Hungary defines family as having a mother and a father

Hungary’s Parliament passed a law Tuesday defining the family as having a woman as the mother and a man as the father, effectively banning adoptions by same-sex couples and complicating adoptions by single people.

The change is the latest of several to be made in recent years in what the government has said are attempts to preserve Hungary’s Christian identity and to boost its plummeting birth rates.

“If we give up on our Christianity, then we will lose our own identity, as Hungarians, as

Europeans,”
Katalin Novák, Hungary’s Minister of State for Family Affairs, told CNA last December. **(1)**

Roughly half of Hungary’s population identifies as Roman Catholic, while about one-fifth identifies as Protestant or some other Christian denomination. Another fifth of the population identifies as having no religious affiliation, with Jewish, Muslim, and other religious minorities making up the rest of the population.

Novák told CNA in 2019 that Hungary’s leaders were concerned with the country’s future due to plummeting birth rate, which is 1.48, well below replacement level at 2.1 children per woman. **(2)**

“We have a demographic challenge ahead of us,” Novák said.
While some countries may rely on immigration, Hungary is trying to reverse the trend with a two-pronged approach: financial incentives for families to have more children, and promoting a culture that is pro-life and welcoming of large families, she added.

In that vein, the Hungarian government started offering financial incentives for couples in the country to marry and have children, including subsidized loans to those who marry before the bride’s 41st birthday.

Incentives to have children are built into the loan. One-third of it can be forgiven if the married couple has two children, and the entire loan can be forgiven if they have three children. Women with four or more children will be exempted from income tax for life. Families with at least three children are eligible for a grant to purchase a car that seats seven or more people.

Hungary claims the policies are working, as its central statistics office recently reported a 20% increase in marriages in 2019.

But the bump in fertility is yet to be seen, and other European countries, such as France and Germany, that have attempted to increase fertility through government subsidies have not seen a significant increase in birth rates.

Earlier this year, Hungary also passed a law declaring a person's gender to be that of their biological sex at birth, blocking attempts by transgender people to change their legal gender identity. The move was widely criticized by some as an attack on LGBT human rights. Critics have also said the policy changes passed this week are a dangerous expansion of power by Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his party, the New York Times reported.

Critics have argued that the policy changes will lessen oversight of government spending, as well as lower the requirements necessary for the government to declare a state of emergency, leading to less accountability and greater potential for the government to seize more control.

"Wherever it was possible, Fidesz chose to cement its power even more with these laws," Agnes Kovacs, a legal expert with the Eotvos Karoly Policy Institute, told the New York Times.

Renata Uitz, a professor of comparative constitution law at Central European University, told the New York Times that the changes to declaring a state of emergency were so broadly defined that even a mild protest could give the government the opportunity to use its emergency powers.

Hungary also sees part of its Christian identity in helping Christian victims of persecution in other countries **(3)**. In Iraq, the government helped resettle Christian genocide victims through its aid program Hungary Helps, providing more than $3 million for the effort.

However, the country has also been criticized for its immigration policies. The UN's human rights chief said its 2018 law criminalizing the assistance of asylum seekers was "blatantly xenophobic." As of early 2018, the UN's refugee agency said Hungary was only admitting around two asylum seekers per day through its transit zones.

The UN's Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, who recently visited the country, said that "migrants are portrayed as dangerous enemies in both official and public discourses."

Novák said in 2019 that Hungary does not "see immigration as a solution to our demographic problem," and is willing to assist with resettling refugees but is not prioritizing the acceptance of

economic migrants seeking a “better life.”

“We are, in the first place, responsible for our own people. And if they need more help in order to be able to raise more children and have a family, then we have to provide this help,” she said.

CNA

WebSite Administrator: these are my added footnotes -

(1) "Through God's mysterious design, it was in the family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life.
It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families ..."
Familiaris Consortio (n. 82).

(2) Ireland's fertility rate, the number of children per woman, has now fallen to 1.7, significantly below replacement level of 2.1. Like all of Europe – and much of the rest of the world – it would seem we have lost interest in replacing ourselves.

From 2009 to 2019, a period marked mostly by economic growth, we continued to have fewer babies – the birth rate in that period fell by a shocking 20%. This will have an immense impact on the future cost of healthcare, the extension of retirement age and the viability of pensions. Yet, no action is taken by government for the support and growth of marriage and the family. To the contrary, the State acquiesced in 6,666 abortions of Ireland's children in 2019. We await the shameful figures for the current year.

(3) While many countries are consecrated to Mary, the only nation on earth that was left to her in a will is Hungary. St Stephen, its first king, after his son Emeric died, named Our Lady to be the rightful heir to his crown, and Queen of Hungary.

Hungary, invaded and occupied many times in its history, has suffered much as a nation, and for the faith; it understands, better than most, the importance of its Christian identity and how to hold on to that.