

*Ladies and gentlemen, my friends!*

It is a decisive moment. We stand on the brink of the annihilation of our nations, our civilization, and our culture. This is what we have already heard in the opening remarks and in the first excellent lectures today. Family policy and demographic policy are no longer secondary issues; they have become matters of survival for our nations, our cultures, our economies, and our democracies.

Even before we discuss statistical data, indicators of crisis, and the experiences of our nations in family policy, I would like to draw your attention to a concrete and effective proposal for action at the international level: the possibility of forming an international coalition for family policy and for effective, data-based demographic policymaking. I encourage you to support the Convention on the Rights of the Family.

What we are facing today is a deep, cultural and civilizational crisis. Not a temporary one and not a cyclical one. In almost every country of Central Europe, fertility rates have fallen far below the level needed to replace older generations. In many EU states the rate has fallen to around 1.2 or 1.3. In Poland it is below 1.1. Each generation is smaller than the last by nearly half. Our societies will age, weaken, and shrink.

These are not abstract numbers. They translate into collapsing pension systems. Labor shortages. Pressure on healthcare. Rising migration pressure. Risk of “replacement migration” policies being implemented by governments even against the will of the people. And, ultimately, they will lead to loss of national identity and national security.

Demography shapes the future long before politics does.

And yet, this crisis cannot be explained by economics alone. Some of the wealthiest countries in the world, with extensive welfare systems and generous social benefits, are experiencing the lowest birth rates. This tells us something fundamental. The problem is not centered on material status of families. It is cultural. Legal. And anthropological.

Without a stable and secure family, there is no democracy. Without the family, freedom becomes fragile. Without families, nations lose their future.

I must say this clearly: one of the main causes of today’s crisis lies in false diagnoses. For years, public policy in many European countries has been shaped by ideologies that treat the family not as a resource, but as a problem. Marriage is pictured as oppressive. Parenthood as a burden. Motherhood as an obstacle to self-fulfillment.

But reality and data tell a different story. Stable marriages and strong families have higher fertility rates. Children raised in intact families do better at school. They face fewer social risks. They are less likely to end up in foster care or social institutions.

Family has a natural structure which is the only viable structure, with its division of roles and responsibilities, with its inherent order and indispensable set of values and religious beliefs. All of these are under assault by the culture which dominates the public sphere in today’s world,

starting from subverting the anthropological understanding of motherhood, fatherhood, meaning of being a wife or a husband, the most successful ways of pursuing happiness.

Family stability works. Ideological experiments do not.

Family breakdown also has a price. A very real one. In Poland alone, the social and economic costs of marital and family breakdown have been estimated at several billion złoty per year. These costs are paid by everyone. By taxpayers. By communities. By the state. Strengthening families is not only a moral duty. It is sound public policy.

A powerful assault on the integrity of the family comes from international and supranational organizations through a number of initiatives, concepts and acts of international law.

Against this background, we must look honestly at the experience of countries that have ratified the so-called Istanbul Convention, which shapes family policies across Europe through its “gender-based violence” framework. This framework defines the family as a primary source of conflict, as a set of entrenched power structures that reproduce violence and a range of other social pathologies.

Poland also ratified the Istanbul Convention. In good faith, with the aim of protecting victims of violence. This goal is legitimate. Yet the reality of its implementation tells a far more troubling story.

The Convention has become a vehicle for social engineering. It introduces the concept of gender as a social construct, detached from biological reality. It obliges states to eliminate so-called stereotypical roles. In practice, this means questioning the traditional family, marriage, and the natural roles of parents.

The Convention obliges states to adopt “necessary measures to promote changes in social and cultural patterns” to eradicate customs and traditions that affirm the complementarity of women and men. Yet it is being promoted precisely in Central European countries that already have some of the lowest rates of domestic violence, some of the smallest gender pay gaps, and some of the highest levels of female participation in public office and corporate leadership. In other words, this programme of social engineering is imposed even on societies whose traditions have long delivered real equality—often more effectively than those of many Western EU states.

At the center of this process stands the GREVIO committee. The body tasked with monitoring the Convention. GREVIO does far more than assess protection against violence. It issues ideological demands. It calls for compulsory gender education. It pressures states to redefine the family in domestic law. It criticizes constitutional protections of marriage.

Even more troubling is the lack of transparency. Analyses show strong links between GREVIO experts and radical activist organizations. This is not neutral oversight. It is political and ideological pressure exercised through international mechanisms.

We must also speak openly about the role of radical strands within the feminist movement that form the back office of GREVIO. Groups that openly declare their aim to transform

society. Groups that describe the family as a structure of oppression. That see motherhood as a limitation. That deny the natural differences between women and men. These ideas are not supported by data. They are not supported by lived experience. And yet, they increasingly shape international policies.

With this framework no demography policy will be effective.

Fortunately, resistance against counterproductive and intellectually flawed ideologies is growing. Across Central Europe and beyond. Hungary has made clear that the Istanbul Convention conflicts with its constitutional protection of marriage and family. Slovakia's parliament refused ratification, citing threats to constitutional order. Bulgaria's Constitutional Court ruled that key concepts of the Convention violate the constitution. The Czech Republic rejected ratification in line with international law, pointing to legal uncertainty and risks to sovereignty.

These are not emotional reactions. They are sober legal decisions. Decisions rooted in constitutional identity and responsibility for the common good.

This resistance against anti-family ideology and against antinatalism is also visible on the global stage. At the United Nations, again and again, attempts to impose so-called sexual and reproductive rights have failed in 2025. Why? Because there is no global consensus. Countries from Latin America and Africa are increasingly outspoken. They defend the family. They defend the right to life. They demand real support for mothers.

The policy of the U.S. administration under President Donald Trump played an important role in restoring balance to this debate. It strengthened voices long silenced by the dominant ideology of the global North. It reminded the world that pluralism must also apply to values.

In this context, criticism is not enough. We need a positive alternative. A constructive proposal that will strengthen family-based-policies and implement family mainstreaming to our politics, economy and lawmaking.

This is why Ordo Iuris Institute prepared the draft Convention on the Rights of the Family, officially supported by the previous conservative government of Poland and worked out by the international committee of expert during 2019 Warsaw Symposium.

This Convention, in important part derived from existing human rights treaty system and soft law standards, affirms a simple truth. The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society. Parents are the primary educators of their children. Marriage between a woman and a man has a special role for social stability. Family life deserves protection from unjustified state interference and social engineering.

This proposal responds to the real needs of Central Europe. It respects constitutional traditions. It is grounded in data and social experience. It establishes international committee dedicated to protection of family and affirmation of family-centered-policies as good practices in national governance. It shows that modernity does not require rejecting the natural social order.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Central Europe carries a historic responsibility. We can show that democracy needs strong families and a clear prioritization of family policy. We must state clearly that the demographic future of our nations depends on the courage to defend marriage, parenthood, and family life.

May the debate here in Vilnius be a step in that direction. May the Convention on the Rights of the Family become a sign of hope. A sign of responsibility. And a sign that Europe still believes in its future.

Thank you.