



Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca
PL01 – ESAME DI STATO DI ISTRUZIONE SECONDARIA SUPERIORE

Indirizzo: LI04 - LICEO LINGUISTICO

Tema di: LINGUA STRANIERA - INGLESE

A - ATTUALITÀ

Europe needs many more babies to avert a population disaster

When Spanish business consultant Alejandro Macarrón started crunching the numbers behind Spain's changing demographics, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. "I was astonished," said Macarrón. "We have provinces in Spain where for every baby born, more than two people die. And the ratio is moving closer to one to three."

5 Spain has one of the lowest fertility rates in the EU, with an average of 1.27 children born for every woman of childbearing age, compared to the EU average of 1.55. Its crippling economic crisis has seen a net exodus of people from the country, as hundreds of thousands of Spaniards and migrants leave in the hope of finding jobs abroad. The result is that, since 2012, Spain's population has been shrinking.

10 Record numbers of economic migrants and asylum-seekers are seeking to enter the European Union this summer and are risking their lives in the attempt. The paradox is that as police and security forces battle to keep them at bay, a demographic crisis is unfolding across the continent. Europe desperately needs more young people to run its health services, populate its rural areas and look after its elderly because, increasingly, its societies are no longer self-sustaining.

15 In Portugal, the population has been shrinking since 2010. For many analysts, the question now is how low can it go, with projections by the National Statistics Institute suggesting Portugal's population could drop from 10.5 million to 6.3 million by 2060. According to Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho: "We've got really serious problems."

20 In Italy the retired population is soaring, with the proportion of over-65s set to rise from 2.7% last year to 18.8% in 2050. Germany has the lowest birthrate in the world: 8.2 per 1,000 population between 2008 and 2013, according to a recent study by the Hamburg-based world economy institute, the HWWI.

The UK's population reached 64.6 million by mid-2014, a growth of 491,000 over the previous year, according to the Office for National Statistics. On average, Britain's population grew at a faster rate over the last decade than it has done over the last 50 years.

25 Macarrón is astonished at the reluctance of Spanish authorities to address what he calls a direct threat to economic growth as well as pensions, healthcare and social services. He and a few friends took it upon themselves to begin tackling the issue, starting the non-profit group Demographic Renaissance in 2013, with the aim of raising awareness of the crisis.

30 "Most people think we're only talking about something that will be a problem in 50 years, but we're already seeing part of the problem," he said. "If current numbers hold, every new generation of Spaniards will be 40% smaller than the previous one."



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A political knock-on effect is the overwhelming political power of the grey vote. Macarrón points to the crippling austerity measure put in place during the economic crisis: “During the same time frame, expenditures on pensions rose by more than 40%. We’re moving closer to being a gerontocratic society – it’s a government of the old.”

35 The region of Galicia is one of the few in Spain that has addressed the issue. The population of this north-western region has been shrinking, leaving it home to nearly half [of] Spain’s abandoned villages. More than 1,500 settlements – once home to schools, businesses and filled with children – now sit abandoned, overgrown with weeds and bushes.

40 In 2012, the regional government launched a multi-pronged initiative to address the falling fertility rate, with plans to roll out measures such as home and transport subsidies for families and radio advertisements urging women to have more children. But it is still estimated that Galicia’s population could shrink by 1 million residents in the next 40 years, a loss of just under one third of the region’s population.

45 For southern Europe, migration within the EU has become a grave problem. Hundreds of thousands of Portuguese have left, hoping to find better opportunities abroad. Coelho has said the next 10 to 15 years would be decisive in reversing the trend. If no action is taken, he said last year, “these issues will only be solved by a miracle.” [...]

[702 words]

Abridged from:
The Guardian, 23 August 2015
 Available online:
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/23/baby-crisis-europe-brink-depopulation-disaster>
 Accessed on 1 February 2016.

COMPREHENSION AND INTERPRETATION

Answer the following questions. Use complete sentences and your own words.

1. Why was Alejandro Macarrón surprised when working on the numbers of Spanish demographics?
2. What are two facts of Spain’s current demographic situation?
3. What paradox does the article highlight?
4. What do European societies need in order to become more self-sustaining?
5. What have Macarrón and some of his friends started? Why?
6. What prospect does every new generation of Spaniards face, if things do not change?



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7. What is the “grey vote” and why is it so powerful?
8. What do many villages in Galicia now look like?
9. How has the region of Galicia tried to tackle the demographic issue?
10. According to Portuguese Prime Minister Coelho, how long do southern European countries have to react to the critical demographic situation if it is to be changed?

PRODUCTION

Choose **one** of the following questions.

Number your answer clearly to show which question you have attempted.

Either

1. A 2015 Eurostat report titled *Being young in Europe today – demographic trends* tells us that the “median age of the EU-28 population was 41.9 years in 2013” and it “rose at a relatively rapid and consistent pace from 35.2 years in 1990.”
How do you think this fact, along with the issues illustrated in the article above, can affect you as a young European? Write an essay of approximately 300 words.

Or

2. Do you find it easy or difficult to relate to people who are much older than you, and why is that? Write a composition of about 300 words on your thoughts and experiences. Try to show self-awareness in your reflections.

Durata massima della prova: 6 ore.

È consentito soltanto l'uso dei dizionari monolingue e bilingue.

Non è consentito lasciare l'Istituto prima che siano trascorse 3 ore dalla dettatura del tema.