

REPORT

The Demographic Future of Poland – a scientific conference Łódź, 17–18 September 2009

Between 17 and 18 November 2009, the Chair of Demography and Social Gerontology, University of Łódź, organized in Łódź a conference entitled „The Demographic Future of Poland”. The conference focused on future changes in both demographic structures and the processes that shape them. Changing population structures and processes have short-term as well as long-term consequences. The increasing awareness of impacts induced by population changes makes the latter more interesting not only to demographers, but also to researchers active in other fields of science. Hence, in addition to demographers, the 50 conference participants represented also sociology, social policy, statistics, and gerontology.

The conference was conceived to provide a platform for presenting some selected population projections and exchanging opinions on the pace, directions and consequences of the aforementioned changes. The research areas addressed in the delivered papers and during the discussions concentrated around the below detailed topics:

- Outcomes of the demographic projections for Poland worked out by various forecasting institutions, including the presentation of Poland against the demographic map of Europe.
- Impacts of the changes in population structure, affecting the labour market, social security systems, health situation.
- Changes in the demographic structure with respect to migration processes.
- The influence of demographic changes on the evolution of the consumer goods and services market and predicting future tendencies in this area.
- The methods for forecasting demographic processes.

The conference was opened by Prof. Jolanta Grotowska-Leder, Associate Dean at the Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Łódź, Prof. Czesław Domański, Director of the Institute of Statistics and Demography, and Prof. Agnieszka Rossa, Head of the Chair of Demography and Social Gerontology.

The conference consisted of five thematic sessions. The first session, “The Future of the Family and Procreative Behaviour”, was chaired by Prof. Zofia Zarzycka. The discussed topics concerned not only the changes in procreative

behaviour and their effect on the future condition and structure of population, but also family policy and its challenges. The relevant consequences were presented by Dr. Milena Lange in the context of the results of demographic forecasts. The presentation delivered by Prof. Andrzej Ochocki and Marta Kawińska, M.Sc., dealt with family policy problems in a broader, European context. Dr. Piotr Szukalski's deliberations concentrated on factors that could enable the Polish population to return to the strict replacement rate. In his opinion, the fertility rate will not exceed 1.7 in the near future, although, as the author stressed, a skilfully pursued pronatalist policy could help reverse this unfavourable trend in the next decades. Another paper presented during the session concerned the influence of religiousness on the family planning decisions. Anna Majdzińska, M.Sc., and Witold Śmigielski, M.Sc., conducted a questionnaire survey among students of the 4th and 5th grades of the University of Łódź to explore how they envisage their family future.

The leading theme of the second session, chaired by Prof. Andrzej Ochocki, was the influence of changing structure and age of population on the labour market. Most speakers during the session, entitled „The Demographic Determinants of Changing Situation of Households and Labour Resources”, focused on the problem of aging labour force and its consequences for both employers and employees. One aspect addressed during this part of the conference was the economic activity of Poles in the pre-retirement period, which is the lowest in the EU. It was discussed by Prof. Halina Worach-Kardas and Szymon Kostrzewski, M.Sc. The authors believe that the high rate of unemployment among persons aged 50+ is caused by objective factors, such as workers' lack of relevant occupational skills and health condition, and subjective determinants, including prejudice against older workers. Katarzyna Bałandynowicz-Panfil, M.Sc., was of the opinion that *age management* could be a response to the aging of labour resources. This term encapsulates actions aimed at improving older persons' situation in the workplace, e.g., involving the introduction of flexible working time, training and workplace adaptation to the needs of older workers. It should be remembered, though, as stressed by the author, that these actions must be taken not only by the employers, but also by the governmental institutions. Employment flexibility that Dr. Zofia Szymanek referred to is one of the most important instruments capable of preventing further reduction in the activity of persons at pre-retirement age. An increased proportion of flexible work offers is likely to help activate persons who have prematurely withdrawn from the labour market.

The third session, „The Transforming Demand for Health and Social Benefits”, was chaired by Prof. Ireneusz Kuropka. This was another session where the aging of Poland's population and the process' consequences for healthcare and long-term aid were the dominant themes. Health condition and morbidity among persons aged 65 years and older were addressed in the presentation prepared by Olga Gajewska, M.Sc., Prof. Irena Maniecka-Bryła, and Dr. Marek Bryła. Their analysis provided an insight into the situation of persons

living in the county of Płock and using the services of the primary health care physicians. The other speakers in the session concentrated on giving care to seniors. Factors determining the take-up of social aid services by persons aged 60 years and older were presented and analysed by Monika Szlawska, M.Sc., Prof. Irena Maniecka-Bryła and Dr. Marek Bryła. The authors studied the population living in the town and in the rural commune of Zgierz. The next paper dealt with financing care services for the elderly and investigated the long-term care insurance, a subject that is frequently raised during discussions on old age. Dr. Barbara Dembowska pointed out that the growing population of older persons, particularly of seniors in the fourth age, would consequently increase the demand for care that the in-family support will not be able to meet. The growing number of persons in need of assistance will entail the problem of earmarking larger funds for aid services extended to older persons. Zofia Szweda-Lewandowska, M.Sc., attempted in her talk to estimate the future demand for beds in nursing homes among persons aged 75 years and older.

The second day of the conference was broken down into two sessions. The first of them, „The Socio-Economic Challenges in an Aging Society”, was chaired by Dr. Alina Potrykowska. The session continued to explore the aging of Poland’s population that was already discussed on the first day of the conference. The presentation opening the session was delivered by Prof. Barbara Szatur-Jaworska and its subject was social policy towards old people, exemplified by the case of Warsaw. The author emphasized that one of the key concerns should be a correct diagnosis of the situation of senior citizens, one providing a starting point for formulating programmes for the subpopulation of old persons. The situation of old persons and the quality of their lives were also evaluated by Dr. Dorota Jachimowicz-Wołoszynek. The speaker had studied some attributes of seniors, such as their gender, age, and educational attainment, in the context of their influence on the assessment of life quality. Further, Prof. Bernard Rzeczyński introduced issues related to „gerontotechnology” and discussed how urban layout interferes with the functioning of the elderly in urban space. Dr. Dorota Kozieł and Dr. Małgorzata Kaczmarczyk presented the challenges that ageing society faces in the area of education and preventing the exclusion of seniors. According to the authors, a strategy promoting life-long learning needs to be implemented, so that the socio-economic activity of persons in older age groups can be supported. Karolina Jaskólska, M.Sc., was another speaker considering the situation and role of old persons in society. She underlined that in the near future the role of seniors in a fast-changing knowledge-based society will appear more and more often in social debates. Another presentation delivered by Prof. Agnieszka Rossa dealt with mortality forecasting. The author proposed to use the dynamic life tables based on the Lee-Carter model in computing the amounts of pensions to be drawn by future old-age pensioners. The last presentation delivered during the session discussed the role of the market for consumer goods and services used by the elderly. Patrycja Woszczyk, M.Sc., discussed both the present situation in the area and the relevant forecasts.

The closing session of the conference, chaired by Prof. Jerzy Kowaleski, concerned the international dimension of demographic changes in Poland. In their presentation, Prof. Eugeniusz Zdrojewski and Małgorzata Guzińska, M.Sc., discussed the size and destinations of permanent migration in Poland. Among other things, the authors pointed to the problem of emigrants with high occupational qualifications. The central theme of the talk presented by Dr. Alina Potrykowska was the future development of demographic processes in Poland in the context of migration.

Prof. Jerzy Kowaleski, the chairperson of the last session, concluded the conference by stressing the importance of the topics addressed and pointing to the diversity of issues that were raised in the presentations. Although ageing and its consequences dominated amongst the topics, in fact all the main areas of interest to demographers were presented.

Speaking on behalf of the conference organizers, Prof. Agnieszka Rossa thanked the participants for their attendance, their presentations and active participation in the discussions. She also invited them to take part in another conference that the Chair of Demography and Social Gerontology, UŁ, is organizing in Łódź – “Life Quality of the Elderly – the Presence and the Future” (22-23 June, 2010). All information relevant to the forthcoming conference can be sought on the website: www.demografia.uni.lodz.pl and www.gerontologia.uni.lodz.pl.

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