New Demographic Faces of Europe

The Changing Population Dynamics in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

With 131 Figures and 151 Tables
Preface

The collapse of the communist system ten years ago caused profound changes in the main demographic processes and fostered transformation of population structures in all former communist countries. In most of them, fertility declined dramatically, mortality worsened and migration moved in new directions and intensities. The other processes such as marriages, divorces, and abortions developed new characteristics. And, above all, the altered demographic situation is grounded on new and quite different socio-economic foundations. Despite many general trends, however, a great deal of individuality in the transition processes of participating countries is evident.

The Central and East European Demographic Network (CEDN) represents an international co-operation of demographers, statisticians and other professionals interested in population development, which was established in view of these dramatic demographic transition processes. The CEDN objectives involve monitoring and analysing recent spatial population distribution and forecasting its future development in the target region. The core activities of this project are the description and analysis of population structures and processes on a sub-national (regional) level through its basic components (fertility, mortality and migration) and their changes in a new economic, social and political context. In particular, the processes' intensity, structural characteristics, dynamics and their interregional differentiation together with the impact on formation of spatial demographic structures are the major focus of the CEDN research inquiry. It is aimed to identify regularities and causalities that would allow comprehensive forecasting. All project activities are directed towards creating the national sets of regional population forecasts, which would describe the probable future development of regional population size and structure according to sex and age.

The first volume through its focus on national population development intends to prepare a comparable informative and cognitive basis for realisation of the central effort of CEDN – further demographic studies on sub-national levels. The sense and need for sub-national population analysis is well illustrated in the last chapter of the volume.

This publication is of specific importance for the described field of research because it presents the recent demographic chronicle of Europe in terms of a new variety of population developments on both sides of the former iron curtain. It elucidates singularities of the demographic situation in different national populations as well as peculiarities in data availability and methods. And most importantly, it presents the evidence that the demographic changes observed in post-communist countries have been more than a simple process of demographic adaptation to so-called Western structures, because Western populations also show a variety of change. Aside
11. Introduction

The Republic of Moldova – the second smallest country among the republics of the former USSR – is situated in the south of Eastern Europe, between Romania and Ukraine. Located in the area surrounded by deltas of Nistru, Prut and Danube rivers, it has experienced frequent changes in borders and territory size. Moldova was part of the Russian Empire until 1918, then it declared independence and united with Romania. The newly formed Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics refused to recognize this unification and in 1924 established Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) by partitioning the ethnically mixed part of Ukraine located by the Nistru river, although the share of Moldovan population in this region was only 30% (O’Loughlin et al., 1998). During the Second World War, in August 1940, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was established in its present borders. Later, the territory was annexed by Romania and then again by the USSR at the end of the Second World War. During the post-war period an intense Russification of Moldovan society took place. Russian language was introduced into everyday life and the Cyrillic alphabet replaced traditional Latin alphabet in Moldovan language, which is similar to Romanian language.

After the first democratic elections held in February-March 1990, the new government took power in May 1990 and introduced series of radical changes – the major being the declaration of the sovereignty in June 1990, and the change of the republic’s name first to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and then to the Republic of Moldova in May 1991. Subsequently, two inner regions declared their own independence: The Republic of Gagauzia (in August 1990) and the Transdniester Soviet Socialist Republic (in September 1990). The Gagauzian region is located in the rural south of the country and is mainly inhabited by an ethnic group of a Turkic origin known as the Gagauz, whose main religion is Orthodox Christianity. The Transdniester Moldovan Republic, with the capital Tiraspol, is located in the so-called Transnistria, on the east bank of the river Nistru, and is populated mostly by Slavonic people.

Following the collapse of the 1991 August coup d’état in the former Soviet Union, the Republic of Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August...
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