introducing legislation and policies on work–life balance measures, including flexible work arrangements (part-time work, teleworking, flexible hours) and attractive parental leave schemes;

¹ Council of Europe Resolution 2235 (2018) “Empowering women in the economy” (2018)

3. **Provide affordable and quality child care initiatives** for children of all age groups and encourage companies to do likewise and introduce incentives to childcare, such as tax deductions or vouchers for expenditure related to childcare.
4. **Support family businesses, where women play an important role**, allowing them to be competitive and to enhance the common good;
5. **Promote work-life balance, to enable couples to form a family and to provide a real free choice of raising children with career expectations**;
6. **Ensure that pregnant working women receive practical support during their pregnancies** to safeguard their health and well-being and that of their unborn children and that in no circumstances are pregnant working women put under pressure by their employers to terminate their pregnancies.²

II. UNPAID CARE WORK

Recognizing the value of the work of families and parents is imperative and should be integrated. This acknowledgment becomes even more crucial in light of its positive impact on the overall well-being of our communities. Families are private institutions with public relevance, as they contribute to the common goods. They are the first economic entity of the society, by working and creating wealth, saving, consuming and paying taxes. By incorporating the significance of unpaid care into policy considerations, we affirm the indispensable contribution of families to the broader societal framework. Stable families make the State and public institutions save public money, due to their activities in education, care, growing up children and solidarity. Indeed, families sustain all members of the family, regardless of their working circumstances, such as unemployed members, students, children, elderly and people with disabilities. This perspective emphasises that family care is not only a personal commitment but also a collective effort that deserves due recognition and support from public policies. **The recognition of the contribution of families not only means the protection of all, but also of the economic development of the society.**

Following the G7-leaders approach of “**recognizing and rewarding unpaid care work adequately**”³ we call on G7-leaders to:

1. **Extend maternity protection and work–family balance** to the domestic work sphere, including paid maternity and parental leave, adequate rest periods, time for breastfeeding, childcare facilities and freedom from maternity-based discrimination.
2. Consider recognising unremunerated household and caregiving work in the **pension system**;
3. **Recognise the value of the unpaid care work as a particular category of work** that grants:

² European Parliament Resolution on “Measures to prevent and combat mobbing and sexual harassment at the workplace, in public spaces, and in political life in the EU”(2019) ; Council of Europe Resolution 2167 (2017) , “The employment rights of domestic workers, especially women, in Europe”

³ Apulia-G7-Leaders, P. 33

- access to the labour market with time-flexible types of contracts;
 - the recognition of soft skills acquired during the exercise of care;
 - access to education, vocational learning and job retraining;
 - pension entitlements;
4. **Establish policies that compensate unpaid care services** of parents that take care of **family members or children with disabilities**, affirming the indispensable contribution of families to the broader societal and economic framework in the support for persons with disabilities.

III. DEMOGRAPHY

Demographic trends across Europe are worrisome: deaths outnumbered live births in many industrialised countries. **Increasingly ageing population and a severe decline in birth rates** are putting pressure on our financial balances and the future of our **welfare states**. The demographic challenges have a disastrous impact on the demographic imbalance on social and pension systems, labour market dynamism, economic sustainability and social cohesion. The world is in the midst of a demographic winter.

Furthermore, demographic challenges affect not only the economic and social policy, but also **the fundamental human rights and freedoms**, their deeper expectations and desires. The youth are delaying or even giving up the decision to form a family, due to financial and labour constraints, such as unstable employment, housing crisis or constraining work-life balance. People should be in a position to freely have the number of children they want: unfortunately, our youngest families in Europe are having fewer children than they wish to have.⁴

We need an international consciousness of the function of the family. We will advance this argument emphasising that the family is the essential pillar of our societies, and without recognising this role, even geopolitical stability and peace are in peril. In particular, the networks of families could have a pivotal function for peace keeping, as families are the natural place of reconciliation and forgiveness.

The above is clearer with regard to demographic challenges, which concern virtually every nation on the planet. In this regard, family organisations can provide an example, demonstrating the unavoidable protagonism of the family and family networks.

To this respect, the United Nations itself acknowledges that without children there is no future. In a 2023 report⁵ it is noted that, as fertility rates drop during demographic transition, “the shift in the age structure manifests initially as a swelling share of adults in the working

⁴ Demographic toolbox published by the European Commission in 2023

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https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2023_wsr-fullreport.pdf

and reproductive ages and falling proportions of children and youth”.⁶ For sustainable development, we need intergenerational balance.

The challenges posed by the demographic change underscore the importance of addressing the evolving needs of an ageing population and their family, many of whom may face disabilities associated with ageing. Comprehensive policies that consider these factors can contribute to creating more inclusive and age-friendly communities. On a larger scale, the care for dependent relatives is only possible if the children or their parents live close to them. With that regard, a special focus should be given to rural regions, where young people often move away in order to find better job opportunities.

According to the G7 aim to “**take a whole-of-society approach to address the demographic challenges faced by ageing societies**”⁷ and “to address the challenges of ageing societies”, we call on G7 leaders to:

1. **Establish family-based taxation systems** in order to prevent the unequal treatment of parents and carers;
2. **Promote adequate and fully paid access to maternity, paternity and parental leaves** for parents, regardless of effective time worked and defending full freedom to parents to decide on the division of the leave between the father and the mother.
3. **Legally recognise the right to disconnect and a work-free Sunday**, as fundamental freedom of each person;
4. Launch additional emergency measures for **large families and families with special needs**;
5. Recognise the important role that families and family associations play in **combating loneliness** of our youth and our elderly, but also of the “sandwich generation”.

IV. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Short-term thinking is destroying values in our economy and is undermining efforts to implement sustainable development policies. Families have always fostered a more long-term perspective, to think in terms of generations and to look beyond one’s own life horizon. Family-owned businesses are well known for planning for long-term business sustainability. This has in turn proven to coincide with higher economic performance. On the other hand, there exists evidence that family troubles and breakdowns predict higher risk taking and the postponement of childbearing. Stronger families will help the current and next generations to prepare for a more sustainable future.

⁶ <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/launch-world-social-report-2023%23%23%20text%3DThe%2520World%2520Social%2520Report%25202023%252C%2520published%2520by%2520the%2520UN%2520Department,renew%2520commitments%2520to%2520achieving%2520the&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1726239454960648&usg=AOvVaw0eHHOOO2bXQyen8UoPABlt>

⁷ Apulia-G7-Leaders, P. 33

To support families is not a cost but a sustainable investment, because it is the best way to guarantee a future.

To be fully sustainable we have to take an approach to the different needs of the generations, as there is no sustainable development without intergenerational balance.

Therefore, we call on G7 leaders to:

1. **Design a labour market and an economic model that adapts to the reality of families.** It is not up to the families to be shaped around the labour market. Families are the basis of society, and recognising their role has positive economic and social externalities;
2. **Establish family policies that help younger generations to balance their family aspirations and their work life.** For instance, rebalancing the burden of care between parents with **flexible work patterns**, adequate leave rights, in particular paternity leave and leave of carers and non-transferable well compensated parental leave. Flexible working arrangements can help align working time with family responsibilities, including with part-time work balanced;
3. **Address current challenges of young women**, particularly difficulties to form a family and have children (housing, unemployment, time, purchasing power).

V. SOCIAL INCLUSION

Society is the combination of interpersonal relationships and community participation. The social inclusion of people with disabilities, suffering from deficiencies or in need of support is first and foremost supported by their families. Stronger families reinforce multigenerational bonds which are increasingly being called upon to provide some essential family functions. The family is the place of social inclusion and integration, because it is the family that protects the dignity and the life of every human person, particularly of the most vulnerable, regardless of his or her mental, physical or intellectual disability.

Families are amongst the main factors of inclusion of persons with disabilities within society and policies recognizing this role should be strengthened. **We would like to stress the importance of families in fostering integral human development and promoting the dignity of each person in societies and communities alike, especially when it comes to children and adults with disabilities.**

Within Europe, approximately 15% of women and 10% of men engage in informal care for older persons and/or individuals with disabilities several days a week or on a daily basis. Remarkably, 42% of women and 56% of men involved in informal care are also part of the workforce.”⁸ **The role families play in caring for their dependent relatives is pivotal.** The unpaid care they provide is not only work but constitutes a mutually beneficial endeavour for

⁸ [EU | Informal caring for older persons and persons with disabilities and long-term care services | Work-life balance | Thematic Focus | Gender Equality Index](#)

our communities. This unpaid labour is carried out with a commitment to delivering high-quality care, creating a positive externality for the economy and society as a whole.

In line with the G-7 aim to “**to make our communities stronger and more cohesive**” and in their commitment of “**further integrate disability rights**”, we call to the G7-leaders to:

1. **Strengthen family policies in order to achieve solid advancement of inclusion of persons with disabilities, and non-discrimination**, particularly fostering work-life balance for parents and carers of children with disabilities, strengthening maternity and paternity policies for parents of children with disabilities and enhancing real policies to support parents that accompany and support their adult children with disabilities;
2. **Recognise the irreplaceable and primary role of parents as educators and supporters**, enhancing education of children with disabilities, and accompanying their children with disabilities also when they are adults, acknowledging that the main promoters of social inclusion of persons with disabilities are their parents;
3. **Include families and parents among the list of stakeholders that are economically and socially affected by the implementation of integration of disability rights**, noting that it would bring savings on their expenditure on public services and pointing out that it will increase not only welfare of the persons with disabilities but of all the family, especially the parents that take care of their child, giving them the possibility to enjoy together access to transport and leisure services.

