

DEMOGRAPHY IN THE NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2024-2029)

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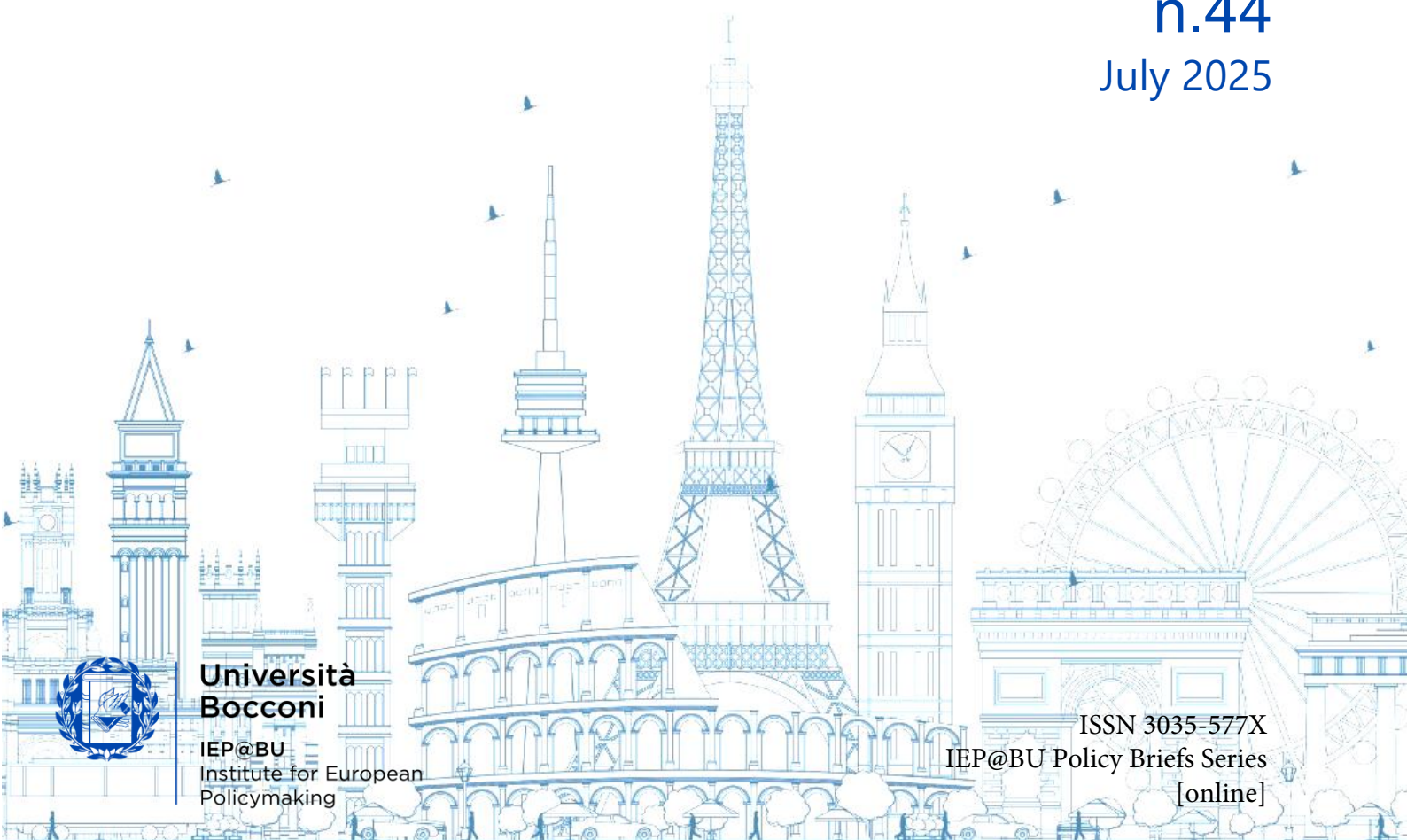


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1. Introduction¹

Is the EU ready for a fragmented world? When asked this question², Enrico Letta, author of the 2024 report on the EU single market, gave a resounding "no." His perspective aligns with the conclusions of Mario Draghi's 2024 report on the future of European competitiveness: without radical reforms, Europe will face decline and may even lose its core purpose. This message was clearly taken to heart by Ursula von der Leyen when she introduced the new EU Commission on September 17th 2024. The mission letters to the new commissioners were unequivocal: focus on defence, the green transition, and improving Europe's competitiveness.

At first glance, demography seems to feature less prominently in this Commission's agenda when compared to the previous one. This might appear paradoxical, given that demography concerns people, and there is no doubt that the human capital of Europe's population is crucial to its competitiveness. Meanwhile, Europe is grappling with an ageing population, driven by increased life expectancy and persistently low fertility rates, a trend that has lasted for decades. The 2024 Ageing Report indicated that Europe's dependency ratio will rise, meaning that unless people work longer, future pension benefits will have to be reduced. Effectively managing the ageing process is a cornerstone of making Europe more resilient and competitive. One potential solution is through migration, though this remains politically contentious.

However, upon closer examination, demographic considerations do play a role in the new Commission's portfolios. As demography intersects with economic competitiveness, human capital, health, and migration, it acts as a common thread, woven into a broader web of related policy priorities. The challenges brought on by Europe's population dynamics, from pension sustainability to healthcare expenditure, will require a corresponding multi-sector approach. In this setting, effective action is unlikely to be brought about by an individual Commissioner with unique jurisdiction over the subject. The coordinated work of many Commissioners in their expert areas is much more valuable.

In this report, we systemize and clarify the role of demography in the new European Commission. We do so by assessing the presence of demographic challenges in the Mission Letters of Commissioners, which detail their mandates, as designated by President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and draw links to the relevant DGs as well as the related EU Agencies.

¹ This paper was written with the assistance of Niccolò Baldesi, Guido Bambozzi, Andrea Bigagli and Alice Cortesi.

² Institute for [European Policy Making](https://iep.unibocconi.eu/eu-fit-fragmented-world-iepbu-annual-event?_gl=1*10m64q5*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTE2NjA2MjczMj4xNzI4MDM3ODA1*_ga_YD6KN3P4TH*MTcyODAzNzgWNS4xLjAuMTcyODAzNzgWNS4wLjAuMA) annual event, 14th October 2024. https://iep.unibocconi.eu/eu-fit-fragmented-world-iepbu-annual-event?_gl=1*10m64q5*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTE2NjA2MjczMj4xNzI4MDM3ODA1*_ga_YD6KN3P4TH*MTcyODAzNzgWNS4xLjAuMTcyODAzNzgWNS4wLjAuMA



2. Demography in European Policymaking

2.1 Europe's Demographic Challenges

The European Union has reached a demographic crossroad. Once characterized by healthy fertility rates and a large working-age population, the Union now faces three pressing trends that will define its future:

1. **Birth rates are low:** the EU's fertility rate is far below the replacement level necessary to maintain a stable population size. The population is shrinking.
2. **Life expectancy is soaring:** Europeans are living longer than ever. In sum, given the characteristic low birth rates, the population is aging more rapidly.
3. **The working-age population is declining:** There are less workers to sustain a larger share of the population which is elderly and out of the workforce. The young generations bear an increasingly heavy burden.

Birth rates across Europe are steadily declining, as shaped by changing social norms and behaviours. Couples are postponing childbearing (De Santis and Livi Bacci, 2001), and voluntary childlessness is on the rise (Tanturri and Mencarini, 2008). In 2022, the EU's total fertility rate was 1.46 (Eurostat, 2024), far below the replacement level of 2.1. As a result, the population is forecasted to peak at 453 million in 2026, before declining to 442 million by 2070 (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2024a).

While fertility declines, life expectancy at birth continues to rise. Over the last 50 years, Europeans have gained an additional 10 years of life, with projections showing further increases with life expectancies of 86.1 years for men and 90.4 years for women by 2070 (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2024a). The striking increase in longevity creates a **demographic imbalance**: the median age in the EU will rise from 44.5 years in 2023 to 50.2 years in 2100, by which one in three Europeans will be aged 65 or older (Eurostat, 2024c).

As the working-age population shrinks, the old-age dependency ratio is set to rise. The ratio weights the share of the elderly population, accounting for all individuals above 65 years of age, against the working age population, generally considered to be made up of those individuals aged between 20 and 64 years (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2024b). The former is assumed to be economically dependent either directly or indirectly on the latter, which is presumed to be economically active. According to the 2024 Ageing Report, in 2022, there were roughly 3 people of working age for every person aged 65 or older. By 2045, that figure will fall to just 2. This demographic shift puts unprecedented pressure on Europe's welfare systems, labour markets, and the young generations.

2.2 Healthcare and pensions

As the population ages, the increasing demand for medical goods and services drives up **healthcare costs** in the EU. Older individuals often develop multiple chronic conditions, which are costly to treat. Around 60% of EU citizens aged 65 and above live with at least one chronic condition, while 40% have two or more (OECD, 2024). As the share of individuals aged 65 and over is expected to grow from 21% to nearly 30% by 2050 (OECD, 2024), the strain on healthcare systems will intensify. But of course, public healthcare in many EU countries is primarily funded through social security contributions from the working population. However, the share of workers is shrinking compared to that of the elderly in the population. Indeed, as the old-age dependency ratio grows – it is projected to rise from 36% in 2022 to 59% by 2070 (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2024a) – there will be fewer contributors relative to beneficiaries. This shift in the population generates a **funding gap** of EU healthcare systems.



Aging also increases demand for long-term care services, often provided in tandem with those of nursing care, rehabilitation, and palliative care. According to the 2024 Ageing Report, in EU countries public spending on long-term care has risen from 1.2% of GDP in 2014 to 1.4% in 2021, while private expenditure has remained stable. Meeting the growing demand for long-term care workers will require improved wages, better working conditions, and enhanced social recognition. Additionally, social services and housing policies must adapt to support independent living and create age-friendly environments.

Sustainability of the **pension systems** represent the other key policy challenge. By 2070, public pension spending is projected to increase in 16 out of 27 Member States, while EU-wide spending will rise by 0.4 percentage points of GDP (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2024a). This trend is driven primarily by old-age and early pension schemes. In pay-as-you-go (PAYG) systems, a shrinking labour force means there will be fewer contributors supporting an increasing number of retirees. Fully funded systems also face challenges, as smaller workforce is often associated with reduced economic productivity and slower growth, being there fewer workers available to contribute to economic activity. Without reforms, these systems risk collapse.

2.3 Possible Solutions: More Participation or More Migration?

As the proportion of elderly individuals grows, the fiscal burden placed on future generations intensifies. Social programs, such as healthcare and pensions, face rising costs, while the working-age population is shrinking and struggles to support these expenditures. Strengthening the labour force is essential to address these challenges. Two key strategies stand out: increasing labour-force participation and leveraging migration.

2.3.1 Increasing participation in the labour force

A crucial step is understanding how demographic trends translate into economic dependency. The age-dependency ratio (ADR), which measures the ratio of children and elderly to the working-age population, is projected to rise by 62% in Europe by 2060 (Marois et al., 2020). However, this metric overlooks critical factors such as labour-force participation, longevity, and education levels. To provide a more accurate assessment, alternative indicators have been developed:

Table 1: Multiple Indicators measuring dependency ratios in the EU

Ratio	Definition	Key Features	Projection Trends
Age-Dependency Ratio (ADR)	Ratio of children (0–14) and elderly (65+) to the working-age population (15–64).	Ignores labour-force participation and education levels, treating all 15–64 as equally productive.	Increase of 62% by 2060 (*).
Labor-Force Dependency Ratio (LFDR)	Ratio of economically inactive people to active workers, regardless of age.	Accounts for real labour-force participation, highlighting trends like older worker retention and women's roles.	Increase of 20% by 2060 (*).
Productivity-Weighted LFDR (PWLFDR)	Considers productivity differences based on education (low = 0.62, medium = 1.0, high = 1.66).	Reflects economic contributions better by accounting for education-related productivity variations.	Modest increase of 10% by 2060 (*).

As shown in Table 1, the ADR grows substantially more than the other indicators. The Labour-Force Dependency Ratio (LFDR) and the Productivity-Weighted LFDR (PWLFDR) incorporate rising



participation rates among women and older workers, as well as the impact of education and productivity. These measures offer a more optimistic outlook than the ADR alone.

2.3.2 The Role of Migration

Between 2014 and 2019, immigration of foreign-born individuals was the main driver of population growth in most European countries (Bagavos, 2022). Already in 2000, the UN Report on Replacement Migration identified immigration as a critical tool to address the challenges of aging populations and below-replacement fertility rates. Migrants, who are typically younger and often have higher fertility rates than native populations, contribute to a more balanced age distribution and can effectively reduce dependency ratios (Harper, 2016; Simon et al., 2012). By filling gaps in labour markets, particularly in sectors experiencing shortages due to aging native workforces, migrants also help alleviate economic pressures on social security systems and public health services (Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2016).

Despite its advantages, migration alone cannot fully offset aging trends: the scale of migration required would be unrealistically large. Migration can be a valuable tool for mitigating population aging and increasing dependency ratios, but it must be integrated into a broader demographic strategy in order to achieve perceivable change.

Overall, projections of the EU dependency burden highlight the need for targeted policies in:

- **Immigration:** Promoting integration of skilled immigrant workers.
- **Education and Labour Force Participation:** Investing in human capital to improve workforce productivity of the future generations, as well as, enhancing participation among women and older workers.

2.4 Europe's Demographic Future: Youth

Europe faces "ageing from the bottom": as people live longer and fewer children are born, younger cohorts shrink in proportion to the elderly. This demographic shift is not just a statistical trend but a **structural change**. For the very first time in human history, the young generation will be (relatively speaking) the smallest generation ever (Goodhart, 2020). At the same time, youth of today will have to shoulder the retirement of the baby boomers. We are entering uncharted territory: whereas the generational shift (i.e. new young cohorts entering adult life) was always viewed as a powerful source of societal regeneration through ushering on modernity, social innovation and further economic progress (Ryder, 1965), it is no longer obvious that the minority generation of youth will provide the same source of renewal.

The decline in Europe's youth population is ongoing. Over the past 20 years, the share of children and young adolescents under 15-years-old has dropped from 16.4% to 14.9% of the EU population (Eurostat, 2024a). This decline is widespread and involves all European countries, with the exception of Czechia, Estonia, and Slovenia. Although national differences persist: Ireland maintains the highest share of young people under 15 in the EU (19.3%), while Italy records the lowest (12.4%). Over the same period, the proportion of young people aged 0-19 years has also declined from 22.6% to 20.1% (Eurostat, 2024a).

One of the most pressing concerns for young Europeans is the high NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate among people aged 15 to 29-year-olds. The EU aims to reduce this figure to less than 9% by 2030, yet in 2023, it stood at 11.2% (Eurostat, 2024d). The rate varies by age group: it is relatively low at 5.3% for 15–19-year-olds but rises to 15.1% among 25–29-year-olds, reflecting the increasing difficulty of transitioning into stable employment (Eurostat, 2024d). Lower educational attainment strongly correlates with a higher NEET rate: 12.9% of low-educated youth are NEETs, compared to 11.6% with medium and 7.8% with high education levels (Eurostat,



2024d). This indicates a **waste of human capital**—a critical issue when younger generations are expected to sustain ageing societies. Additionally, a gender **gap persists**: young women face a higher NEET rate (12.5%) than young men (10.1%), further highlighting inequalities in access to education and employment opportunities.

3. Demography in the new EU Commission

This section systematically reviews the new Commissioners' Mission Letters and identifies how demographic issues align with their key objectives. **Demography is not an isolated issue**: it intersects with labour markets, migration, sustainability, and generational equity.

3.1 How the European Commission Deals with Demography

The European Commission plays a key role veering European policymaking. Until recently, no Commissioner was explicitly tasked with leading demographic policy. That was until the last Commission (2019-2024) appointed **Vice President Dubravka Šuica for Demography and Democracy** and signalled the growing relevance of demographic shifts at the EU level.

However, in the **Commission 2024–2029**, this position has been discontinued. Šuica, now Commissioner for the Mediterranean, retains oversight of demography and the implementation of the “Demography Toolbox”, but demographic issues more generally appears scattered around other commissioners' portfolios. Similarly, there is no DG exclusively responsible for demography. Instead, demographic policy is dispersed across multiple departments.

In many respects, this is appropriate: demographic change operates through multiple channels. Responding to demographic challenges must mimic the same complex patterns. In this sense, the **Von der Leyen Commission II** promotes collaborative action, as opposed to isolating demographic policy in one single Commissioner's portfolio, a shift that may have strong potential benefits. This multi-channel approach encourages synergies between different Commissioners and across policy areas – ultimately fostering cooperation to achieve shared goals. If successful, it transforms demographic change from a crisis into an opportunity to foster a fairer and more resilient Europe.

While interdepartmental cooperation maximizes synergies, it also introduces risks. If cooperation falters, the division of responsibilities among multiple Commissioners and Directorates-General may cause gridlock or inefficiencies. To prevent such an outcome, it is necessary to establish a central mechanism or a **nexus for demographic action**. Here next to commissioner Šuica, Commissioner Micallef's role becomes crucial. As Commissioner-designate for **Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport**, his mandate emphasizes intergenerational fairness and youth empowerment. It places him at the centre of efforts to balance the interests of both current and future generations. His portfolio offers a strategic opportunity to ensure that demographic action – or inaction – does not unfairly burden societies and communities across Europe.

As Europe's youth are at the heart of the Union's human capital and competitiveness, Micallef can lay the groundwork for a European Union where the priorities of both young and elderly are balanced. Additionally, action that places emphasis on youth involvement, through initiatives like the **Youth Policy Dialogues** and the President's **Youth Advisory Board**, ensures that young people have a voice in shaping the policies that will impact their futures.

While Micallef's mandate focuses on youth and future generations, it must also be grounded in the broader EU agenda on demographic action. Traditionally, demographic policies have focused on three core areas: ageing and health, migration, and family planning. However, only the first two (**ageing and health; migration**) are addressed at the European level and present in the Commissioners' mandates. When considering how population structures and demographic policies have the power to directly affect employment, especially in the long term, an additional area of action emerges: the **labour market**. Lastly, **sustainability** should be integrated in this assessment, given



its pervasiveness and its impacts on demography and public welfare (e.g., through environmental changes, resource allocation, and urban development).

A comprehensive approach to demographic policy should account for these interconnected challenges. Micallef's portfolio could act as a coordination hub, aligning demographic policy with broader EU objectives and EC missions. In what follows we establish the basis for this approach and outline how the four demographic areas of action intersect the missions of the new Commissioners. For a more detailed analysis of how the DGs and Agencies come into play in this proposed plan, please refer to Appendix A, which provides a 'roadmap' linking DGs' and Agencies' mandates to demographic issues at the EU level.

3.2 The Role of Demography in the Mission Letters of the EU Commissioners: [Ageing and Health](#)

The pattern of population ageing is unquestionably among the demographic trends that will most define countries across the European Union in the coming decades. The main areas of impact are therefore analysed, identifying current trends and future challenges to be addressed by relevant commissioners through specific coordinated policies.

Pension systems sustainability

With declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancies, a disproportionate increase in the number of pensioners is foreseeable in the upcoming future. Pension spending is projected to rise over the next 50 years, with fewer workers supporting an increasing number of retirees for extended periods (European Commission, 2024). This will place significant pressure on the sustainability of pension systems.

This challenge falls partly under the purview of **Maria Luís Albuquerque**, Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union. Her mandate includes:

- exploring ways to enhance the role of private and occupational pensions:
- help EU citizens secure retirement income:
- channel citizens' savings into the broader economy.

Social protection

As Europe's population ages, addressing social protection will also require meeting the expanding healthcare and long-term care needs of individuals aged 65 and over, who already are the age group which places the highest demands on healthcare systems (OECD, 2016). Investing in healthy longevity has therefore become essential, not only to enhance quality of life for older citizens, but also to alleviate the pressure on healthcare infrastructure as life expectancy rises.

To this end, **Dubravka Šuica**, Commissioner for the Mediterranean, has been assigned the task of assessing how demographic shifts impact the sustainability and adequacy of social protection systems across Member States. **Olivér Várhelyi**, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, is responsible for advancing preventive health measures and disease prevention across the life course, therefore supporting a sustainable healthcare system equipped for an aging, longer-living population.

Quality of life

In a context of profound demographic change, the management of European budget will play a critical role in determining the quality of life and general wellbeing of EU citizens. There are many difficulties that must be faced in the short term, and which could hinder the effective utilization of



economic resources. In this regard, **Piotr Serafin**, Commissioner-designate for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration, allocating the budget, will need to keep in mind the current demographic struggles:

- increased public spending on pensions and health care due to an ageing population;
- possible rise in the tax burden due to a shrinking working-age population;
- investment to support immigration and social integration.

The quality of life is also affected by the difficulty in finding affordable housing. Vulnerable groups, particularly the elderly and low-income families, are disproportionately affected by energy poverty and the housing crisis (UNECE, 2024), highlighting the need for age- and income-sensitive policies. These issues will be addressed by:

- The Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, **Teresa Ribera Rodríguez**, whose objective is to provide adequate housing support to stabilize communities and make urban areas more liveable and sustainable.
- The Commissioner-designate for Energy and Housing, **Dan Jørgensen**, who is responsible for:
 - increasing availability of housing units and optimizing energy consumption;
 - creating plans for a fair and efficient distribution of housing;
 - providing a more adaptable living environment to the elderly population.
- The Commissioner-designate for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law, **Micheal Mcgrath**, who is in charge of promoting: territorial equality; access to rights; intergenerational justice; and the reduction of discrimination.

3.3 The Role of Demography in the Mission Letters of the EU Commissioners: [Migration](#)

Migration is increasingly viewed as an important remedy to Europe's shrinking workforce, helping to fill labour shortages in hard-hit economic sectors and sustain economic productivity. For this approach to be effective, coordination is required in the management of both border security and legal migration, as emphasised in several Commissioners' missions.



Commissioner	Key Initiatives	Key Outcomes
Kaja Kallas <i>High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stabilizing international relations in key regions, which can determine migration flows. - Linking internal and external EU policies (from climate and energy to digital and food security). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easing the pressure on EU borders. - Creating regulated migration pathways. - Addressing migration root causes, such as economic instability and resource scarcity
Henna Virkkunen <i>Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening external border management. - Ensuring fair and firm migration policies. - Partnering with Magnus Brunner on the Pact on Migration and Asylum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving external border security. - Ensuring ethical and effective migration management.
Magnus Brunner <i>Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting legal migration strategies to fill labour market gaps. - Drafting the 5-year European Asylum and Migration Management System. - Partnering with Henna Virkkunen on the Pact on Migration and Asylum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting skilled migrants to meet the economic demand. - Integrating migration policies with labour needs.
Dubravka Šuica <i>Commissioner for Mediterranean.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing the New Pact for the Mediterranean to establish partnerships with neighbours and foster economic stability, job creation, and migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building partnerships with neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean area on Shared priorities.
Marta Kos <i>Commissioner for Enlargement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing demographic aspects of EU expansion and Ukraine's reconstruction. - Supporting workforce mobility and reintegration of displaced people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aligning candidate countries' policies with EU standards. - Rebuilding displaced communities and labour forces.

3.4 The Role of Demography in the Mission Letters of the EU Commissioners: [Labour Market](#)

The European Union's ability to sustain and enhance its economic performance and effectively utilise its human capital is critical for future competitiveness. The 2024 Letta Report highlights a sharp decline in the EU's share of the global economy over the past 30 years, largely due to the rise of Asian economies. **Demographic shifts also play a role in this trend.** To address this, the labour market must adapt to the changing age composition of the workforce. With an increasingly older population, it is crucial to boost participation among women, young workers, and migrants to foster economic growth.



Labour force participation

The two most prominent figures designated within the European Commission to improve labour force participation are:

- **Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, tasked with creating a more cohesive framework to address workforce challenges, including facilitating the recognition of skills and qualifications, supporting reskilling and career progression.
- **Dubravka Šuica**, Commissioner for Mediterranean, responsible for increasing labour market participation among women, young people, and other underrepresented groups, recognizing their role in counterbalancing demographic changes.

Their efforts are supported by the action of:

- **Jozef Síkela**, Commissioner for International Partnerships, whose priorities include promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in development policies, addressing the need for greater integration of women in the workforce.
- **Hadja Lahbib**, Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management, committed to a "Union of Equality", and mandated to create a Women's Rights Roadmap for International Women's Day 2025 which will support a new Gender Equality Strategy.

The integration of migration is another critical aspect of this effort:

- **Magnus Brunner**, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, has been assigned the development of a comprehensive strategy to integrate refugees into communities and the labour market.
- **Stéphane Séjourné**, Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy, is tasked with facilitating work and economic migration. Specifically, he will focus on strengthening the Single Digital Gateway as a one-stop-shop for anyone seeking to work, study, or do business in another EU country, positioning his contributions at the intersection of labour market access and migration policy.

Young workforce and education

Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, plays a pivotal role in tackling **brain drain** and addressing **the right to stay**. To address these pressing demographic challenges, his mission is clear: create opportunities for young people within their home regions and ensure that they can build futures without feeling compelled to migrate. To achieve this, Fitto is focused on:

- implementing a place-based approach that tailors solutions to regional needs
- boosting local economies by enhancing job opportunities, improving infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and strengthening public services

simplifying and modernizing cohesion policy by reducing administrative burdens while maintaining transparency and accountability. Closely aligned to these efforts, **Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, is focused on empowering Europe's youth and enhancing their participation in the workforce. Her priorities include:

- strengthening Europe's human capital;
- push forward the European Education Area initiative to drive a common approach to skills development, learning mobility, quality and inclusiveness.



In her mission, she is assisted by **Glenn Micallef**, Commissioner-designate for Intergenerational Equity, Youth, Culture and Sport, tasked with:

- preparing a Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness to ensure that today's decisions will not harm future generations;
- strengthening communication between generations, also through the implementation of the youth check, an initiative by which young people can help shape Europe's future.

Migration and the workforce

Boosting productivity to counteract demographic decline requires not only increasing the participation among existing workers, but also effectively welcoming new talents through migration. In this regard, the effort of **Magnus Brunner**, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, is of key importance. He will produce a comprehensive strategy for the integration of refugees into both communities and the labour market, while preventing the exploitation of workers in Europe with an irregular status.

As highlighted in this chapter, competitiveness must take demographic policy into account. In this context, demographic challenges can be transformed into opportunities for sustainable growth and social cohesion.

3.5 The Role of Demography in the Mission Letters of the EU Commissioners: [Sustainability](#)

At present, climate change is putting significant strain on Europe's territory, and it is impacting cities, rural areas, and coastal regions. This phenomenon is expected to hamper industrial, agricultural, and maritime systems, undermining the competitiveness of the European market and posing serious consequences for citizens' health. Additionally, atmospheric phenomena and environmental crises are making certain regions of the world less hospitable, displacing populations, and affecting migration flows in the future.

For these reasons, one of the European Commission's urgent priorities is to enhance the resilience and adaptability of member states. This is necessary to safeguard citizens, workers, and economic competitiveness. The Green Transition is key to these efforts, as highlighted in the 2024 Letta Report. The Green Transition promotes climate-neutral innovations, the implementation of the circular economy, and the decarbonization of industrial sectors to make Europe more climate resilient.

The table below outlines the names and responsibilities of Commissioners dealing with sustainability-related issues:



Commissioner	Key Initiatives	Key Outcomes
Jessika Roswall <i>Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience, and Competitive Circular Economy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing climate plans and deals. - contributing to the new Climate Adaptation Plan and the Vision for Agriculture and Food. - jointly leading on a Circular Economy Act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening Climate Diplomacy (the use of foreign policy tools to promote sustainable development and tackle climate change globally). - Ensuring alignment with European Green Deal goals. - Progressing towards climate resilient Member States.
Wopke Hoekstra <i>Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero, and Clean Growth</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing the European Green Deal. - promoting investment in green technologies and sustainable energy - strengthening the EU's global leadership in climate governance and partnerships under the Paris Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions across key sectors. - securing increased financial support for green initiatives - developing adaptation strategies to climate impacts.
Christophe Hansen <i>Commissioner for Agriculture and Food</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contributing to the new Climate Adaptation Plan and the European Water Resilience Strategy - preparing a "Vision for Agriculture and Food". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening sustainability, competitiveness and resilience in agriculture. - Improving resilience and food security in rural areas.
Raffaele Fitto <i>Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - designing a cohesion and growth policy - contributing to the new Climate Adaptation Plan, European Water Resilience Strategy and affordable housing initiatives. - implementing the NextGenerationEU recovery package. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of EU cities.



4. Policy actions

The report has outlined the multi-dimensional aspects of demography and the way those weave into the rather complex governance structure of the European Commission. We have provided a possible framework for collaboration among the various EC entities (Commissioners, DGs, and agencies), aligned with their respective missions. In terms of policy actions related to demography, the portfolio of Commissioner **Micallef** represents an obvious **nexus**. Given that demographic issues cut across multiple policy areas, the development of a structured network with key Commissioners whose mandates intersect with ageing, migration, the labour market, and sustainability is paramount. We summarize here the Commission's key policy actions.

4.1 Ageing, Health, and Fiscal Responsibility

A first priority is tackling the consequences of Europe's ageing population, ensuring that rising social costs do not fall disproportionately on younger generations. **Micallef** must work closely with **Michael McGrath**, Commissioner for **Democracy, Justice, and the Rule of Law**, whose focus on fairness and equal access to rights will be critical in shaping social protections that balance the needs of the elderly and the working-age population.

This collaboration must also involve **Maria Luís Albuquerque**, Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union, who oversees the sustainability of pension systems, healthcare funding, and long-term public debt. Without careful fiscal management, demographic trends will cause unsustainable public spending. A coordinated strategy is needed to reform pension systems, explore new financing mechanisms for ageing populations, and ensure that young Europeans are not left to bear the financial burden of an ageing population.

Actionable Priorities:

- Align pension and welfare reforms with intergenerational fairness to prevent an unsustainable burden on younger taxpayers.
- Ensuring healthcare and ageing policies are tied to employment strategies, allowing older workers to remain active in the labour market through lifelong learning and flexible retirement schemes.
- Developing EU-wide strategies for long-term care funding

4.2 Migration as a Demographic and Economic Lever

Migration is often framed as a stop-gap solution to the EU's demographic ageing but must be met with targeted labour market integration. **Micallef** must coordinate closely with **Magnus Brunner**, Commissioner for **Internal Affairs and Migration**, to ensure that migration policy matches labour market needs in terms of skills and qualifications. Important in this context is to ensure close collaboration with **Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for **People, Skills, and Preparedness**, as a means to bridge the gap between migration policy and workforce development. Migrants must be given the tools to contribute meaningfully to the EU economy—through faster recognition of foreign qualifications, targeted upskilling programs, and structured labour market entry pathways.

Actionable Priorities:

- Creating a joint migration-labour strategy that links migration with skills shortages across Europe.
- Expanding the EU Talent Partnerships, prioritizing sectors and regions facing labour market shortages.



- Streamlining foreign qualification recognition and harmonization, ensuring skilled migrants can enter the workforce without unnecessary delays.

4.3 Labour Market and Economic Competitiveness

Demographic shifts are shrinking Europe's workforce, putting economic growth and competitiveness at risk. Yet, many European countries and regions suffer from high rate of youth unemployment and NEETs. **Micallef's** role requires a proactive employment strategy, in coordination with **Roxana Minzatu**, to enhance youth employment, reskilling initiatives, and gender equality in the labour force. The Commission must reinforce existing employment initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee while also developing new programs to address regional labour imbalances.

At the same time, **Raffaele Fitto**, Executive Vice-President for **Cohesion and Reforms**, plays a complementary role to enhance the resilience of rural regions facing depopulation and brain drain. His mandate directly addresses the territorial dimension of demography, an area where the EU has clear competence under Article 175 TFEU. Many young people leave their home regions not out of choice, but out of necessity. Reversing this trend, will require investments in rural areas to increase economic resilience and labour demand.

Actionable Priorities:

- Ensuring that the European Skills Agenda serves to prepare young workers for the demands of a digital and ageing economy.
- Enhancing access to vocational training and apprenticeships, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, technology, and green industries.
- Expanding youth employment incentives, particularly for industries experiencing workforce shortages and rural areas facing depopulation.
- Strengthening labour mobility initiatives which enable workers to move across EU regions while ensuring that migration is a choice, not an obligation.

4.4 Sustainability and the Long-Term Demographic Framework

Demographic resilience is inextricably linked to sustainability. Micallef must coordinate with **Jessika Roswall**, Commissioner for **Environment, Water Resilience, and Competitive Circular Economy**, to ensure that climate policies and demographic strategies are mutually reinforcing. The effects of climate change—whether through environmental driven migration, resource depletion, or public health challenges—are already reshaping European demographics.

At the same time, demographic policy must align with **Teresa Ribera**, Executive Vice-President for a **Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition**, to ensure that the green transition does not place undue burdens on younger generations. Europe's climate strategy must be integrated with labour market reforms, rural development policies, and housing initiatives, creating a future in which demographic change does not lead to social fragmentation.

Actionable Priorities:

- Integrating demographic planning into climate resilience policies, particularly in rural areas and regions facing depopulation and brain-drain.
- Aligning intergenerational fairness with the green transition, ensuring that younger generations are not disproportionately burdened.
- Supporting sustainable urban development and housing initiatives, promoting demographic renewal in shrinking regions.



4.5 Fertility

Fertility is a central tenant of demography, and it is a key driver of the ageing process we now observe in Europe and elsewhere in the Western World. As a policy realm, however, fertility lies with the nation state and it is not mentioned as a policy issue in the mission letters, nor was this raised in the Draghi and Letta reports. Fertility is in any case not a viable policy lever for the short or medium term to alleviate the challenges associated with an ageing population. Even if fertility miraculously increased to reach a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1, say, it would in any case take about 25 years before the cohort would enter as productive workers. It is also true that there is very mixed evidence as to whether pro-natalist policies have any effect at all on increasing fertility. Still, fertility will matter in the longer run and the fact that there is a consistent gap between the ideal number of children that people wants, and, the actual fertility realization, means that this is a relevant issue for most European states.

However, what the scientific literature has demonstrated is a clear positive relationship between fertility and policies encouraging gender equality. The evidence suggests that generous parental leave and strong childcare systems both enhance fertility rates and, importantly, sustain maternal employment (Bergsvik et al., 2021). However, the EU faces significant challenges in implementing these policies uniformly due to diverse cultural and institutional contexts across member states. Nonetheless, there are certain measures that would undoubtedly benefit all countries, such as improving the standards of family support services and addressing inequalities. Additional services should also be provided to mothers, given the increasing postponement of childbearing age.

While family policy remains a national competence, the Commission can shape the broader framework by:

- Expanding EU targets for childcare accessibility, building on the **Barcelona Targets for 2030**.
- Strengthening the **Work-Life Balance Directive**, particularly regarding paternity leave and flexible working arrangements.
- Incentivizing investment in early childhood education and parental support programs through Cohesion Funds.

5. Conclusions

Europe stands at a demographic crossroad, facing the combined pressures of low birth rates, increasing life expectancy, and a shrinking working-age population. These trends are accelerating population ageing and raising old-age dependency ratios, straining healthcare and pension systems as demand rises while the number of contributors declines.

To address these challenges, the document highlights two key strategies: increasing labour force participation and leveraging migration. While migration can help alleviate labour shortages and rebalance age distribution, it alone cannot fully resolve the issue, given the scale of demographic shifts. At the same time, Europe's shrinking youth population faces difficulties in labour market integration, as evidenced by high NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rates.

Recognizing the urgency of these demographic changes, the new European Commission (2024–2029) has integrated demographic considerations across multiple policy areas instead of assigning them to a single Commissioner. While the dedicated role of a Commissioner for Demography has been discontinued, demographic issues are embedded within the mandates of several Commissioners overseeing ageing, health, migration, the labour market, and sustainability. Commissioner Micallef's focus on Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport is particularly relevant for coordinating policy actions.



A multi-channel approach, involving different Commissioners, Directorates-General (DGs), and agencies, must aim to foster cooperation and synergies to turn demographic challenges into opportunities. Key policy actions include:

- **Ageing, Health, and Fiscal Sustainability** – Ensuring intergenerational fairness in pension and welfare reforms while maintaining financial sustainability.
- **Migration as a Demographic and Economic Tool** – Developing a coordinated migration-labour strategy to address skills shortages and integrate skilled migrants effectively.
- **Labour Market and Economic Competitiveness** – Promoting employment strategies that boost youth participation, reskilling initiatives, and gender equality to counteract workforce shrinkage.
- **Sustainability and Long-Term Planning** – Aligning demographic trends with climate resilience policies and ensuring a fair green transition for younger generations.
- **Fertility and Family Policies** – While largely a national competence, the EU can support gender equality and family-friendly policies to create a more enabling environment for families.

A coordinated, forward-looking demographic strategy is essential for ensuring a sustainable, competitive, and equitable future for Europe. By integrating demographic considerations across multiple policy domains, the European Commission can transform these challenges into opportunities, fostering a resilient and thriving society.

A final point to emphasize is that any policy actions implemented or proposed by the European Commission must be grounded in robust and rigorous scientific evidence. In this regard, Population Europe plays a crucial role. As a network of Europe's leading demographic research centers, Population Europe has established strong collaborations with a wide range of international organizations involved in population research and policy. By bridging the gap between policymakers and experts from academia, politics, business, and civil society, Population Europe facilitates informed discussions on pressing demographic challenges at local, regional, European, and global levels.



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Appendix A: How the DGs and Agencies Deal with Demography

In this section we provide a “roadmap” linking Commissioners’, DGs’ and Agencies’ mandates to demographic challenges at the EU level. The objective is to demonstrate how a cohesive strategy between these three actors – Commissioners, DGs and Agencies – can transform demographic challenges into opportunities for a strong and competitive Europe, as according to the Commission Priorities for 2024-2029.

The Role of Demography in the DGs and Agencies: Ageing and Health

Sustainability of pension systems

As highlighted in the previous chapter, strengthening the long-term sustainability of pension systems in the EU is a key objective set among the missions of **Maria Luís Albuquerque**, Commissioner for **Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union**. The Commissioner is expected to work closely with the Directorate General for Financial Stability, Financial Services, and Capital Markets Union (**FISMA**), the department responsible for EU policy on financial services. Indeed, the past organizational structure of FISMA included a specific focus on insurance and pensions (FISMA.D.4), which proves key to addressing the fiscal response to ageing. Next to FISMA, two other key entities operate in the same direction:

- The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), which surveys the stability of the EU's financial system.
- The European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA), a decentralized agency whose mission is to enhance public confidence in the EU's insurance and occupational pensions sectors through:
 - The promotion of a solid regulatory framework;
 - The implementation of consistent supervisory practices.

Maria Luís Albuquerque must also collaborate with the DG for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN), which is fundamental in the promotion of EU policies focused on economic growth, job creation, and stable public finances, and in the assessment of how ageing could impact economic stability. Among the ECFIN departments which are critical to this mission, it is necessary to include:

- ECFIN.B (Investment, Growth & Structural Reforms), evaluating the sustainability of public finances, including public pensions.
- ECFIN.C (Macroeconomic Policies), focusing on responding to demographic changes through structural reforms.

Careful budget management is key to meeting the needs of the European population. This delicate task is in the hands of **Piotr Serafin**, Commissioner-designate for **Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration**, who is expected to work closely with the Directorate General for Budget (DG BUDG). The directorate will focus on citizens' quality of life, with attention to the effects on life expectancy.

Sustainability of the health care system

As highlighted above, ageing populations pose an ever-increasing burden on the healthcare systems. To tackle this challenge, the **DG for Health and Food Safety** (SANTE) will work in cooperation with **Olivér Várhegyi**, Commissioner for **Health and Animal Welfare**. Their initiatives include:

- Ensuring disease prevention and health promotion;



- Modernizing healthcare systems and fostering medical innovation;
- Addressing demographic impacts such as increased life expectancy and evolving healthcare needs of a diverse and aging population.

Also the **European Health and Digital Executive Agency** (HaDEA) plays an important role in terms of healthcare systems sustainability. It manages health-related programs in collaboration with **DG SANTE** and **HERA** (the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response department). HaDEA's initiatives focus on:

- Addressing challenges posed by ageing populations;
- Preventing diseases and modernizing health systems to avoid the overburdening of healthcare infrastructure;
- Focusing on making the EU more resilient to future health emergencies by addressing demographic vulnerabilities. As an example, it is playing a key role in the post-COVID-19 reconstruction;
- Promoting digital inclusion for underserved groups, including the elderly and rural communities.

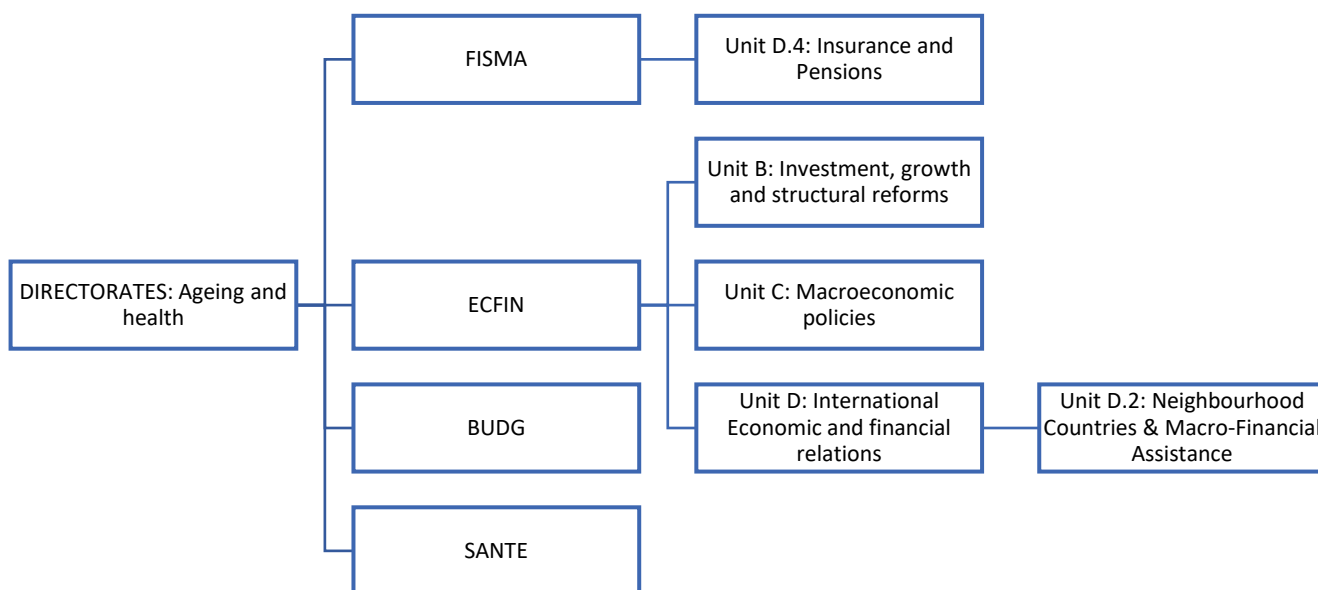
From the point of view of prevention, the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control** (ECDC) is tasked with strengthening Europe's defences against infectious diseases through:

- Surveillance systems and warning systems, such as operating platforms like the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) to detect and respond to cross-border health threats.
- The provision to European states of information and tools for epidemic preparedness and management.
- The training of professionals in disease detection and management to improve European health systems.

Two additional agencies play executive roles in improving the health of European citizens, specifically addressing workplace health and living conditions:

- The **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work** (EU-OSHA):
 - Analyses trends in accidents and diseases to be prepared when dealing with emergencies and challenges and to advise policies able to increase safety and improve health conditions.
 - Provides risk assessment tools, such as OIRA (Online Interactive Risk Assessment) to support enterprises in achieving and maintaining safety and health standards.
- **European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions** (Eurofound):
 - Conducts large-scale surveys on the living and working conditions of citizens.
 - Promotes social dialogue and industrial relations in a context that has deeply changed since the COVID-19 crisis.



Figure 1: Action Dedicated to Ageing and Health in the Directorates-Generals

The Role of Demography in the DGs and Agencies: Migration

Security and economic stability

The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (HOME) operates in collaboration with **Henna Virkkunen**, Executive Vice-President for **Tech Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy**, and **Magnus Brunner**, Commissioner for **Internal Affairs and Migration**, both tasked with ensuring that Europe's migration policies support security and economic stability. **DG HOME** is central to establishing migration policies, which, in turn, directly impact the EU's demographic structure, workforce diversity, and social integration. Immigration and integration policies ([HOME.C.2](#)) include:

- Supporting Brunner's mandate to promote legal migration pathways to respond to Europe's ageing workforce.
- Facilitating the integration of newcomers into labour economies where they are most needed.

Additionally, DG HOME's action spans also border management. It is responsible for:

- Implementing policies to secure external borders and prevent irregular migration.
- Overseeing two departments dedicated to:
 - The management of Schengen borders, external borders and visa procedures.
 - the management of migration and asylum procedures.

Complementing the efforts of DG HOME, the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN) supports **Dubravka Šuica's** mandate as Commissioner for Mediterranean, particularly through its Neighbourhood Countries & Macro-Financial Assistance department (ECFIN.D.2). This department focused on:

- Fostering economic stability, especially in the Mediterranean area.
- Strengthening partnerships with countries neighbouring the EU to:



- Sustainably manage migration flows.
- Generate mutual benefits for the EU and its neighbours.

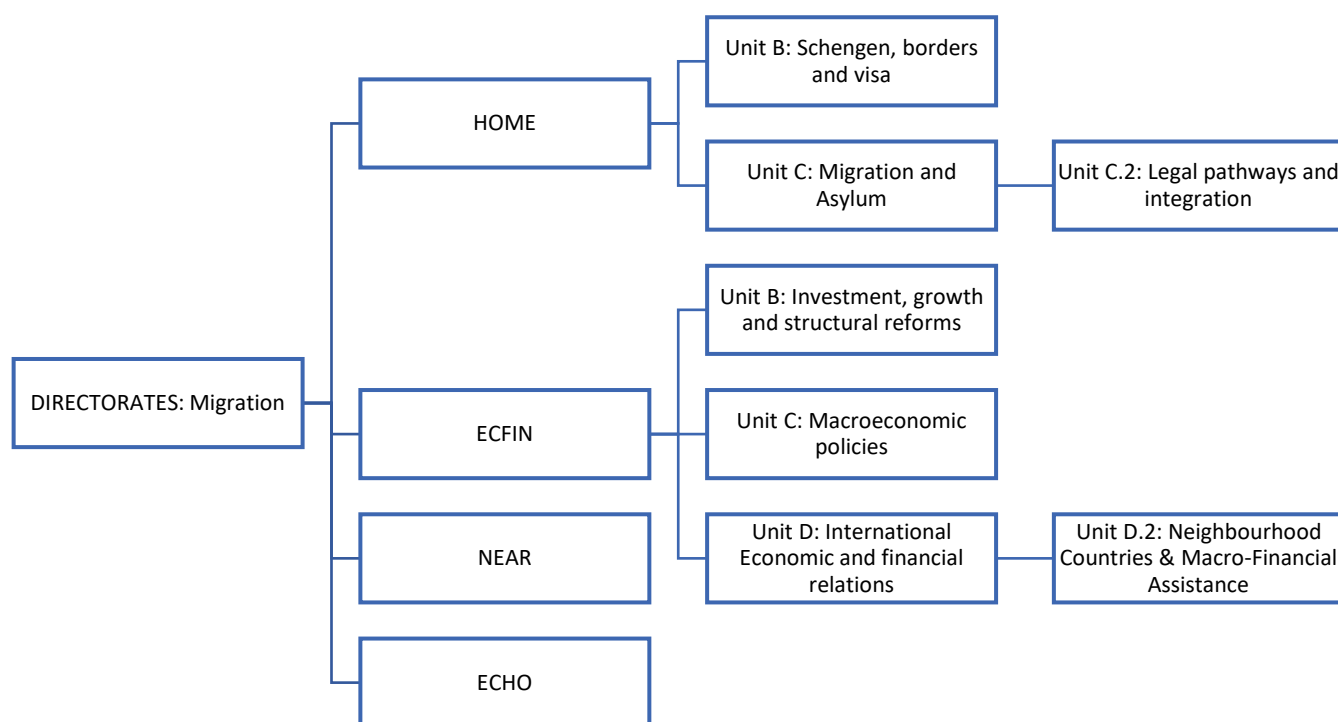
Enlargement

The work of **Marta Kos**, Commissioner for **Enlargement**, will align closely with the mandate of the **Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations** (DG NEAR). Her commitment to driving structural reforms in candidate countries, particularly in aligning their social and economic policies with EU standards, reflects DG NEAR's strategic objectives. These efforts have the potential to:

- Reshape EU demographics by influencing migration flows and creating the conditions for successful future enlargements.
- Address the demographic implications of Ukraine's reconstruction, including the return and reintegration of displaced populations.
- Influence migration flows and create the conditions for successful future enlargements.

Her work intersects with the mission of the **Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid** (DG ECHO).

Figure 2: Action Dedicated to Migration in the Directorates-Generals



The Role of Demography in the DGs and Agencies: Labour Market

Given the ongoing challenge of an ageing workforce in Europe, the Commission is committed to enhancing labour force participation. The Directorates-General support this effort by empowering



underrepresented groups, recognizing skills, and promoting inclusivity. These overarching objectives were included in the missions of:

- **Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for **People, Skills and Preparedness**, tasked with creating a more cohesive framework to address workforce challenges.
- **Dubravka Šuica**, Commissioner for **Mediterranean**, responsible for increasing labour market participation among women, young people, and other underrepresented groups.

Minorities and equality

These commissioners are supported in their work by the **Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion**. The past commissions' departments of Job and Skills (EMPL.B) and Working Conditions and Social Dialogue (EMPL.C) are of specific interest. EMPL.C, in particular, used to focus on systemic issues affecting workforce participation of minorities.

The promotion of higher female labour force participation and gender equality in the workforce requires collaboration between:

- The department for Equality and Non-discrimination (JUST.D) of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (JUST).
- The department for Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance (INTPA.G.1) of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA).

At the agency level, the **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** is involved with:

- Supporting inclusive policymaking by producing independent research.
- Sharing best practices and providing technical support for gender mainstreaming.

Education and training

Furthermore, boosting productivity and innovation through education, digital skills, and technological advancements is crucial for adapting to a shrinking workforce and leveraging the potential of digital and green economies. The objective of strengthening the EU's human capital, under the responsibility of **Roxana Mînzatu**, Executive Vice-President for **People, Skills and Preparedness**, and that of ensuring **intergenerational fairness** by **Glenn Micallef**, **Commissioner-designate for Intergenerational Equity, Youth, Culture and Sport**, should induce close cooperation between:

- **DG EMPL**, specifically the department for **The Future of Work, Youth, and Employment** (EMPL.B.1).
- The **Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture** (EAC), particularly its department focused on projects for the youth, to promote higher education and to strengthen communication between generations (EAC.B).

By supporting education and training projects, the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** helps:

- Providing younger generations with relevant skills for better labour market integration, reducing youth unemployment and discouraging migration due to lack of opportunities.
- Fostering youth-focused initiatives and cross-border mobility through programs like Erasmus+, encouraging cultural exchange and diversity.
- Promoting social cohesion and easing the integration of migrant populations.

Legal migration

The **DG EMPL** will cooperate with **DG HOME** to efficiently integrate new talents through legal migration pathways.

- DG HOME's role involves shaping Europe's demographic composition through immigrant and refugee integration.



- DG EMPL focuses on promoting labour market inclusion and social welfare, influenced by demographic factors such as aging populations, workforce shortages, and migration trends. It implements programs to improve migrant employment and skill development, particularly within the Labour mobility and international affairs department (EMPL.E) in the past Commission's organizational set-up.

These tasks fall under the missions of: **Magnus Brunner**, Commissioner for **Internal Affairs and Migration**, and **Stéphane Séjourné**, Executive Vice-President for **Prosperity and Industrial Strategy**. Indeed, their priorities intersect when it comes to streamlining procedures to ease access for the immigrant workforce.

At the same time, developing a comprehensive strategy for integrating refugees and inbound migrants into the labour markets would require the coordination with:

- The unit for Legal Pathways and Integration (HOME.C.2), under DG HOME.
- The unit for Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace (INTPA.G), under DG INTPA.

Together, the DGs should work to create a framework for the successful integration of immigrants into the workforce, while ensuring their social inclusion and protection. Also the agencies provide a valuable contribution, especially:

- The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)
- The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

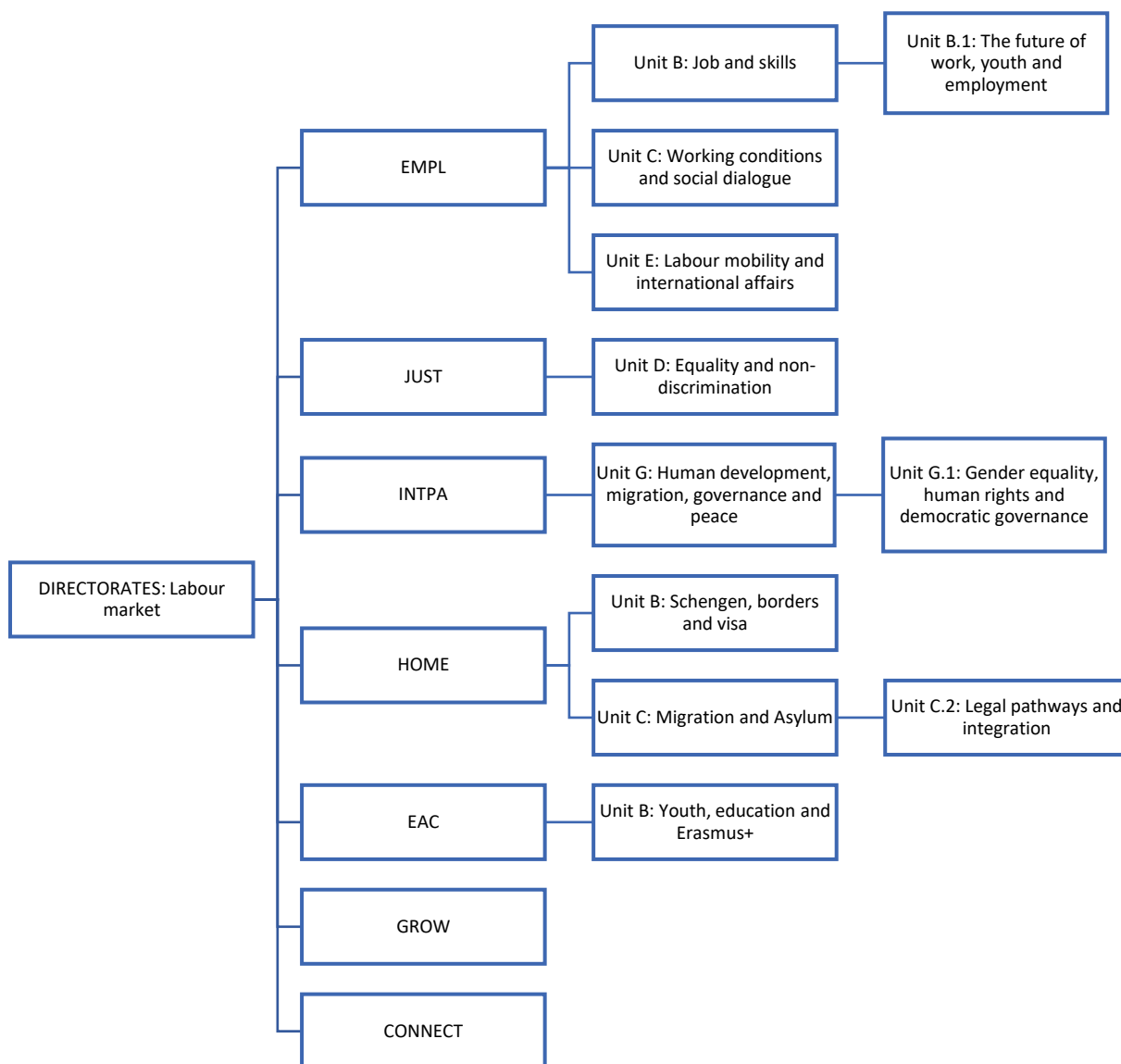
They operate in the realm of social protection and are both directly targeted at asylum seekers, who may be the most vulnerable category of migrants, and more generally they look after the human rights of all people who live and work in the EU.

Technological improvements

Another measure to counteract the demographic change of the workforce consists in achieving higher levels of productivity through technological improvements. To this end, **Ekaterina Zaharieva**, Commissioner for **Startups, Research and Innovation**, will collaborate with three DGs, each focusing on different areas and tasks:

- DG GROW, leading the efforts on digitisation and decarbonisation of European industry and SMEs. It contributes to the objective of turning the EU into a greener, more digital and more resilient economy.
- DG CONNECT, working to bring Europe to a high standard in the field of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and data economy.
- DG ECFIN, boosting the funding towards technological innovation objectives while preserving macroeconomic and financial stability.



Figure 3: Action Dedicated to the Labour Market in the Directorates-Generals

The Role of Demography in the DGs and Agencies: Sustainability

Sustainability and demography are intertwined, with significant impacts in a range of areas. Today, climate change and resource scarcity are key challenges that significantly influence demographic factors, including:

- Population distribution;
- Migration flows;
- Life expectancy;
- Regional and social disparities.

For this reason, the efforts of **Wopke Hoekstra**, Commissioner for **Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth**, and those of **Jessika Roswall**, Commissioner for **Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy**, will be complemented by the collaboration of several Directorate-Generals and European Agencies operating in different but cross-cutting fields.



Green transition policies

The **European Environment Agency** (EEA) supports environmental and climate policies through its network “Eionet”, which collects and reorganises data on the state of Europe’s environment. These pieces of information are crucial for DGs to shape policies over:

- Adaptation and resilience.
- Decarbonisation of industry and agriculture.
- Regional development.

Among other tasks, the **DG for Climate Action** follows the implementation of the European Climate Adaptation Plan, aimed at helping Member States strengthen the adaptability of their territories. In particular:

- CLIMA.B and CLIMA.C promote:
 - Carbon markets.
 - Clean mobility.
 - Innovative solutions to build a low-carbon economy, taking into account demographic shifts such as urbanization and its consequences.
- CLIMA.E focuses on:
 - Climate adaptation and resilience.
 - How extreme weather events and environmental degradation drive migration and influence population distribution.
 - Support of the needs of regions to withstand demographic change.

DG CLIMA should be assisted by the **DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs** (DG GROW) and by the **Joint Research Centre** (JRC). These DGs support a digital and green transition that aligns with demographic needs, particularly through the decarbonization of European industries. On the one hand DG GROW, by promoting sustainable business models for SMEs, helps to make industries more resilient in regions facing depopulation, counteract migration flows and create opportunities to increase labour force. On the other hand, JRC’s evidence-based research and science backs up EU policies.

Quality of Life

Energy poverty and the housing crisis are another current criticality with huge impact on citizens’ quality of life, their health and consequently their life expectancy. These factors will be overseen by Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner for Energy and Housing and Teresa Ribera Rodríguez, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition. He will have to cooperate with:

- **DG for Energy** (DG ENER), which ensures sustainable and affordable energy access and supports the reduction of energy consumption.
- **DG for Environment** (DG ENV), which promotes the transition to a circular economy.
- **The Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators** (ACER).
- **The Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment Executive Agency** (CINEA).

A sustainable, competitive, and resilient EU agriculture

The goals of the **DG for Agricultural and Rural Development** (DG AGRI) are closely related to those of the Commissioner for **Agriculture and Food**, **Christophe Hansen**, and of the Executive Vice-President for **Cohesion and Reforms**, **Raffaele Fitto**. DG AGRI has the mission to support and promote an evidence-based green and digital transition towards a sustainable, competitive, and resilient EU agriculture.

AGRI.B, as Sustainability Department, plays an essential role in crafting policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with the aim of protecting rural areas and ensuring food security.



In general, DG AGRI improves the resilience of rural areas by strengthening their ability to manage crisis, thereby preventing unemployment, depopulation and migration flow towards already overcrowded cities. To achieve these objectives, DG AGRI works with:

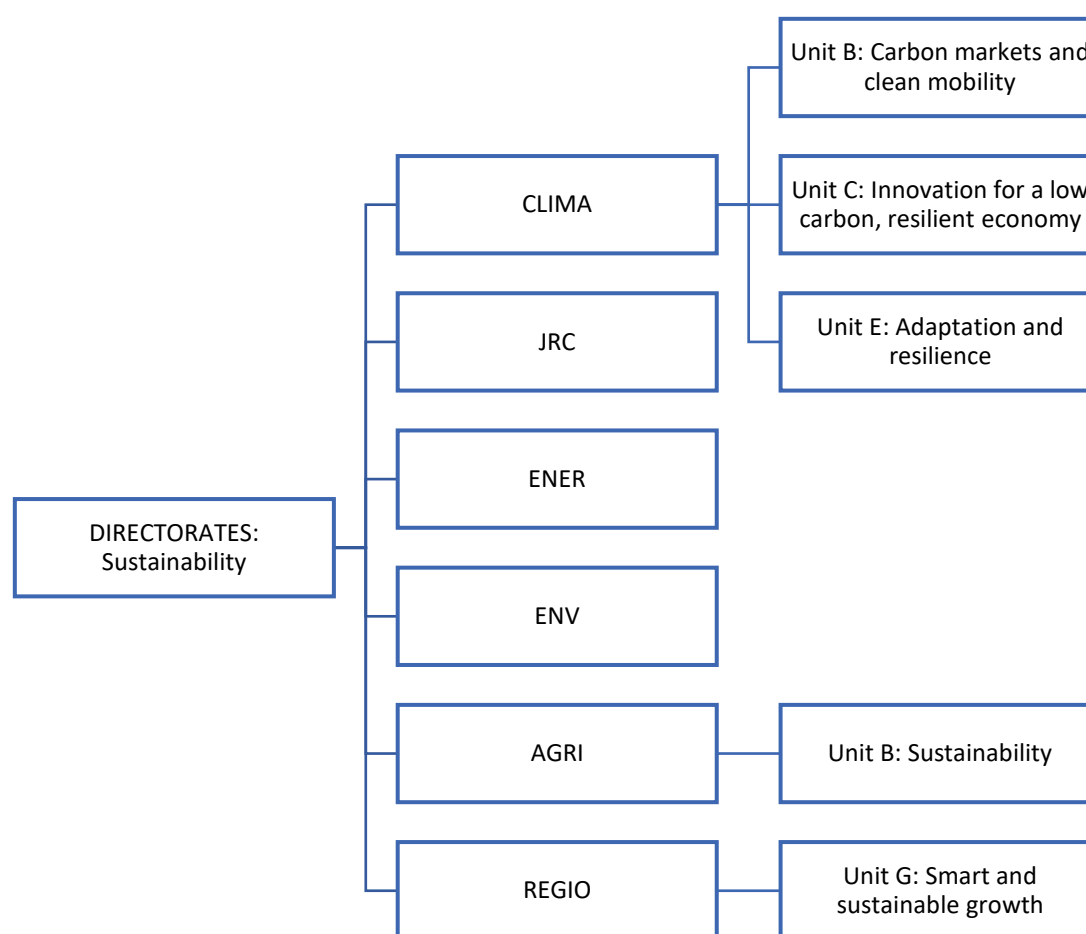
- The **European Research Executive Agency (REA)**, which provides funding to projects centred on Food, Bio-economy, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment (Cluster 6).
- The **DG for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)**, which ensures food security and monitors its quality and safety. Its work addresses demographic pressures on goods, sustainable agriculture, and environmental sustainability.

Regional disparities

Finally, the primary aim of the Directorate-General for **Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO)** is that of reducing regional disparities, which are tied to demographic issues such as rural depopulation and urban overcrowding. Its objective is to achieve balanced regional development, supporting sustainable demographic patterns across the EU.

REGIO.G, the department for Smart and Sustainable Growth, focuses on boosting resilience in urban and regional communities by addressing specific sustainability challenges, internal inequalities, and demographic factors including aging population and its consequences.

Figure 4: Action Dedicated to Sustainability in the Directorates-Generals



Appendix A.1: The Role of Demography in the European Union Agencies

