

**Question for written answer E-000022/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Susanna Ceccardi (ID)

Subject: EU contribution to specific policies in support of the birth rate in Italy

A few weeks ago, ISTAT highlighted the further drop in the birth rate in Italy as a result of the pandemic; ISTAT's president put the total number of births in 2020 at 408 000, a sharp decline from the previous low of 420 000, recorded in 2019.

The expert group on 'Demography and COVID-19', set up by the Italian Government in April 2020, has reached the same conclusions, highlighting the possibility that in 2021 the number of births will fall below 400 000.

The figures for Italy are the lowest in Europe, a historical trend that has worsened throughout the pandemic crisis. According to the report 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on birth rates and prospects for new generations', commissioned by the Department of Family Policies, 58% of Italians between the ages of 18 and 34 have decided to postpone or abandon their plans to have children.

Immigration cannot, and must not, be the simplistic answer to the problem of falling birth rates.

In the light of the above, can the Commission say:

1. whether it intends to submit an action plan to help boost the birth rate in Europe;
2. whether it sees a need also to take action to support women's reproductive health, given that, according to some studies, *lockdowns* and travel restrictions have led to fewer women being screened?