

Fame Peste Bello (Famine, Plague and War) were the three evils that Europeans had long had to guard against. With the progress of science and modern agriculture (mechanization, fertilizers, increasingly resistant crops thanks to agronomic research...), famine is no longer a problem in Europe. Surpluses have even accumulated with a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) designed by the European Union that has promoted a productivity oriented agriculture. With global warming, sustainable, more sober, and decarbonized agriculture (the fertilizers used are hydrocarbon-based) is on the agenda in 2026. Thanks to the progress of science (vaccines and medicines), diseases that have caused havoc in Europe (plague, cholera, leprosy, tuberculosis...) have been eradicated. The global COVID pandemics (2020-2021) was a useful reminder that the health threat is permanent and is to escalate in the coming years. Healthy life expectancy has declined with pollutants that have poisoned our soils and food; the number of cancers is exploding. After the two World Wars of the WWth century, humanity's deadliest, Europe believed that it had been spared from wars on its territory. Since the 1990s, war has returned to Europe: in ex-Yugoslavia (1991-995), in Chechnya (2000-2008), in Georgia (2008) and in Ukraine (since 2014). Conflicts are closing in; the EU is rearming.

Since 2012, the natural balance within the European Union has been negative according to a note from the National Institute of Demographic Studies (2). Yet the EU's population has not declined. It increased by 9 million between 2012 and 2025, from 441 million to 450 million inhabitants. The EU's net migration (difference between inflows and outflows) has more than offset the negative natural balance. For Gilles Pinson, a researcher at INED, if in the 1960s it was practically zero (baby boomer generations born after 1945 arrived in large numbers on a very open and demanding labor market), it then increased. It reached a little over one million per year on average at the end of the 2010s. New growth has been observed since 2022 and in subsequent years with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

The latest figures published by Eurostat date from 2024. France had a positive natural balance, with six other European countries: Sweden (10.6 million inhabitants), Denmark (6.0), Ireland (5.3), Cyprus (1.4), Luxembourg (0.7) and Malta (0.5). Among the twenty countries with a negative natural balance, eight have a declining population in 2024: Italy, five Central European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) and two Baltic countries (Estonia and Latvia). Some countries have had more deaths than births for more than ten years - Germany, Italy, Hungary or Romania, with a declining population in all these countries except Germany where net migration, positive, has offset the negative natural balance. This is no longer the case in 2026. (3)

In a scenario "without migration", which is unrealistic but very telling, Eurostat has projected European demography to 2050 on the assumption of net zero migration from 2025. This theoretical extrapolation makes it possible to imagine the evolution of the population of the European Union if there were no more entries or exits, or if the exits were equivalent to the entries. In this case, the population of the 27 EU countries would decrease from 2025 until reaching 404 million in 2050, a loss of 46 million inhabitants (10%) in 25 years. In terms of population, this would correspond to the disappearance of Poland (36.5 million) and Hungary (9.6 million). A scenario without migration is impossible in 2026.

The demographic argument is decisive in migration policy. To face increasingly open competition (customs duties exploded in 2025) in an aggressive geopolitics that combines military war (Russian aggressions since the 2000s) and economic (Chinese Silk Roads), the European Union needs a diverse workforce (skilled and unskilled), with various skills (manual and intellectual) to relaunch its economy, and in particular its industrial policy, to face the challenges of the twenty-first century - Artificial intelligence, cold and hot wars, global warming.... Europe can no longer rely on its own people; it must call in workers from abroad. Paradoxically, the immigration of economic actors (looking for a job), foreign students (coming to complete a degree) or related to family reunification has become increasingly difficult in Europe.

The European Union is not only an economic construction, a liberal project based on freedom of movement (of goods and services, capital and people). Welcoming refugees is essential for Europe, a land of human rights that has been built on a foundation of common values inspired by the defense of individual and public freedoms, and fundamental rights. In the twenty-first century, large populations had to flee their country in the midst of civil war – Syrians victims of the Assad dictatorship (and a civil war that began in 2011), Afghans persecuted by the Taliban (who returned in 2021), or Iranians with the mullahs' regime. (increasingly repressive). A more insidious form of persecution is that suffered by minorities, because of their religion (Rohingya in Burma , Uighur in China, Christians and Muslims in India...), their ethnicity (Yezidis persecuted by ISIS or Kurds in Syria or Turkey) or their sexual orientation (homosexuals in Chechnya, and in many dictatorships or illiberal regimes such as Viktor Orbán's Hungary).

A law passed on March 11, 2026, in Senegal has increased penalties for homosexuals, triggering violent homophobic repression. Michael Brice (5) reveals the results of a survey conducted by his NGO in six sub-Saharan African countries – 94% of LGBTQIA+ people interviewed experienced targeted violence, primarily sexual, such as “corrective rape.” He cites serious situations of homophobic persecution in Uganda (with its 2023 anti-homosexuality law) and in Ghana, which is set to adopt a similar law in 2026. Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali have all adopted anti-LGBTQIA+ laws in recent years. The six countries in the study have also fallen under the influence of Russia, which is fueling a violently anti-Western discourse in Africa by denouncing the supposedly "decadent" values of Westerners, including homosexuality. Michael Bruce warns of global budget cuts to NGOs protecting the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly to US aid (USAID) since March 2025 (Trump administration), which has targeted initiatives related to "gender ideology" or "diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Migration policy is a subtle "Art" that requires great sensitivity to geopolitical upheavals to anticipate the "Weapons" to be used in the event of economic, military, or cultural warfare, along with a relevant legal arsenal, "Laws," to counter attacks from its diverse and varied adversaries. Europe, a land of welcome for exiles, without exception, is a universal and timeless principle that should inspire the entry into force of the Asylum and Migration Pact in June 2026. United in diversity, all diversities...

Bénédicte Halba, president of iriv (www.iriv.net) author of a Webblog on migration - <https://actions-migration.blogspot.com/> and of a portal on Diversity <https://www.superdiversite.net/?lang=en> - Paris, 05/04/2026 –

- (1) Quotation inspired by Joachim du Bellay « **France, mère des arts, des armes et des lois** », in his collection of poems « *Les Regrets* », Paris, 1558
- (2) Gilles Pinson, « En France comme en Europe, le solde migratoire compense l'excédent des décès sur les naissances » numéro 642 • mars 2026 • Population & Sociétés - <https://www.ined.fr/fr/presse/en-france-comme-en-europe-solde-migratoire-compense-excedent-deces-sur-naissances>
- (3) Elsa Consea « En Allemagne, l'immigration ne compense plus le déclin démographique », Le Monde, 15 avril 2026-
https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2026/04/15/en-allemande-l-immigration-ne-compense-plus-le-declin-demographique_6680317_3210.html
- (4) Editorial « L'odieuse répression de l'homosexualité au Sénégal », Le Monde, 2 mai 2026
- (5) Michael Bruce, founder and executive director of the African non-governmental organization Pride Centre- « Dans de nombreux pays d'Afrique, les personnes LGBTQIA+ luttent perpétuellement pour leur survie », Le Monde, 2 mai 2026