

COORDINATES OF EUROPEAN UNION POPULATION EVOLUTION

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The paper emphasizes the evolution of EU population during the last 12 years, actual trend and the future expectations. The main issue of this work is about the actual slowly increase of the EU population and the future decrease, especially after 2025, with negative influence on the active population and dependency ratio. The paper also emphasizes the different demographic evolution both for EU 25 countries and the candidates ones.

For every country but also for Europe the evolution of population plays an important role to the economic and social development and a decline of it, may have serious consequences.

And because of this, the demographic situation must be measured and analysed both at the national level and in a global context.

If Europe aims to be a major force in the world, Europe must do something, because a force with a declining population is not one of increasing power. We say this because if the actual demographic situation is quite good, the future is not so promising.

1. RECENT TRENDS OF EU POPULATION

During the last 12 years, the population of the EU has grown from 445,3 million in 1994 to almost 462 million in 2006 (Figure 1).

We can observe that the EU population continues to increase slowly [1]. On 1 January 2006, the population of the EU 25 was 461,5 million and that of Candidate Countries 106,3 million. The population of EU 25 increased by 2,0 million in 2005 and by 2,3 million in 2004; the increase in 2004 was the largest in more than 30 years.

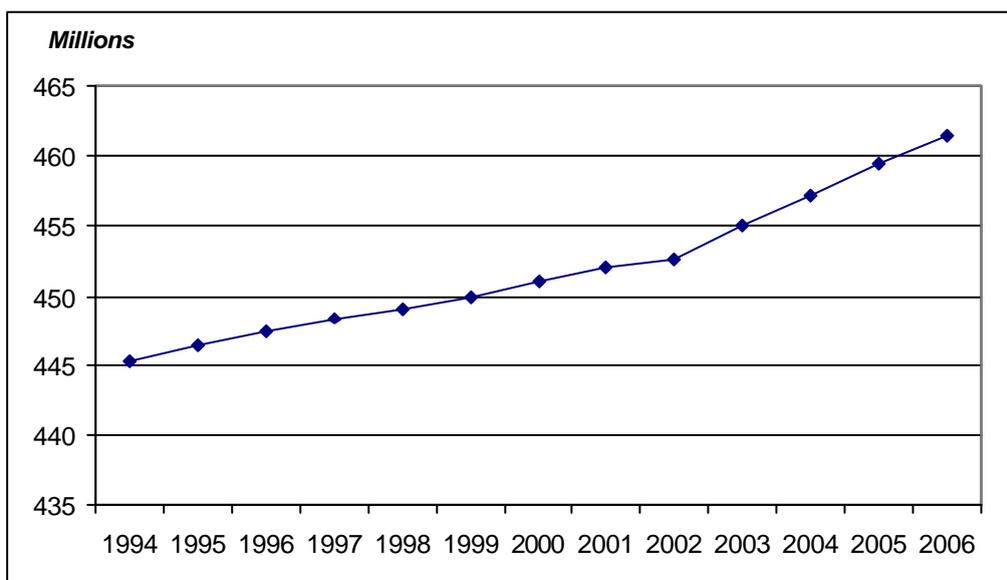


Figure 1 Total population, EU 25, 1994-2006

In relative terms the EU 25 population is expected to grow by 0,44% in 2005 [2].

The number of live births is expected to increase slightly from 4,80 million in 2004, to 4,82 million in 2005.

The total number of deaths is also expected to increase from 4,35 million in 2004, to 4,49 million in 2005.

So, natural population change (live births minus deaths) is therefore too slow significant decrease from 447000 in 2004, to 327000 in 2005 (Table 1).

Table 1: Population change in 2005 (first estimates)

	Population 1.01.2005	Natural change	Net migration	Total change	Population 1.01.2006	Crude natural change rate	Crude net migration rate	Crude growth rate
	(1000)					per 1000		
EU 25	459488,4	327,2	1691,5	2018,7	461507,1	0,7	3,7	4,4
EU 15	385383,4	409,4	1628,7	2038,0	387421,4	1,1	4,2	5,3
Candidate Countries	105472,5	815,1	-12,0	803,2	106275,8	7,7	-0,1	7,6
Belgium	10445,9	15,0	33,3	48,2	10494,1	1,4	3,2	4,6
Czech Republic	10220,6	-5,6	35,6	30,0	10250,5	-0,5	3,5	3,9
Denmark	5411,4	8,5	7,8	16,2	5427,6	1,6	1,4	3,0
Germany	82500,8	-143,7	98,5	-45,2	82455,7	-1,7	1,2	-0,5
Estonia	1347,0	-3,4	-0,4	-3,8	1343,2	-2,5	-0,3	-2,8
Greece	11075,7	2,3	34,3	36,5	11112,2	0,2	3,1	3,3
Spain	43038,0	90,6	662,3	742,9	43781,0	2,1	15,0	17,1
France	60561,2	227,7	102,9	330,5	60891,7	3,7	1,7	5,4
Ireland	4109,2	36,6	47,2	83,8	4193,0	8,8	11,4	20,2
Italy	58462,4	-28,3	338,1	309,8	58772,2	-0,5	5,8	5,3
Cyprus	749,2	3,2	20,7	23,9	773,0	4,1	27,2	31,3
Latvia	2306,4	-11,3	-1,1	-12,4	2294,1	-4,9	-0,5	-5,4
Lithuania	3425,3	-13,7	-10,3	-24,0	3401,3	-4,0	-3,0	-7,0
Luxembourg	455,0	1,8	1,6	3,3	458,3	3,9	3,4	7,3
Hungary	10097,5	-39,7	18,1	-21,6	10076,0	-3,9	1,8	-2,1
Malta	402,7	1,1	2,0	3,1	405,8	2,7	5,0	7,8
Netherlands	16305,5	51,2	-19,1	32,1	16337,6	3,1	-1,2	2,0
Austria	8206,5	3,0	61,0	63,9	8270,4	0,4	7,4	7,8
Poland	38173,8	-12,9	-13,0	-25,8	38148,0	-0,3	-0,3	-0,7
Portugal	10529,3	8,3	41,1	49,4	10578,7	0,8	3,9	4,7
Slovenia	1997,6	-0,9	7,2	6,3	2003,9	-0,5	3,6	3,1
Slovak Republic	5384,8	1,0	4,1	5,1	5389,9	0,2	0,8	0,9
Finland	5236,6	9,4	8,8	18,2	5254,8	1,8	1,7	3,5
Sweden	9011,4	4,2	24,7	28,9	9040,3	0,5	2,7	3,2
United Kingdom	60034,5	122,9	196,3	319,2	60353,7	2,0	3,3	5,3
Bulgaria	7761,0	-43,6	-13,7	-57,3	7703,8	-5,6	-1,8	-7,4
Croatia	4443,9	-7,4	11,5	4,1	4448,0	-1,7	2,6	0,9
Romania	21658,5	-44,9	-9,8	-54,7	21603,9	-2,1	-0,5	-2,5
Turkey	71609,0	911,0	0,0	911,0	72520,0	12,6	0,0	12,6

Source: Eurostat, First demographic estimates for 2005

The Candidate Countries with 106,3 million in 1 January 2006 accounts for 23,0% of the EU 25 population and is an increase of 803000 compared with 1 January 2005, due to positive natural growth (live births out numbering deaths).

The increase of Candidate Countries population is different from country to country: while in Turkey the increase was of 911000, in Croatia was only of 4100 and in Romania and Bulgaria was a decrease of over 54000.

Taking into consideration the data from the table, it may be observed that in 2005 the EU Member States experienced very different rates of population growth.

Within in the EU 25, the highest rates of natural increase (the difference between the number of births and deaths per thousand inhabitants) were observed in Cyprus (+4,5‰), Ireland (+8,8‰), Luxembourg (+3,9‰), France (+3,7‰), Netherlands (+3,1‰).

The largest rates of natural decrease were observed in: Lithuania (-4,0‰), Bulgaria (-5,6‰), Romania (-2,1‰) and Estonia (-2,5‰). The decrease of natural rates in the ex-communist countries was determined by the renouncing at the pro-natalist policies practiced by communist governments, combined with economic difficulties and the decrease of the quality of life (high unemployment rates, high level of consumer prices index, difficult transition to the market economy etc.).

After a period of rather strong decline in the 1990's, the net inflow of international migrants to the EU increased to 1981000 in 2003, but for 2005 net migration is expected to decrease to a level of around 1691000 persons.

The majority of the EU countries are expected to experience a decrease in their net migration rates in 2005 (+3,7 per inhabitants in the EU 25).

The highest rates of net migration were observed in: Cyprus (+27,2‰), Spain (15,0‰), Ireland (+11,4‰), Austria (7,4‰), Italy (5,8‰). In absolute terms the largest net migration was registered most in developed countries (Spain – 662,3 thousand people, United Kingdom – 319,2 and Italy – 309,8).

The largest rates of net migration decrease were observed in: Lithuania (-3,0‰), Bulgaria (-1,8‰), Netherlands (-1,2‰).

In absolute terms the largest population decrease was observed in Romania (-54,7 thousand inhabitants), Germany (-45,2), Bulgaria (-57,3), Poland (-25,8) and the strongest increases in Spain (+742,9), France (+330,5), Italy (+309,8), United Kingdom (+319,2).

2. THE FUTURE OF EU POPULATION

According to the Eurostat [3] the total population of the EU 25 is expected to increase by more than 8 million inhabitants, from 461,5 million on 1 January 2006 to 470,1 million on 1 January 2025.

Population growth in the EU 25 until 2025 will be mainly due to net migration, since total deaths in the EU 25 will outnumber total births from 2010.

The effect of net migration will no longer outweigh the natural decrease after 2025 when the population will start to decline gradually.

The population will reach 449,8 million on 1 January 2050, that is a decrease of more than 20 million inhabitants compared to 2025 (by 1,5% resulting from a 0,4% increase for the EU 15 and a 11,7% decrease for the ten new Member States).

Between 2004 and 2050, the largest declines are expected to be observed in most of the new Member States: Latvia (-19,2%), Estonia (-16,6%), Lithuania (-16,4%), the Czech Republic (-12,9%), Hungary and Slovakia (both -11,9%) and Poland (-11,8%).

Over the whole period the strongest increase will be recorded in: Luxembourg (+42,3%), Ireland (+36,0%), Cyprus (+33,5%) and Malta (+27,1%).

In absolute terms, the largest population decrease is expected in Germany (-7,9 million), followed by Italy (-5,2 million) and Poland (-4,5 million), while the highest rises are expected in France (+5,8 million), the United Kingdom (+4,7 million) and Ireland (+1,5 million).

The share of the population of working age (between 15 and 64) in the total population is expected to decrease strongly in the EU, from 67,2% in 2004 to 56,7% in 2050, that is a fall of 52 million inhabitants of working age (Figure 2).

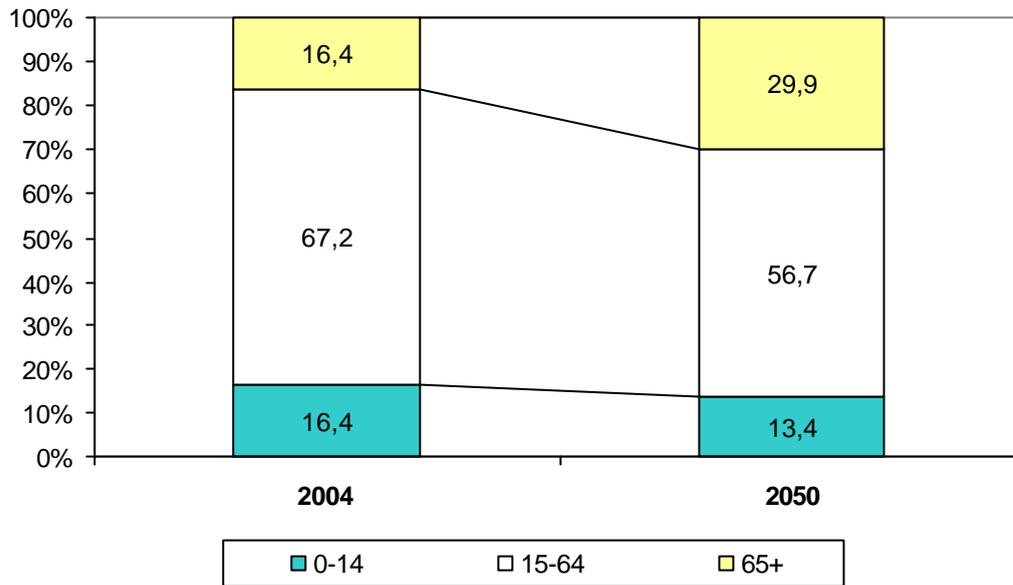


Figure 2 Structure on age of EU 25 population in 2004 and 2050

The share of population aged between 0 and 14 will also be reduced from 16,4% in 2004 to 13,4% in 2050, while the proportion of elderly people (aged 65 and more) is expected to almost double over this period from 16,4% in 2004 to 29,9% in 2050.

As consequence, the total dependency ratio in the EU 25 would increase from 48,9% in 2004 to 76,5% in 2050. This means that whereas in 2004 there was one inactive person (young or elderly) for every two people of working age, in 2050 there would be three inactive people for every four of working age.

More precisely, total dependency will start to increase around 2010, when those born from 1950 onwards (the baby boomers) will begin to enter retirement age. Then, the population of working ages will probably start to fall, while total population growth will slow down.

So, the future of Europe, including Candidate Countries, is not at all very encouraging, because the risks caused by the ageing population would be numerous and difficult to bear, threatening not only the economic sector but especially the social security and retirement systems[4].

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