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The demographic future of Europe and migration

Motion for a resolution¹

tabled by Ms Gultakin HAJIBAYLI and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Demography is the combined result of various factors, including birth rate, life expectancy and migration flows. The Assembly, in two relatively recent debates (2004 and 2006), addressed the problem of policy measures that can influence population trends ([Recommendation 1683](#)) and demographic challenges for social cohesion ([Resolution 1502](#), [Recommendation 1749](#)). Population developments are important for a vast number of policy areas.

Europe's population will have dropped by 67 million, from 731 million in 2005 to 664 million by the year 2050, according to a report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This population fall may increase the continent's dependence on immigration, not least to ensure a functioning economy and the maintenance of social structures.

The world population is projected to rise from today's 7 billion to 9.2 billion in 2050. This, according to the report, assumes that fertility will continue to fall in developing countries. If it stays at current rates, the world population will increase by about 5 billion, nearing 12 billion by 2050, with the population of less developed nations increasing to 10.6 billion, instead of 7.9 billion.

Europe's share of the world population has declined from some 25% at the beginning of the 20th century to 11% currently, and this will probably drop to around 7% by 2050.

This underlines the urgency of meeting family planning needs in developing nations, thus giving couples, and in particular women, the means to exercise their human right to freely determine the size of their families, according to UNFPA Executive Director, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid. It also points to the need for Europe to assess population-related policies in a globalisation scenario.

All European countries are experiencing rising longevity of their population and many countries are concerned about low fertility rates. The population of more and more countries is greying. The challenges facing European society because of population ageing can only increase, as the main thrust is yet to come when the populous "baby boom" generation reaches retirement age. The number of persons of traditional working age will decline and the economic dependency ratio will increase (number of economically inactive population, such as pensioners, children and young people in education, divided by the number of economically active population of working age). This will have important economic consequences.

1. Referred to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, for report: Reference No. 3459 (19th Sitting, 23 June 2008).



Migration is, in addition to natural growth/decline, the other, increasingly dominant, population growth factor. The highest rates of positive net migration (the balance of immigration and emigration) are witnessed in southern Europe. However, some European countries or regions have also experienced higher emigration than immigration rates, which leads to a shrinking of the population. Some of these countries or regions have been particularly concerned about the emigration of highly educated young people.

Population decline, migration and ageing of the population need to be looked at together, to assess the future of Europe's population. European policy makers need to understand how each of these three factors interlink when devising policies linked to population management, migration management and management of an ageing population.

The Council of Europe, and in particular its Parliamentary Assembly, could be a privileged forum to take up this pan-European debate on European population decline and its multiple consequences, including for future migration policy. It is also important that the Assembly be aware of and debate the population changes in developing countries, in particular the poorest ones, where family planning and health care are crucial factors for development.

The Assembly therefore calls on Council of Europe member governments to:

1. compare and review their population-related policies;
2. assess the needs of the economy for labour of different categories in order to ensure economic growth and social progress;
3. design migration policies responding to identified needs without causing unnecessary harm, such as brain and skills drain, to countries of emigration, including by promoting co-development policies and circular migration.

The Assembly also calls on the UNFPA to continue its mission of promoting the rights of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity, and asks Council of Europe member governments to help ensure the necessary funding for UNFPA's work programme.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed²:

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2. EDG: European Democrat Group
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