

Demographic and Migratory Flows affecting European Regions and Cities – “DEMIFER”

The key objective is “to assess the effects of demographic trends and migration flows on European regions and cities, and to examine the implications for regional competitiveness and European social cohesion, taking into account possible effects of climate change.”

The project will explore impacts on the size and structure of populations, but also will look at the possible effects of policies on demography. Among the key questions to be researched are:

- Why do some regions attract highly skilled people, whereas others do not?
- Why are the financial consequences for the regions that migrants leave – e.g. flows of remittances?
- Who are the migrants, and does their profile fit different types of cities and regions?

Because of problems of data availability the research will concentrate on NUTS 2 level.

There was a demography project in the ESPON 2006 programme (1.1.4). It identified the main parameters of Europe’s demography and migration – e.g. an ageing society, especially in remote rural regions experiencing depopulation; migration of the young to large urban areas, and of the middle aged to pleasant environments; and at a European level, east to west migration. The Spatial Scenarios project (3.2) of the 2006 programme also produced demographic scenarios that fed into integrated scenarios for 2030 based on policies emphasising either competitiveness or cohesion. The DEMIFER project builds on these previous findings.

In most ESPON countries, immigration and emigration have more impact on population size and structure than does the balance of births and deaths. Of 475M EU residents, around 23M hold citizenship of a country in which they are not resident. One-third are from another EU state, the rest from elsewhere. Germany, France and the UK (in that order) are the most popular destinations for migrants. The UK has 2.9M resident foreign citizens and 5.4M foreign-born residents, roughly 60% of whom are from Africa or Asia. Net migration has compensated in UK (and other affluent, urban parts of Europe) for a negative “natural increase”.

The Inception Report argues that the implications of an ageing population for economic performance are not clear – historically labour shortages have been addressed through productivity increases. Similarly, the economic benefits of migration are not agreed. Immigration can be interpreted either as speeding or as slowing economic restructuring. In addition, the health of a regional economy is seen as less significant in shaping inter-regional migration in Europe than in North America, because the welfare benefits here make people more inclined to stay put.

A multinational-multiregional model (MULTIPOLES) will be used for projections. It is a cohort-component, female-dominated hierarchical model, which disaggregates population into sexes and 18 five-year age groups, and also into countries and regions. It handles migration at three levels – inter-regional within each country, international inter-regional migration between countries in the system, and net migration from the rest of the world to each modelled country. The population modelling is linked to labour force modelling.

Scenarios are an important part of the project. As a basis for these there will be a status quo projection (no changes on age-specific fertility, mortality and migration rates, and no changes in net migration from the rest of the world, and constant age-specific labour force participation rates); and also a simulation with no migration (i.e. “as in the status quo, but with all migration –related indicators set to zero”).

Four scenario options are then posited. These are:

- “Long-term growth and competitiveness” based on a laissez-faire approach to policy;
- “Long-term growth and social cohesion” based on a welfare state model and government interventions to restrain, for example, the consequences of climate change;
- “Limits to growth and competitiveness” – free market policies but with increasing vulnerability due to fast climate change and resource depletion; and
- “Limits to growth and social cohesion” where faced with environmental and social problems, governments pursue strong redistributive and restorative policies.

The aim then is that comparisons of the results from these four scenarios with the reference scenarios will “show the effects of different demographic and migration developments on regional competitiveness and social cohesion”. Furthermore, a Delphi method (polling of experts) will be used to explore the possible impacts of a range of European level policies.

Various case studies of NUTS 3 regions are also promised, which for different types of regions will describe the socio-demographic structure, migratory processes and consequences for competitiveness and cohesion.