



**Balancing Family Life and Work  
'Exploring the possibilities of a European family-friendly label'**

**Raise Awareness Meeting**

---

**FAFCE**

---

*FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS  
FAMILIALES CATHOLIQUES EN EUROPE*

*FÖDERATION DER KATHOLISCHEN  
FAMILIENVERBÄNDE IN EUROPA*

*FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY  
ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE*

---

**Address to Commissioner Laszlo Andor  
by Antoine Renard, President of the FAFCE**

**European Parliament, International Day of the Family 2013**

Commissioner,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Commissioner Laszlo Andor pointed out at the opening of the 4th Demography Forum organised by the European Commission last week young Europeans have difficulties founding a family due to lack of jobs and lack of stable jobs. Today none of the EU Member States has a fertility rate that is high enough to renew the population, and despite the fact that there is a desire to have children European citizens do not have as many children as they wish.

This is a great problem because families are Europe's wealth! Families are the basic units of society, a family is more than just the simple sum of its members, the family has a value of its own. From an economic perspective the family is not only a consumer but also produces riches.

To address this complex situation that is human, demographic and economic I wish to offer three ideas on how to exit this dead end road.

1. Full employment is essential for all families but we often hear that work and family life need to be reconciled. This expression indicates that there is a form of competition between work on the one hand, and family life on the other hand. I believe this approach is misleading. The FAFCE represents family associations from 15 Member States and in each of these countries families find it difficult to combine work and family life. Based on this fact, we would suggest to search for equilibrium and replace the word 'conciliation' by 'balance': families need work, employers need employees who have a harmonious family life, it is therefore in the interest of both parts to search for measures that help establish a balance between family life and work.

2. When designing working conditions we would suggest to put the family first, in other words create working conditions that take into account the needs of the family (time, resources, services). This can be done by family mainstreaming at every decision level.
3. Work is currently organized in a manner that corresponds to a model that has revolved: today both mothers and fathers are present in the labour market, but professional careers are organized as if one of them stayed full time at home. This organization does not correspond to the reality of how most European families live. This is why a life course perspective would be more adapted. It could rely on three aspects in particular:
  - take into account the needs for maternal, paternal leaves, also at different ages of their children, not only for the newborns;
  - value the invisible work done within the family and the competencies and capacities that this work develops;
  - offer regular professional training to update the professional skills; this would also contribute to reduce the unemployment, and help to raise the average level of available competences.

To conclude: each of these points are in my opinion feasible and would greatly benefit from a deep dialogue between all stakeholders: families, employers, employee representatives, human resources experts, managers, and policy makers.

As President of the FAFCE, I wish to call on the European Commission to consider these proposals. It is my firm convictions that they would contribute to better balance for both families and employers. Our conference today is a first step in this direction, I hope it is not the last!

*Founded in 1997, the Federation of catholic Family associations in Europe (FAFCE) has a participatory status at the Council of Europe and represents national family associations from 16 European countries. The FAFCE promotes family interests in the political arena from a catholic perspective, on the basis of the Catholic Church's Social and Family teaching as well as on the testimony of faith and experimental knowledge of Christians in Church and society.*