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Introduction

In modern times, Europe was the first region in the world to embark on the demographic transition. Today, European populations have reached a "post-transitional" stage. Europe is characterized by low mortality levels. These translate into high life expectancies at birth, which are estimated for both sexes at 78 and 81 years for Europe and the EU, respectively.[1] In addition, European populations have low and sometimes very low fertility levels. As a result, Europe is faced with significant population aging. In addition, Europe experiences important migratory trends. Although Europe sends migrants overseas, it receives more international immigrants and refugees, mostly from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. However, it is also important to note that 43 per cent of European international migrants in the past two decades were born in Europe.[2] Assuming that mortality conditions will continue to improve in Europe, the three major demographic challenges that the region must address are sub-replacement fertility, population aging, and immigration.

1. Population Reference Bureau, *2015 World Population Data Sheet*, (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2015).

2. United Nations, *International Migration Report 2013,* (New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013).

The demographic processes that have played out in Europe over the past centuries were shaped by multiple factors, including *inter alia* socio-economic advancements, achievements in medicine and hygiene, urbanization trends, ideational changes, and political upheavals. In more recent times, mostly after World War II, population policies have also contributed to modify demographic trends in some European countries, although leaders and the public alike have often turned a blind eye to the pressing population issues at hand.[3]

Population policies are prepared in the interest of the public good and are meant to mitigate, and if possible regulate, perceived population problems by adjusting population size and age structure to the rights, needs, and aspirations of the people. They are defined as the actions taken explicitly or implicitly by public authorities in order to prevent, delay, or address imbalances between demographic changes, on the one hand, and social, economic, environmental, and political goals, on the other.[4] Population policies may be explicit or implicit, which means that proposed interventions are either stated clearly or just implied.

The proposed policy interventions may be geared at one or several components of demographic change, i.e., mortality, fertility, population aging, and/or migration. However, in industrialized and European countries population policies are usually designed to address one demographic issue at the time. Policies are implemented through policy levers, which are entry points or policy instruments. Policy interventions are either direct, e.g., vaccination programs, or indirect, e.g., incentives to entice couples to have more children.[5]

Sound population policies call for an awareness of the issues at stake, as well as a consensus on the actions to be taken. They also require good data that are not always readily available, especially on international migration. Population issues, especially immigration, are sensitive and have the potential to trigger political passions among the general public, the stakeholders, and the lobbying groups. In this context, the public debate on future population policy orientations has been difficult and has often brought about a polarization of the stakeholders and the public opinion. The implementation of population policies necessitates adequate institutional settings, good coordination among various sectors, and effective monitoring and evaluation, in addition to strong political will.

3. Sections of this essay have been adapted from John F. May, *World Population Policies: Their Origin, Evolution, and Impact*, (New York: Springer, 2012), with kind permission from the publisher Springer Science+Business Media.

4. Ibid, p.42.

5. Ibidem.

Sub-Replacement Fertility

European countries, like most industrialized countries, are characterized by total fertility rates (TFR) that are lower and sometimes much lower than replacement level.[6] The average number of births per woman is 1.4 and 1.6 in Europe and the EU, respectively. Southern and Eastern Europe have the lowest fertility, with 1.4 and 1.6 children per woman, respectively. Only one European country, Kosovo (a predominantly Muslim country) has a TFR above replacement level, with 2.3 children per woman. Some countries such as France and Ireland have fertility levels that are close to, although slightly below, replacement level. The old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) is also affected by sub-replacement fertility, with a TFR of 1.8 children per woman—the Russian TFR has slightly increased in recent years.[7]

With respect to fertility, European countries fall into two categories: countries that have around 1.8 children per woman and those with TFRs in the vicinity of 1.4 children. In the first group, relatively higher levels of fertility will mitigate or at least postpone the consequences of population aging. A somewhat higher fertility level can maintain the structure and numbers of a population for a long time, depending on the initial age structure.

Countries in the second category, however, will face more severe consequences of population aging. Given the constraints of their age structure, they might experience an inversion of their population pyramids and even negative population momentum, whereby the process of depopulation cannot be stopped even if fertility should increase again.[8] However, the vicious-circle effect of sub-replacement fertility is not sufficiently documented due to the lack of empirical data. Moreover, sub-fertility is too recent to have yet a visible and significant impact.

Several factors can probably explain the low European fertility levels. First, societal values, economic patterns, and life cycles have changed fundamentally and reshaped traditional gender roles. These trends have probably been exacerbated by consumerist attitudes. European women pursue longer studies and are often employed (in many cases, they are more educated than their male partners). The uncertainty concerning the future (e.g., unemployment) and the lack of comprehensive child care in some countries (e.g., Germany) may also lead European women to postpone pregnancies. Second, family structures have undergone important changes, including challenges to the traditional authority of the "father

6. Demographers usually assume that women need to have 2.1 children on average in order to enable the replacement of generations. This figure, however, is somewhat arbitrary because it is linked to the mortality conditions of the moment (the figure might be slightly higher when mortality conditions are less favorable).

7. Population Reference Bureau, *2015 World Population Data Sheet*.

8. Jean-Claude Chesnais, *Le crépuscule de l'Occident. Dénatalité, condition des femmes et immigration,* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995), p. 235-273.

figure". Since women are empowered to take reproductive decisions, they have their first child later. Women probably make the final decisions about the total number of children they want. Third, the proximate determinants of fertility are also being affected. Since many women have postponed their first birth for many years, some may have become infertile before having the opportunity to conceive.

To some extent, contemporary angst and existential fears explain birth delays and postponement, and so does the calendar of fertility. The mean age at childbearing has increased in European countries. Small increases in fertility observed in recent years in some European countries (e.g., France) might be related to late childbearing (i.e., tempo effect). However, assertions that couples will eventually have enough children to renew the generations, but will have them later during their reproductive life, are not fully satisfactory. A majority of European couples (almost two-thirds) want to have at least two children, as illustrated by the Eurobarometer Special Surveys. This is the first choice of people questioned during demographic surveys, the second choice being three children. Evidently, fertility desires of European couples are only partially fulfilled today.[9]

The challenge of public policies aimed at increasing fertility is to design effective measures and programs to counteract the factors that have triggered the fertility decline in the first place. The reasons for a woman or a couple to have a child, or not to have one, are manifold. They include, but are not limited to, the marital status (including divorce and cohabitation), the cost of bringing up children, opportunity costs for women (e.g., inability to pursue higher education and/or to obtain employment), the household economic status, and the availability of child care and its compatibility with women's participation in the workforce.[10] In order to counteract some or several of these factors, European countries have offered and/or have contemplated benefits or incentives, as follows:[11]

– 14 weeks of leave for mothers, with parental leave up to 36 months; limited child-care centers (Germany)
– 26 and 14 weeks of leave for mothers and fathers, respectively (Ireland)
– A one-off payment of EUR 1,000 for the second child (Italy)
– 12 months off work with 80 per cent pay (or 10 months with 100 per cent pay) for mothers; fathers *must* take 4 months of leave (Norway)

9. John F. May, "Population Policy," in D. Poston & M. Micklin (Edits). *Handbook of Population*, (New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers (Springer), 2005), p. 843.

10. Mukesh Chawla, Gordon Betcherman & Arup Banerji, *From Red to Gray: The "Third Transition" of Aging Populations on Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2007), p. 9.

11. Ibidem; Peter McDonald, "Sustaining fertility through public policy: The range of options," *Population-E* 57(3), (2002), p. 417-446.

- EUR 258 payment to mothers under consideration for each new birth (and double for poor women); housing scheme being considered as well (Poland)
- Free maternity hospitals and free vitamins and iron supplements for pregnant women; payment of equivalent of USD 9,000 for a second child or a child of higher parity, since 2007 (Russia)
- Payment of EUR 2,500 for any birth, since 2007 (Spain)
- 18 months of paid maternity leave, plus subsidized day care and flexible and reduced working hours (Sweden); and
- 6 months of paid leave for mothers and optional 6 months unpaid leave after that; free early education centers (United Kingdom).

France offers an example of somewhat successful fertility policies.[12] The first paid maternity leave was introduced in 1913.[13] Thereafter, France adopted a new *Code de la famille* (Family Code) in 1939. Today, French pronatalist regulations are among the most generous in Europe. They include *inter alia* a maternity leave, benefits for children, family allowances, a single parent allowance, an adoption allowance, and some housing facilities for families with three or more children. Couples also receive sizeable maternity and paternity leaves. Female workers are entitled 16 weeks of paid and job-protected leave for the first and second child; the length of leave is increased for the third child. After the maternity leave expires, parents can take additional time off until the child reaches age three and they are also entitled to reintegration into the workplace. France has an extensive network of public child-care facilities (one of the largest in Europe), providing full day care as soon as a child reaches age two or three. Between 1995 and 1998, France spent 2.3 per cent of its gross domestic product on family benefits.[14] Nonetheless, France's cohort fertility has declined gradually, although it has increased slightly in recent years (TFR of 2.0 in 2015).[15] The generous French pronatalist measures do not seem to have brought fertility back to replacement level, although France is doing better than most European countries. Moreover, recent budgetary constraints in France may curb the fairly generous entitlements granted in previous decades.

Specialists are divided on the possibility for public policies to result in fertility increases. Although European fertility policies have occasionally obtained modest albeit short-lived results, they have generally failed to change fertility levels signif-

12. C. Alison McIntosh, *Population Policy in Western Europe: Responses to Low Fertility in France, Sweden, and West Germany,* (Armonk/London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1983), p. 43-57 & 104-126.

13. Chawla et al., *From Red to Gray: The "Third Transition,"* p. 9.

14. Ibid. p. 9-10.

15. Population Reference Bureau, *2015 World Population Data Sheet*.

icantly. Policy measures to deal with fertility may be enacted and then discontinued afterward because they are too expensive. For example, Spain once proposed generous payments for new births, but has to discontinue them later because they were not financially sustainable. Romania became a test case when it repressed abortion to increase birth rates, but effects dissipated rapidly and the policy led to increased maternal mortality rates caused mainly by illegal abortions.[16]

At best, public policies might slow down demographic trends perceived as being "negative", and do so at the margin.[17] The consensus among policy specialists is that the effects of transfer-based pronatalist policies are largely negligible. Traditional monetary transfers and tax breaks appear to be too low to cover the full costs of having and especially raising children. To have an impact, sub-replacement fertility policies should adopt a more comprehensive menu with a mix of costly and hard-to-implement family and social interventions. Current pronatalist measures, which are expensive, are often perceived by parents and potential parents as only temporary benefits. Since these stakeholders capture these benefits as soon as they are offered and for as long as they last, increases in fertility are often temporary. For policies aimed at raising fertility to be effective on a sustainable basis, policymakers should consider combining solid financial options with working arrangements and family incentives.[18]

However, there is also increasing evidence that some policies can have a significant impact, at least in the right context. Paid family leave, particularly when both parents are encouraged to share it, has to some extent sustained fertility levels in Scandinavian countries along with an excellent, means-tested mechanism of child care. These countries appear to have attained the child development community's ideal of family care in the first years of life and social and academic enrichment for preschoolers. Therefore, the way forward might be policies to reconcile work and childbearing within the broader context of societal values.[19]

Population Aging

The growing proportion of individuals aged 65 and older in relation to the total population has become an irreversible feature of European demographics. The consequence of the demographic transition is that more people live longer

16. Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

17. Jonathan Grant, Stijn Hoorens, Suja Sivadasan, Mirjam van het Loo, Julie DaVanzo, Lauren Hale, Shawna Gibson & William Butz, *Low Fertility and Population Aging: Causes, Consequences, and Policy Options*, (Santa Monica: RAND Europe, 2004).

18. Chawla et al., *From Red to Gray: The "Third Transition,"* p. 10; Peter McDonald, "Sustaining fertility through public policy."

19. Jean-Claude Chesnais, "Fertility, Family, and Social Policy in Contemporary Western Europe," *Population and Development Review* 22(4), (1996), p. 729-739.

and, therefore, older people become a growing proportion of the total population. In the past century, the process of population aging has accelerated as European countries saw their life expectancies increase rapidly and their fertility rates often reach sub-replacement levels. These two factors are the main engines of the aging process.[20] It has been estimated for Europe that, in a low fertility scenario, improvements in mortality conditions account for about a third of population aging, whereas fertility decline is the key driver.[21] Lower fertility rates modify also the age structure and reduce the number of youth relatively to older cohorts.[22]

The proportion of the elderly (people above age 65) is 17 per cent and 19 per cent in Europe and the EU, respectively (in the much younger populations of sub-Saharan Africa, it is only 3 per cent[23]). Population aging will become even more visible with the growing ranks of the "old old" (75–84), "older old" (i.e., 85+), centenarians (100+), and super-centenarians (110+). Economic and social implications of population aging are further illustrated by changes in dependency ratios. With population aging, the ratio of active persons to people 65 years and older becomes less favorable; currently, they are 19 per cent of people over 65 years in the EU, against 65 per cent in the 15-64 age group.[24]

However, measuring population aging by simply looking at the proportion of old people (however defined), is not fully satisfactory. The notion of aging is relative. Today, 65 year-old persons are young compared to their counterparts 50 or 60 years ago. Medical progress and life-style improvements have pushed back the frontier of old age, whose definition remains subjective. To capture all dimensions of old age, one should include an estimate of health and quality of life among old people (i.e., concept of life expectancy without disability). Another way to measure old age is to take into account the age at which a person becomes dependent on someone else. A new definition of old age should combine physical, psychological, and social dimensions, and not only endogenous demographic criteria.[25]

Population aging has enormous implications not only for the aging individuals themselves, but also for policy-making, public spending, and family policies.[26]

20. David E. Bloom, David Canning & Günther Fink, *The Graying of Global Population and Its Macroeconomic Consequences,* (Boston: Harvard School of Public Health, 2009), p. 5.

21. Gérard Calot & Jean-Paul Sardon, "Les facteurs du vieillissement démographique," *Population* 54(3), (1999), p. 509-552.

22. United Nations, *World Population Aging 2009*, (New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2009), p. 4.

23. Population Reference Bureau, *2015 World Population Data Sheet*.

24. Ibid.

25. Patrice Bourdelais, *Le nouvel âge de la vieillesse: Histoire du vieillissement de la population,* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1993).

26. World Bank, *Averting the Old Age Crisis: Policies to Protect the Old and Promote Growth*, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1994).

How countries and their institutions should adapt to rapid population aging while enhancing economic performance is a dominant question for policymakers.

The phenomenon of population aging raises concerns about pensions, caregiving, social security systems, macro-economic and fiscal imbalances, and economic performance more generally. In some low fertility countries, aging has also been linked to fears of depopulation, e.g., in Russia.[27] The rapid spread of the Alzheimer's disease, and its consequences for health services, adds a somber note to this picture.[28] The emergence of the debate about euthanasia in some countries (for example in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) is linked to increasing proportions of bed-ridden invalids. In addition, population aging evokes even more subjective notions of vitality and the survival of societies.

Implications of population aging are embodied in retirement decisions (e.g., age of retirement and public or private pension schemes), savings, and housing prospects of older individuals. These choices are responsive to institutional incentives including taxes, subsidies, laws, and economic policy.[29] A significant consequence of population aging is an imbalance in social security systems, with numbers of older individuals entitled to benefits exceeding numbers of active adults in the workforce.[30] This is a concern as most European countries pension schemes are organized as "pay-as-you-go" systems.

Numerous studies suggest that population aging may diminish the capacity of production in an economy because future workforces may shrink and older individuals do not work or save to the same extent as younger, active individuals.[31] However, some research indicates that the labor force may become larger despite the aging process, because more women may be enticed to join the labor force. Young active adults might also increase capital accumulation and saving rates.[32]

Some authors emphasize mostly the negative weight of old people in a society, the cost of their retirement, and the burden posed by their health care. A large literature has appeared recently on the graying of Western societies.[33] The reduction

27. Kevin Kinsella & David R. Phillips "Global Aging: The Challenge of Success," *Population Bulletin* 60(1), (2005), p. 17.

28. Catherine Gourbin & Guillaume Wunsch, "Hospitalization rates for Alzheimer's disease," *Archives of Public Health* 59(1), (2001), p. 29-42.

29. Axel Borsch-Supan & Pierre-Andre Chiappori, "Aging Population: Problems and Policy Options in the US and Germany," *Economic Policy* 6(12), (1991), p. 129.

30. Population Reference Bureau, "Social Security Systems Around the World," in *Today's Research on Aging, Program and Policy Implications* (Issue 15), (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2009), p. 2.

31. Bloom et al, *The Graying of Global Population,* p. 7.

32. Ibid, p. 8.

33. Philip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It,* (Cambridge: Basic Books, 2004); George Magnus, *The Age of Aging: How Demographics Are Changing the Global Economy and Our World,* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia), 2009). Pte. Ltd.

of fertility could cause a progressive economic recession, so goes the reasoning, because entire sectors aimed at young classes might disappear (e.g., education, leisure industry, etc.). When these young classes reach adult age, the economic recession would only deepen. Older people require more care and those aged 90 and over are rarely autonomous; many require continuous care, medical attendance, a constant presence, and often have to be placed in institutions. Family solidarity is scarce because of declining fertility and reduced number of siblings; the responsibilities of the State and communities do increase.

By contrast, others researchers view population aging more positively and talk about the "gray revolution". They place their hopes in socioeconomic and political measures that would enable older people to participate more fully in the economy. Relatively young people are often forced to take early retirement (in some European countries, age for early retirement was set at 55 or even 50, although the recent trend is to increase the retirement age). The wealth of experience of older people could bring much added-value to the economy.[34] Even aging European countries (e.g., Germany) continue to dominate the international economic scene.

To address the implications of population aging, policymakers have identified policy levers to influence and mitigate its effects. They have taken programmed initiatives, for instance through the provision of specific care for the elderly. Another effective policy lever is the age at retirement. Institutional incentives and disincentives to retire at a particular age could arguably be adjusted to encourage later retirement. Other areas where incentives could be adjusted include taxing more heavily the wealth among older individuals and bequests, raising social security taxes, promoting healthier aging, and increasing incentives for family care of older members.[35]

The implications of population aging are multi-faceted, and population aging may also reinforce existing gender inequalities as older women usually face more hardship. Policies to deal with population aging are complex to design and to implement. Such policies do need to involve many different elements, including aspects dealing with social security, public health, and economic strategy. These policies have also significant financing and fiscal space dimensions. To sum up, it may be said that European policies have somewhat helped to mitigate the consequences of population aging, but have not achieved to set up entirely satisfactory sets of measures and programs to deal fully with the aging process.

34. Robert Rochefort, *Vive le papy-boom*, (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2000).

35. Population Reference Bureau, "Assessing the Fiscal Impact of Aging," in *Research Highlights in Demography and Economy of Aging* (Vol. 9), (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2007), p. 1; Borsch-Supan & Chiappori, "Aging Population," p. 129-130.

Immigration

Contrary to countries perceived as being immigration-friendly, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the US, European countries have traditionally been less open to immigration. However, this statement should be qualified as many immigration-friendly countries have recently tightened their immigration policies. Conversely, some European countries have received large numbers of immigrants in the recent decades and are now confronted with important inflows of refugees. Between 1990 and 2010, Europe and Northern America were the two regions in the world that gained the most annually from net international migration.[36]

The net migration rate for both Europe at large (48 countries and geopolitical entities) and the EU (28 countries) is currently estimated at 2 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants.[37] Between 1990 and 2013, Europe gained 23 million international migrants, of which 43 per cent were born in Europe, 22 per cent in Asia, 18 per cent in Africa, and 14 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.[38] The presence near Europe of regions with higher fertility levels (e.g., Africa) creates migratory pressures from these regions. Moreover, the ongoing political turmoil in large swathes of the Middle East and the Sahel region creates additional migration push factors.

Immigration is arguably one of the most controversial population policy issues in European countries. In the context of globalization, goods, services, and capital are moving more freely. Movement of people, however, remains constrained, despite the need for global labor mobility. Immigration issues often spark fears of changes that could result from the arrival of new populations. In many European countries there are groups, organizations, and political parties opposing immigration-friendly policies. Common concerns relate to adverse socioeconomic consequences for host populations, such as loss of job opportunities and decreasing living standards (i.e., lower wages). Immigrants are often seen as a threat to low skilled workers, to the setting of societies, and even to countries' cultural and religious values.[39]

Nonetheless, many European countries need immigration to shore up their declining labor forces and sustain their economies (e.g., Germany). When considering low skilled work, it is generally acknowledged that immigrants are more likely to accept low wages and sometimes dangerous jobs, which natives are less willing to take. Furthermore, immigrants provide an array of skills and/or cheap

36. United Nations, *International Migration Report 2013,* p. 11.

37. Population Reference Bureau, *2015 World Population Data Sheet*.

38. United Nations, *International Migration Report 2013,* p. 3.

39. Philip Martin & Gottfried Zürcher, "Managing Migration: The Global Challenge," *Population Bulletin* 63(1), (2008), p. 4.

labor that positively contribute to the economy. Consequently, countries may target both highly skilled and less-skilled immigrants, especially in areas where domestic labor is insufficient. Immigration is sometimes encouraged to replace population deficits (i.e., depleted cohorts) in receiving countries, and to counter the effects of low fertility and population aging.

However, there are many unresolved issues, including projecting the number of immigrants needed to avoid population decline and how to best integrate immigrants in receiving countries. The immigration debate is significantly complicated by immigration's linkages to national identity, and how immigrants could modify it. In fact, as immigration has become more visible, negative public sentiment toward immigrants has occasionally led to hostility from receiving populations.

European immigration policies have been shaped by the specific economic and political context of receiving countries.[40] Over the past decades, Europe has used diverse policy levers to encourage and/or discourage immigration. Until the oil crisis in 1973, immigration levels were high, with many labor migrants entering Europe. Labor immigration was facilitated in most countries because economies were booming and larger workforces were desirable. At the time, European countries generally pursued a laissez-faire immigration policy.[41] In Germany, an extensive guest worker and "temporary" migrant system facilitated labor migration. In France, a policy of permanent migration included integration and assimilation, especially for immigrants from former French colonies.[42]

Assimilation and integration efforts in Europe, which have been accentuated in recent years, can be seen as policies to assist faster adjustments of immigrants but are also likely to make migration more difficult for many individuals.[43] The notion of integration implies assimilation, e.g., learning the language of the host country, blending into the economy with minimal discrimination, adopting customs and political mores of the receiving country, and eventually acquiring citizenship. Integration occurs through institutions such as schools, professional groups, as well as community and neighborhood associations. If immigrants are more numerous than native populations, these institutions no longer serve as efficient tools of the melting pot. If immigrants stay isolated culturally, socially, or religiously and/or do not mingle geographically with inhabitants of the host country (e.g., ghettos), the melting pot does not work either. Interestingly, these

40. May, *World Population Policies,* p. 171.

41. Klaus F. Zimmermann, "Tackling the European Migration Problem," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9(2), (1995), p. 58.

42. Ibid. p. 7.

43. Ibid. p. 51; María Bruquetas-Callejo, Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, Rinus Penninx & Peter Scholten (n.d.), *Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case* (IMISCOE Working Paper: Country Report, Working Paper 15), (Amsterdam: IMISCOE, 1995), p. 21.

integration efforts have recently been symptomatic of European countries renouncing a "multicultural" identity, such as the Netherlands, where immigration policies currently concentrate expectations, costs, and responsibility for assimilation on the immigrant alone.[44] In Europe at large, there is pressure to integrate immigrants, which is much less pronounced in the US where ethnic or cultural niches can coexist without much contact or need for assimilation.[45] To some extent, Europe appears to face more problems in addressing the issue of immigration than long-standing immigration countries such as the US, Canada, and Australia.

After the oil crisis of 1973, there were increasing restrictions on immigration to Europe, especially in Germany and France (in 1995, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom received about 88 per cent of the EU's immigrants[46]). The number of migrants sharply decreased and actions were even taken to favor the return of immigrants to their country of origin. In France, policy levers included limitations on family reunification, strict border controls, and priority given to domestic labor through strong trade unions. In Germany, acquiring citizenship became difficult for non-ethnic Germans and settlement remained difficult because immigration rights were granted on a temporary basis.[47] Although immigration increased again in the 1990s as individuals from Eastern Europe migrated to Western Europe and the number of asylum seekers and refugees increased as well, policies have continued to become more selective and restrictive. Today, special status and programs for highly skilled migrants are present in EU countries (e.g., Green Paper of 2005 and Blue Card of 2009), including some bilateral agreements between countries to attract the types of immigrants required. However, family reunification has become more restricted. For instance, in Ireland parents whose children were born in some other European Union countries cannot gain citizenship anymore. In the Netherlands, minimum age and wages have become conditions for spouses to immigrate. In Denmark, some European Union nationals must prove solvency if they wish to bring their foreign spouses to live in Denmark.[48]

Each country has its own immigration policy characteristics and the EU has made efforts to try to harmonize policies. Under the Schengen Agreement to create a passport-free zone, which was adopted in 1985 but implemented 10 years later, the EU sought to harmonize policies through stricter external border

44. Ibid, p. 3 & 21.

45. Zimmermann, "Tackling the European Migration Problem," p. 51.

46. Martin & Zürcher, "Managing Migration," p. 12.

47. Zimmermann, "Tackling the European Migration Problem," p. 57-58.

48. United Nations, *International Migration Report 2006: A Global Assessment,* (New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2006), p. 10.

control, a more integrated visa policy, and the management of asylum policies.[49] Numerous directives on immigration have been adopted at the EU level. The coordination of national and supranational policies can be challenging, yet joint policies are arguably a major lever to control migration to Europe, the strict tightening of external borders being an example of this.[50] The paradox, however, is that the European integration and the free movement of labor among the EU countries, which affects labor markets of many member states, has been counterbalanced by a much greater rigidity of policies toward immigrants originating from outside the EU.

Today, European countries are confronted with large numbers of refugees, in addition to the traditional "economic" migrants. The EU has not been able to reach yet a broad policy consensus on immigration and refugees issues. Policy discussions will inevitably entail the issue of immigration quotas in receiving and also probably in sending countries. So far, most European countries do not have immigration quotas, and hardly discuss such quotas during immigration policy debates. The 2015 European refugee crisis appears to be a turning point in European immigration policies and Germany decided to accept more refugees, a sharp departure from previous policies.

Challenges and Prospects

Due to the "explosive" demographic transition in sub-Saharan Africa,[51] Africa's share of the world population will increase dramatically. Asia's population will also continue to increase, whereas the European population is poised to decrease slowly until 2050, and more rapidly between 2050 and 2100 (United Nations, 2015).[52] The reshuffling of the demographic weight among the different regions of the world will inevitably have significant geopolitical consequences for Europe, not the least because of potentially increasing migratory flows toward European and EU countries. Europe also faces the challenge of population aging, which in some countries (e.g., Germany) translates already into labor force shortages. To be sure, the three main challenges that the European countries are facing, i.e., sub-replacement fertility, population aging, and immigration, are quite difficult to address. Nevertheless, policy responses to these demographic challenges will

49. Zimmermann, "Tackling the European Migration Problem," p. 59.

50. Virginie Guiraudon, "European Integration and Migration Policy: Vertical Policy-making as Venue-shopping," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38(2), (2000), p. 268.

51. Henri Leridon, "Afrique subsaharienne: une transition démographique explosive," *Futuribles* 407, (2015), p. 5-21.

52. United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*, (New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015).

have important consequences for the sustainability of the socioeconomic achievements of European countries.

In many European countries population issues have not yet received the priority they deserve. Indifference and lack of concern about demographic issues have often prevailed.[53] As mentioned, the debate, if and when it occurs, is marred by controversy and passion. Non-interventionists are opposed by those who wish to take action. Demographic problems are not analyzed in a pragmatic way, free of political or ideological agendas. Too often, demographic issues are framed by the traditional opposition between Left and Right. A further complicating factor is that information sources and relevant stakeholders are fragmented (i.e., public administrations dealing with population issues).

Many policymakers, demographers, and intellectuals do not see the need to intervene on demographic patterns and trends and in particular to design policies to increase fertility. Some demographers have even dubbed a "demographic obsession" any interest into future population trends.[54] On the contrary, others have highlighted dire scenarios should fertility remain below replacement levels, promising that soon an aging Europe would be overwhelmed by waves of immigrants.[55] These constituencies call for immediate actions, in particular to increase low levels of fertility and regulate migration inflows.

With respect to the policies and regulations that are needed, one of the most pressing concerns is to obtain a policy consensus on which interventions to propose and implement. This is necessary in order to muster the goodwill and commitment of policy constituencies, namely political leaders, public authorities, the media, and the general public. In addition, one should enlist the support of demographers, political scientists, and intellectuals, whose contribution is important to inform the public debate and help design adequate policy responses.[56] Finally, the support of all these constituencies will also be necessary for the implementation of the policies, as well as their proper monitoring and evaluation.

The current crisis of the refugees might serve as a clarion call for European countries to design sound and consensual population policies, especially in the area of immigration. Given their "post-transitional" status, Europe and the EU could serve as a laboratory of population policies for other parts of the world, which sooner or later may experience similar demographic challenges. Policymakers in Europe will need to appreciate that it is feasible to design interventions

53. Paul Demeny, "Population Policy Dilemmas in Europe at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century," *Population and Development Review* 29(1), (2003), p. 1-28.

54. Hervé Le Bras, *Marianne et les lapins: L'obsession démographique*, (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1991).

55. Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West*, (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

56. Peter J. Donaldson, *Toward an Engaged Public Demography* (Occasional Paper), (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2011).

to deal with population issues. They will also need to appreciate that it is possible to do so with some degree of effectiveness and, last but not least, that population policies can be designed within the framework of Human Rights.[57] Indeed, consensual, meaningful, and actionable population policies are urgently needed if Europe does not want its demography to become its destiny.

Abstract

Both the European Union (28 countries) and Europe at large (48 countries and geopolitical entities) have completed their demographic transition. They currently experience a "post-transitional" situation and are faced with three major demographic challenges, namely below-replacement fertility, population aging, and immigration. Despite laissez-faire attitudes in many European countries, several governments have designed public policies to address some or all of these issues. However, policies to increase fertility levels and to address the challenges of population aging have yielded somewhat mixed results. A pressing problem in Europe today is the management of large numbers of immigrants and especially refugees. On this count, European Union (EU) countries have not been able yet to reach a strong policy consensus. Nonetheless, given their "post-transitional" status, Europe and the EU could serve as a laboratory of public policies for other parts of the world, which sooner or later may experience similar demographic challenges.

Résumé

L'Union européenne (28 pays) et l'Europe dans sa totalité (48 pays et entités géopolitiques) ont terminé leur transition démographique. Elles connaissent actuellement une situation « post-transitionnelle » et sont confrontées à trois défis démographiques majeurs, à savoir une sous-fécondité n'assurant plus le remplacement des générations, un vieillissement de la population et l'immigration. En dépit d'attitudes de laissez faire de beaucoup de pays européens, plusieurs gouvernements ont adopté des politiques publiques pour gérer certaines ou toutes ces questions. Cependant, les politiques destinées à augmenter les niveaux de fécondité et celles s'attaquant aux défis du vieillissement ont donné des résultats quelque peu mitigés. Un problème urgent en Europe aujourd'hui est la gestion d'un grand nombre d'immigrants, et en particulier de réfugiés. Concernant cette question, les pays de l'Union européenne (UE) n'ont pas encore été capables de parvenir à un consensus politique fort. Néanmoins, étant donné leur statut « post-transitionnel », l'Europe et l'UE pourraient servir de laboratoire en matière de politiques publiques pour les autres parties du monde lesquelles, tôt ou tard, pourraient être confrontées à des défis démographiques semblables.

57. John F. May, *Agir sur les évolutions démographiques*, Coll. Académie en poche, No. 22, (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 2013), p. 127-129.