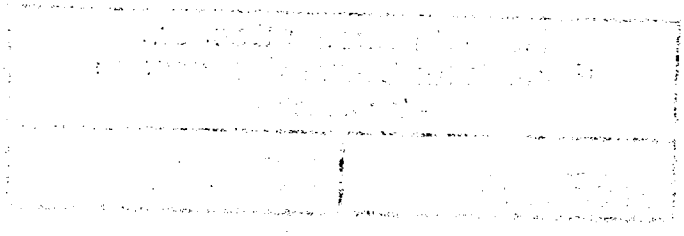
Stefan Immerfall · Göran Therborn
Editors

Handbook of European Societies

Social Transformations in the 21st Century



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Chapter 14
Population

Tony Fahey

14.1 Introduction

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Europe led the world towards the population explosion of the modern era. Today, along with Japan, it is leading the world on the new path of population decline. If we interpret the term 'decline' to include all those aspects of demographic change that cause observers to be anxious about Europe's future, then we can say that it has three major dimensions. The first is the move to a *smaller* total population, represented both by shrinking absolute numbers and, more sharply, by a declining share of the global population total. Having peaked in the early 2000s, Europe's population is soon about to begin to edge downwards (difficulties in counting immigrants mean that one cannot say exactly when the peak is reached and the decline has begun). By the middle of the present century, according to the UN's most recent central population projections, there will be about 10 percent fewer people living in Europe than there are today. This is not a catastrophic fall, but it avoids being greater only on the assumption that a steady flow of immigrants will counterbalance contraction in the numbers of native Europeans (and of course difficulties in predicting migration trends even for the near future underscore the conjectural nature of forecasts such as these) (United Nations 2006). Nevertheless, even taking the uncertainty of the future into account, it seems unlikely that the steady decline of Europe's relative weight in global population totals can be avoided in the foreseeable future.

The second aspect of decline is the move to an *older* population, as a result of low birth rates and rising longevity. The UN projection is that the median age of the population of Europe will rise to over 47 years by 2050, compared to about 39 years today and 30 years in 1950. Some might consider it ageist to speak of population ageing as 'decline' and indeed there are ways of thinking about what 'young' and 'old' means that cast present trends in a better light. For example, Sanderson and Scherbov (2005) suggest that we could define a young person not as someone who was born recently (the usual 'retrospective' approach) but as someone who has still a long time to live (the alternative 'prospective' approach). Even when the median age of a population (as usually understood) rises, increased life expectancy can cause its 'prospective age' to remain stable or even rise since the median number of years its members can still expect to live may increase (Sanderson and Scherbov 2005). The population of Europe could thus remain reasonably young in this sense even as

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its median age rises. However, the more conventional view is that population ageing is real and will cause problems for pensions systems and public finances and, beyond that, may cause a decline in economic productivity, if not a wider loss of social and cultural vitality (for an early 'crisis' view of what population ageing can entail, see World Bank 1994; for assessments of the impact ageing on economic growth in the EU, see Carone et al. 2005; Prskawetz et al. 2007).

The third possible dimension of decline is that the peoples living in the continent of Europe will become *ethnically less cohesive*, arising from the expected role of migration in future European population dynamics. The concern here is not entirely clear-cut, since it could relate either to the European or the national level. At the European level, the prospect raised by some is that European identity and cultural distinctiveness could be weakened by the influx of non-Europeans, particularly Muslims coming from Europe's southern hinterland in North Africa and the Middle East. Smil (2005), for example, refers to existing migrants into Europe from this Islamic hinterland as 'the greatest influx of people the continent has seen in more than a thousand years'. He raises the prospect that their continued influx will give rise to 'an eventual triumph of Islam' if not in Europe as a whole then at least in the core states of Italy, France and Spain (Smil 2005: 611–12; for a more sober assessment of the role of Muslims in European population, particularly in regard to their fertility, see Westoff and Frejka 2007). The alternative, and for some no less worrying possibility, is that movement *within* Europe will undermine the existing ethnic profile of its nation states and thereby reduce the ethnic solidarity of European societies. For Coleman (2006), for example, present migration trends in a number of European countries could 'lead to the displacement of the original population into a minority position' by the latter part of the present century.

There are many uncertainties about this projected future of European population, two of which might be mentioned here. One is how likely it is to come to pass. All forecasts, whether of population or anything else, inevitably get the finer details wrong, but quite often too they are completely off the mark about the general thrust of developments. They fail to anticipate either the large rare events (such as wars, epidemics, ecological catastrophes or sudden leaps forward in technology) or the more gradual but nonetheless significant shifts in behaviour that regularly knock change off its existing course.[1] The social sciences make no claim to have theories of population change with predictive power (Lutz 2006) and in the past signally failed to anticipate major demographic developments such as the post-World War II baby boom or the collapse in birth rates that occurred in many developed countries in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Within the next decade, therefore, not to mind within the next half century, European population trends might head off in quite a different direction from that expected by demographers today (birth rates, for example, *could* stage a recovery). Population projections, based as they are on extrapolations from present conditions and recent trends, might thus be of interest less as predictions

[1] A century ago, forecasters could hardly have predicted that a total European war would break out in 1914, initiating a decades-long phase of violence and instability – not to speak of demographic turbulence – unlike anything experienced before. In Europe today, observers often latch hopefully onto the smallest signs of demographic revitalisation – see, for example, *The Economist*, 14 June 2007, which speaks of a demographic 'bounce back' in European population. One might recall here economist Alec Cairncross's well-known ditty: 'A trend is a trend is a trend/But the question is, will it bend?/Will it alter its course/Through some unforeseen force/And come to a premature end?' The most entertaining and stimulating attack on the follies and poor previous record of statistically based forecasting is N. N. Taleb's *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (2007).

of the future than as another means of highlighting where we are today and where we have come from in the recent past.

A second general uncertainty about the emerging prospect of a smaller, older and ethnically less cohesive population in Europe is whether it is as worrisome a development as most commentary on it implies. The key point here, as Paul Demeny says, is that 'we do not know what optimum population size is, nor can we successfully nail down its first cousin, the optimum rate of population growth' (Demeny 2007: 28). He warns that we should not be beguiled by rising population numbers, nor cast into automatic despond by their absence, since 'numbers alone do not a civilisation make' (ibid.: 29; see also Demeny 2003). To take a more positive approach, one could view Europe's new demographic turn as a great and necessary experiment in sustainable development – a helpful contribution, perhaps, to reducing Europe's carbon footprint. As far as population ageing is concerned, one could view rising longevity as a great advance in civilisation and argue that its economic and social side-effects are intrinsically neither positive nor negative but depend on how flexibly and creatively we respond to them. The view of immigration as ethnic threat might also be modified by taking account of the very particular worldview it rests on. This is the worldview of twentieth century European nationalism, which defines Europe as a mosaic of ethnically homogenous, or near-homogenous, nation-states, viewed not as transient phase of recent European history but *the* normal form of cohesive societies.[2] It thus discounts as a model of normality the multi-ethnic polities that were the norm in Europe in the pre-nation state era (and out of which modern European nation-states were hewn with horrific violence and bloodshed – Ferguson 2006, Hobsbawm 1990) and are commonplace elsewhere in the world today, not least in the regions of European settlement such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Here too it is not only the facts of immigration that may count but the degree to which Europe can adapt its traditions of ethnic separatism and exclusivity so as to absorb and capitalise on the potential offered by immigration.

It may be difficult to judge either the inevitability or the significance of the contracting numbers, greying age profile and the changing ethnic mix now emerging in Europe, yet these are the major trends that cast their shadow over any consideration of European population change. The concern of this chapter is to provide a general account of these trends and also briefly to consider their implications for European integration. That is done partly by separating out the major components of population change – births, deaths, and migration – and looking at the sub-trends that make these up. In addition, a key concern is to give some sense of the internal diversity within Europe, since that diversity may prove great enough to amount to a new force for division between European regions, not least between the demographically stronger and weaker states within the European Union. Broadly speaking, north-west Europe (the Scandinavian countries and the North Atlantic rim) is in a reasonably strong demographic position, though even here some countries are to the fore in one of the dimensions of demographic 'decline' referred to earlier, namely, population ageing. The countries of southern and central Europe are somewhat weaker on most fronts, and problems increase as we move eastwards, culminating in what in many respects is a dire demographic situation in Russia. As we make the transition to the liminal territories that form the boundary between Europe and Asia – of which Turkey is the main

[2]Note Ernest Gellner's characterisations of nationalism as 'the doctrine that cultural similarity is the primary social bond' (Gellner 1997: 3) and as 'a theory of political legitimacy requiring that ethnic and state boundaries should coincide' (Gellner 1983: 1).

instance – we enter quite a different demographic regime, though one which in recent times has been converging rapidly on the mix of very low fertility and low mortality that became the defining feature of western demographic patterns in the latter decades of the twentieth century.

14.2 What Is Europe?

Before dealing with these issues, it is necessary to take note of a problem in dealing with the population of Europe – the ambiguity of the concept of Europe itself. Part of the problem here is the common tendency to refer to the European Union as Europe (not least in documents of the European Commission – see, for example, European Commission 2005). This tendency is easy to dismiss, since in fact, as we shall see below, the present European Union accounts for something less than 60 percent of the population in what by any traditional reckoning would be considered as Europe. The trickier problem lies in drawing the boundary between Europe and Asia. In geographical terms, Europe is a western peninsula of the Eurasian landmass, but there is no clear physical or cultural-political line of demarcation between the European peninsula and the Asian territory from which it projects. Europe's claim to be regarded as a continent is very much a matter of convention and could be seen less as an expression geographical scale or cultural distinctiveness than 'an anachronistic product of European cultural egotism' (Lewis and Wigen 1997: 69; this work provides a detailed account of the shifting spatial and cultural connotations of the concept of Europe over time). Whatever about its status as a continent, Europe can undoubtedly be regarded as a major world region but even then questions arise about where its eastern limits lie.

These questions have most demographic significance in connection with Russia and Turkey. The Russian Federation, to give its full title, with a current population of 143.5 million, is the most populous country in Europe. However, some 77 percent of its territory and 23 percent of its population lie east of the Ural Mountains and stretch across all of northern Asia to the North Pacific. The Ural range was promoted as an internal boundary between European and Asian Russia during Peter the Great's westernisation campaign in the early eighteenth century (Lewis and Wigen 1997: 27). It has since become widely accepted in the west as the conventional eastern boundary of Europe, though its meaning within Russia itself became less clear-cut with the rise of Russian nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century and the consolidation of Russia's eastern empire (Kaiser 1994). However, the practice in present-day international population databases, such as those of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, is to count the entire Russian population as European, even though the vast 'Asian' territory thereby implicitly added to Europe is larger than Europe itself. At the same time, the representation of Europe's population in maps typically cuts off Russia's huge trans-Ural region, so that the maps do not fully represent the territory the demographic data refer to (see, for example, the European population maps published by the Council of Europe – Council of Europe 2006). Here we follow these conventions by treating Russia as wholly European, but would note that as a result European population totals include some 39 million inhabitants who actually live in what is normally considered Asia (that is, in the three Russian Federal Districts of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East).

The boundary case represented by Turkey is demographically even more significant than the Asian regions of Russia, both because its population is larger (at 71.6 million)

and because its demographic patterns are more 'un-European'. As a successor state of the Ottoman empire and the Islamic culture it represented, Turkey belongs to the classic oriental 'other' of the European imagination (as most famously analysed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* – Said 1979). Geographers normally regard the Black Sea as part of the south-east border of Europe, thus placing most of Turkey on the Asian side (though 3 percent of its land area, including part of its largest city, Istanbul, lies on the European side of the Bosporos, thus making Turkey a transcontinental country and Istanbul a transcontinental city). The United Nations classifies Turkey as an Asian state. However, even the Ottoman sultans claimed to be the heirs of Roman and Greek civilization (Lewis and Wigen 1997: 69), and Turkey's internal orientation shifted towards the west with the advent of the secular republic in 1923. The Council of Europe has accepted Turkey as a member state since 1949, and the European Union has regarded Turkey as European on geographical grounds since 1963. Formal negotiations on Turkey's admission to membership of the EU commenced in 2005. Turkey thus exerts a political claim to be included in Europe, though that claim is contested both in Turkey and in Europe (on popular attitudes in Europe towards Turkey, see Ruiz-Jimenéz and Torreblanca 2007). The demographic import of whether it is counted in or out of Europe is large. If included, it would increase the population of Europe by one-tenth and would have the third largest national population after Russia and Germany (United Nations, 2006). As we shall see further below, it would also lie somewhat outside the normal range of demographic diversity found across the national populations of Europe, particularly as it would be the only European country with above-replacement fertility and a rate of natural increase of population of above 1 percent per year. Its demographic 'otherness' is diminishing as its birth rates and age structure converge towards European patterns but in the meantime its population is growing rapidly and so it will loom even larger on the demographic landscape in the future than it does today.

There are other states whose European-ness is uncertain. However, their demographic significance is limited by their small size. Three such states are the Caucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which together have a population of 16.2 million people. They lie in the gap between the southern tip of the Ural mountains and the Black Sea, a territory where there is no clear physical boundary that can be used to demarcate Europe from Asia. Cyprus is also an important boundary case in political terms, as sovereignty over it is disputed between Turkey and Greece and since 1974 it has been internally divided between a Turkish and Greek zone. Geographically, it is closer to Turkey, which lies 75 km to the north, than to Greece, the mainland of which lies 800 km to the west. However, its demographic significance is slight, since the total island population is only 854,000 (2005 estimate).

The approach to the concept of Europe adopted here is flexible and varies according to context and database being used. Two main alternatives are drawn upon – the definitions of the United Nations and the Council of Europe (CoE). The UN definition is relatively restrictive: it includes all of Russia but excludes all the five border states referred to above (Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Cyprus). It yields an estimated population total for Europe in 2005 of 731 million (United Nations 2006). The CoE definition, on the other hand, is relatively expansive in that it includes all of Russia and all of the five border states. (Belarus is not a member state of the CoE and is omitted from the CoE's strict definition of Europe, but it is included in a broader definition, labelled 'Europa', which we will utilize here.) The CoE definition yields a total population of Europe in 2005 of 815 million, which is 11.5 percent larger than that of Europe as defined by the UN.

14.3 Population Size and Increase/Decrease

The population size of the states of Europe, as set out in Fig. 14.1, varies enormously.[3] The two largest states (Russia and Germany) together account for 27 percent of the total

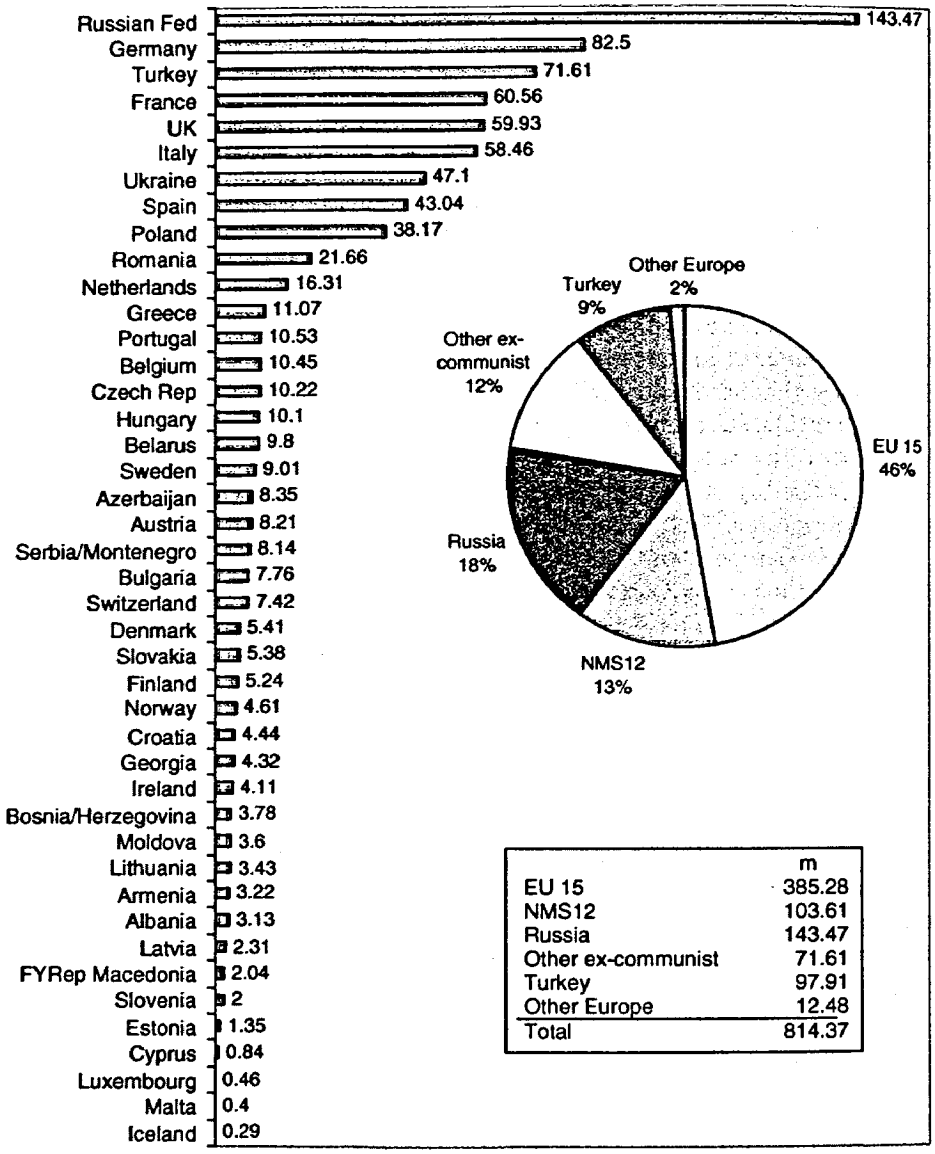


Fig. 14.1 Population of the states and major regions of Europe* (millions), 2005
Source: Council of Europe (2005).
*Council of Europe definition.

[3]In addition to the states listed in Fig. 14.1, Europe has five micro-states (i.e. with less than 100,000 population): Andorra (76,900), Liechenstein (34,600), Monaco (33,000), San Marino (29,700), and the Vatican (less than 1,000).

population, while the 32 states that make up the long tail of the distribution (from Greece to Iceland in Fig. 14.1) account for only 21 percent. Looking at the major blocks of states, the European Union as it was prior to the eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007 (the EU 15) makes up 46 percent of the European total, while the 12 new member states that joined since 2004 (NMS 12) make up 13 percent. Thus, summing these two blocks, slightly less than 6 out of 10 Europeans (59 percent) live in the current European Union (the EU 27). The unbalanced distribution of population across states that characterizes Europe as a whole is paralleled within the EU, where the 'big five' of Germany, France, UK, Italy and Spain make up 62 percent of the EU population, while the smallest five (Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta) make up only 1 percent. This unevenness in population weight across the EU states is an important instance of a demographic influence on European integration. It creates the challenge for the European Union of devising systems of representation and power-sharing between states of great differences in population size (where, for example, there are 100 times more Germans than Cypriots and almost 200 Germans for every Luxembourger).[4]

If we were to divide present-day Europe in two along the lines of the old Iron Curtain, then the population balance between the two halves would be tilted slightly to the west, with 397 million on that side of the line compared to 344 million in the former communist east.

All the major regions and countries of Europe had growing populations from the 1950s to the 1990s. However, the momentum of population growth has slowed in recent decades, as is revealed by two features of the picture set out in Fig. 14.2. First, growth in absolute numbers is running out of steam in western Europe and has already done so in eastern Europe. The eastern situation is exemplified in Fig. 14.2 by the Russian Federation and the NMS12 where absolute numbers had already peaked in the 1990s and were in slow decline as the present century began. It is possible, according to the projections set out in Fig. 14.2, that population in these eastern regions will be back to the level of the 1950s by the middle of the present century. In western Europe, as represented by the EU15 in Fig. 14.2, upward movement has not yet ceased but is likely to do so and turn downwards in the 2030s and 2040s. However, decline is likely to be relatively modest over this period and will leave the EU 15 with a slightly larger population in 2050 than it has today. It is also worth noting that within the EU 15, a number of individual countries may still be growing in population by 2050. This indicates that the time-span taken for population decline to spread throughout the states of Europe could be long, with the trend having started in the east in the 1980s and perhaps not yet being fully extended to the Atlantic seven decades later. This spread in the arrival of decline increases further if we include Turkey in the picture. Its strong growth over the whole period 1950–2050 is evident from Fig. 14.2: having had only one-fifth of the population of Russia in 1950, it will have come close to catching up with Russia by 2050.

[4]The extent of this challenge can be compared with that facing the United States, where differences in population size between states are significant but less extreme than in the EU. California (population 36 million) is by far the largest state in the USA (50 percent greater than the next nearest, Texas) but would count as only the seventh largest in the EU (after Germany, France, UK, Italy, Spain and Poland). The smallest US state (Wyoming, population 509,000) is larger than the smallest EU states (Luxembourg and Malta, both less than 500,0000). However, the USA has eight states with population less than 1 million, where the EU has only three (Cyprus plus the two already mentioned), so that the USA does have some real size discrepancies between states to cope with.

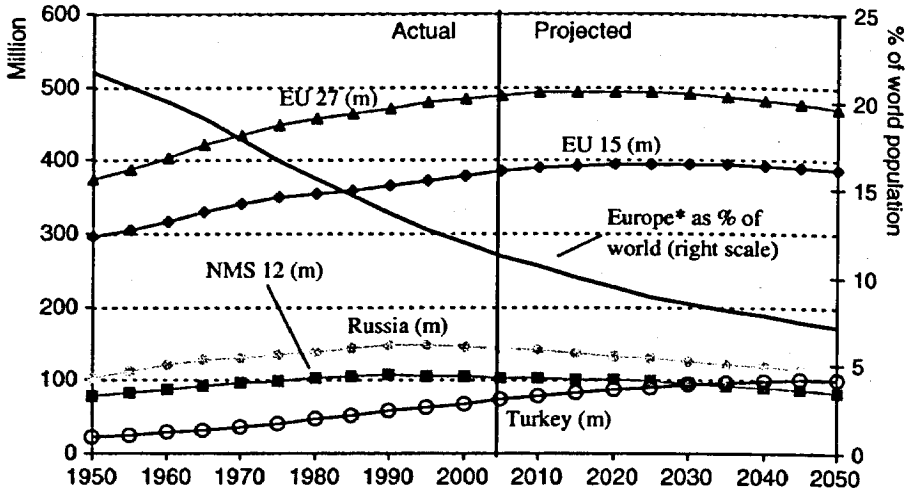


Fig. 14.2 Growth and decline of European population, 1950-2050
Source: UN population database (2006 Revision, medium variant projections). Author's calculations for EU15, NMS12 and EU27
*UN definition.

A further feature of European population trends over the whole period from 1950 to 2050 shown in Fig. 14.2 is its shrinking share of total world population. In 1950, more than 1 in every 5 people in the world (21 percent) was a European. Today, that share has fallen to 1 in 10 and by 2050 is likely to have fallen to something in the region of 1 in 15. It is notable that the diminution in Europe's relative population size was greater in the period 1950–1990, when its absolute numbers were growing, than it is likely to be over the next 50 years, when its absolute numbers will be falling. This reflects the slowing tempo of global population expansion: in the second half of the twentieth century, total world population grew 2.4 times, while it may grow by less than 1.5 times in the first half of this century (United Nations 2006). It is uncertain whether or when total world population will peak and turn into decline, but the very fact that a global population downturn may occur within the next century provides the context that allows us to interpret Europe as an early mover in the direction of population decline rather than as a global anomaly. Some commentators have suggested that Europe should take particular note of its share of population relative to what Demeny (2003) calls its 'southern hinterland' – the largely Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East, running from the Atlantic to India's western borders (Demeny 2003, Smil 2005). The population of this hinterland outnumbered that of the EU 25 by 1.39 to one in 2005 but the corresponding ratio in 2050 could be as high as 2.76 to one (Smil 2005: 611).

Figure 14.3 elaborates on the long-term picture of population growth and decline in Europe by highlighting trends for the period 1950–2050 for a number of representative states. Romania is included in this figure as an extreme instance of population decline, though in this regard it is simply at the outer edge of the experience that is common to many east European countries. While its population numbers grew up to the mid-1980s, decline was already well underway by the 1990s and is projected to continue to the point where population may fall by one-third from the level of the year 2000 by the year 2050. The Ukraine, which is not shown in Fig. 14.3, is another large east European state (current

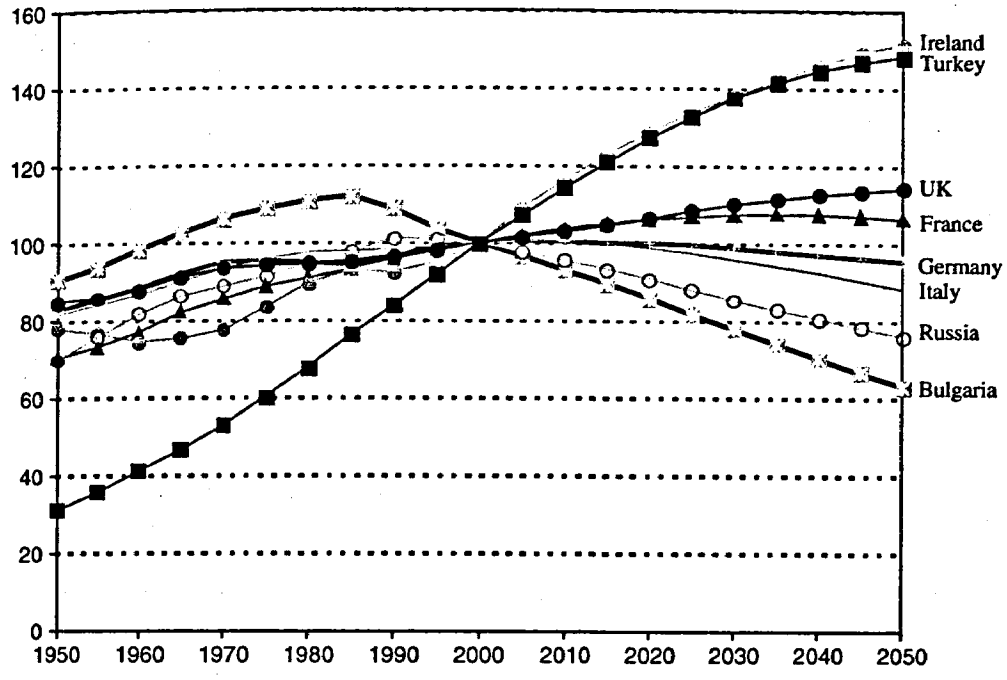
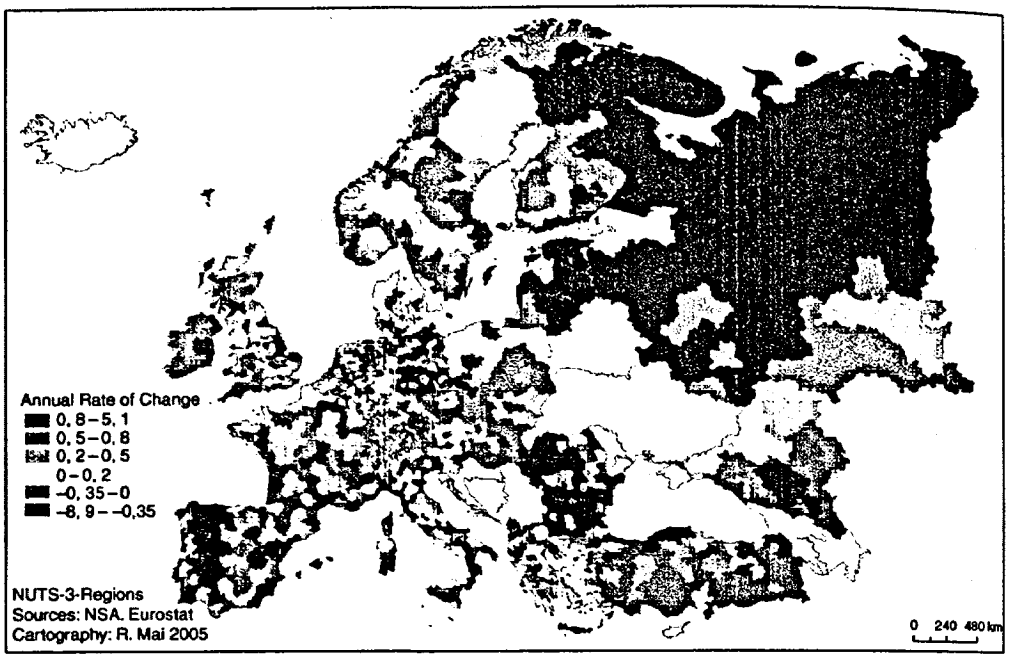


Fig. 14.3 Population index, selected states, 1950–2050 (2000=100)
Source: UN population database (2006 Revision, medium variant projections).

population 47 million) which is projected to experience decline of around one-third up to 2050. Decline in Russia is less extreme, but yet is likely to be substantial (perhaps of the order of 25 percent between 2000 and 2050) and in this regard is closer to the typical prospect for east European states.

Decline is a less likely prospect in most of the western European states, but for the majority neither is there much prospect of substantial growth. Italy and Germany are two of the west European states where growth has already ceased and moderate decline is likely to set in within the next decade or two. The UK and France, on the other hand, are still experiencing modest growth and many have larger populations in 2050 than they have today. Strong growth is quite exceptional and is largely confined to Ireland and Turkey.

Patterns of growth and decline in population at the level of national states can often conceal a great deal of variation around the national trend between regions within states. Such variation can be seen from Map 14.1, which is reproduced from a study of population dynamics in almost 1,500 sub-national regions in 33 European states carried out by Hansjeorg Bucher and Ralf Mai for the Council of Europe (Bucher and Mai 2005). Looked at very broadly, this map reflects the differences in population dynamics across European states just described, with continued growth in much of the north-west rim, a mixed pattern in southern and central Europe and the most extensive swathe of decline found in eastern Europe. However, it also shows varying degrees of internal diversity within states. Turkey provides a case of sharp polarity between expanding and contracting regions: though it has the fastest growing population in Europe at national level, nine of its eighteen regions are in decline (Bucher and Mai: 21–22). Spain shows a west to east gradient, with decline



Map 14.1 Population change in Europe at NUTS3 regional level
Source: Reproduced with permission from Bucher and Mai (2005: 64). Map 3. Regional data not available for Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro.

in the border regions with Portugal but regions of strong growth as we move towards the Mediterranean. Although the north-west rim is the demographically strongest zone in Europe, we nevertheless find some regions as the very northern edge of that rim, such as western highlands and islands in Scotland and the northern coast of Sweden, in decline. The highly varied nature of the pattern of decline is suggested by the limited differences found between rural and urban areas: decline is almost as common in urban as in rural regions, though the instances of greatest decline are largely rural (Bucher and Mai 2005, p. 22).

Figure 14.4 sets out the components of population growth in European states. Here the key distinction is between natural increase (the balance between births and deaths) and net migration (the balance between inward and outward migration). In 14 of the 33 states shown in Fig. 14.3, natural increase has already turned negative – and included among these demographically weak performers are two of the biggest states, Russia and Germany, while a third large state, Italy, is only barely on the positive side of natural increase. In three of the states with a negative balance between births and deaths (Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Greece), net immigration is sufficiently strong to retain overall growth in population. In the Mediterranean states, of which Italy and Spain are the most significant in population terms, large volumes of immigration have brought about quite respectable levels of population growth in spite of weak natural increase. For the most part, population decline is so far found only in the former communist states of eastern Europe. Germany is the only western European country that is already experiencing population decline, though even here the former communist East Germany contributes disproportionately to the total national decline (Kroehnert et al. 2006).

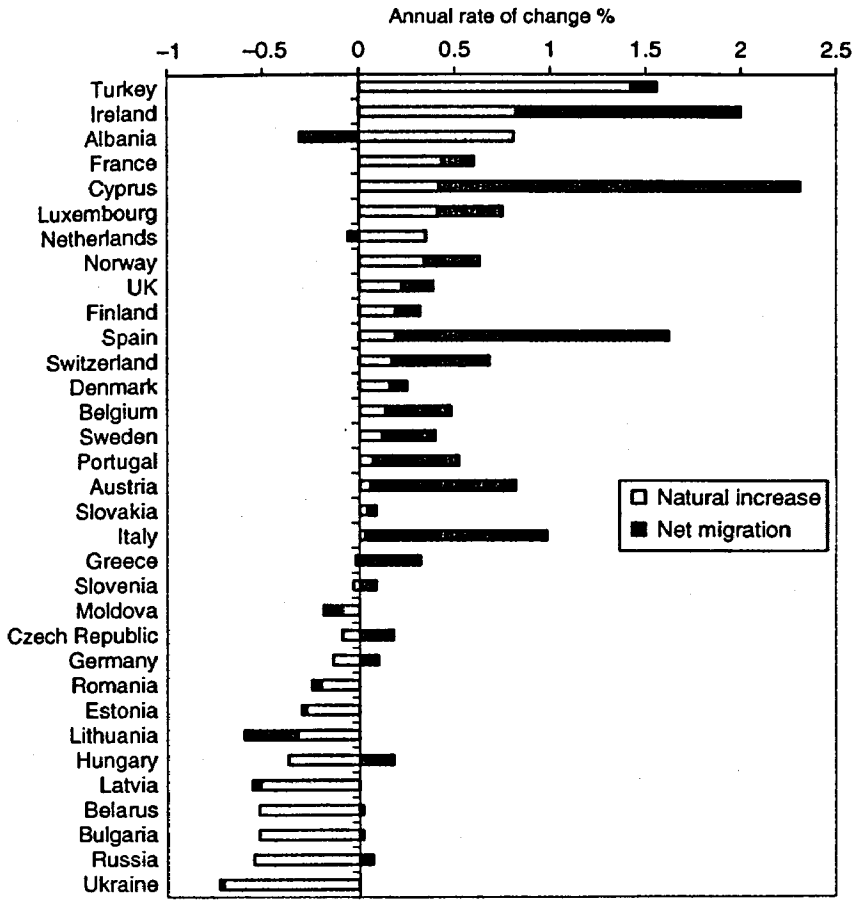


Fig. 14.4 Components of population increase/decrease, 2004
Source: Author's calculations from Council of Europe population database (Council of Europe 2005).

14.4 Age Structure

Alongside its incipient decline in numbers, the second strand to Europe's demographic weakness is the shrinking share of young people and growing share of older people in its population. As Fig. 14.5 shows, Europe's age profile in 1950 was a broad-based pyramid, with some gaps among older children and adults aged in their thirties reflecting the effects of World War II. The weighting of population towards young people is indicated by the fact there were some 50 million infants compared to 21 million 60–64 year olds, a more than twofold differential. By 2000, population ageing had caused the pyramid to evolve into a pear shape, with a narrower base, a wide middle and a thickening top. The number of infants had fallen to 37 million, while the 60–64 year olds had more than doubled to just over 40 million, giving them a slight numerical excess over infants. The UN's forecast for 2050 shows a narrower pear standing on its thin end, with the wider portion concentrated from age 60 upwards. By then, the number of infants is projected to have fallen further, to about 32 million, and at that to be about two-thirds the number of 60–64 year olds (which will then could be around 46 million).

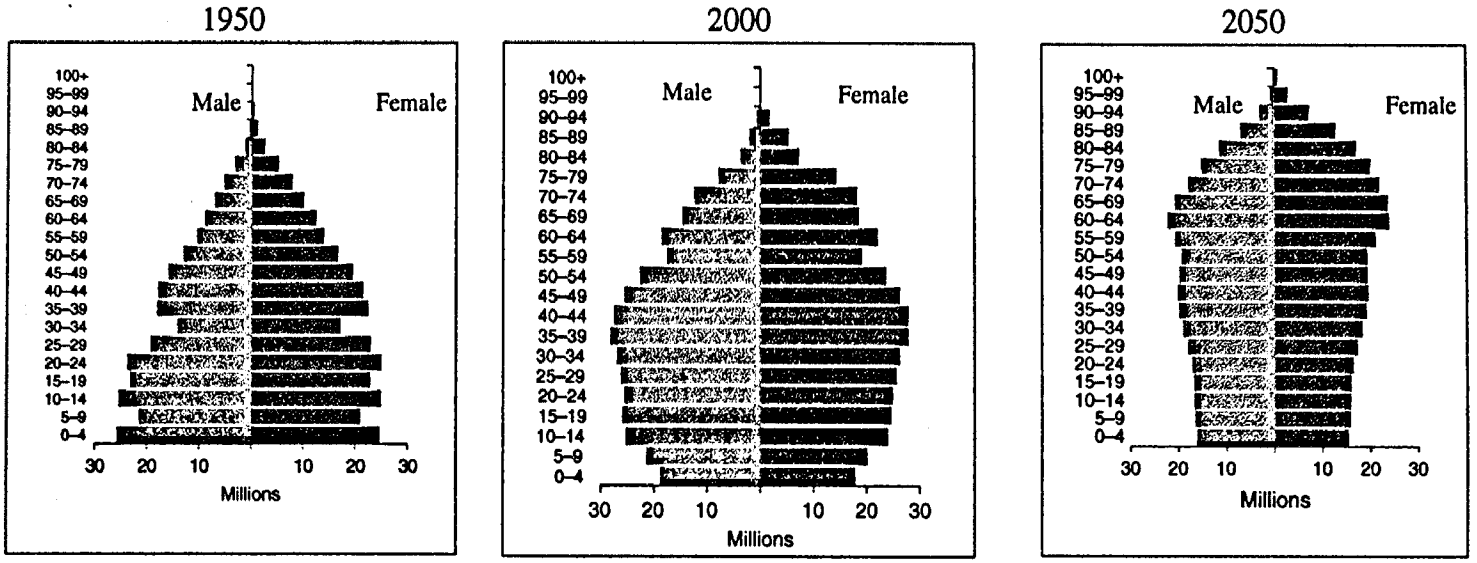


Fig. 14.5 Age pyramids, Europe* 1950, 2000 and 2050
Source: UN 2006 (medium variant projections for 2050).
*UN definition.

Change in the size of the very elderly population is even more dramatic. The number of Europeans aged 85 and over has grown fourfold over the past half-century (from 2.25 million in 1950 to 10.3 million in 2000) and is projected by the UN to increase a further threefold, to well over 30 million, by 2050. This is an increase from less than half a percentage of the total population in 1950 to 1.4 percent in 2000 and to a possible 5 percent in 2050.

Virtually no country in Europe has escaped considerable population ageing (Fig. 14.6). Turkey and Albania, because of their late decline in fertility, are the most youthful. Ireland, at the other end of the continent, shows the smallest increase in the elderly share of the population over the past half-century, for the reason that its elderly share was large by contemporary standards in 1950 and its demographic recovery since then has kept that share more or less static. Even in these cases, however, the absence of serious population

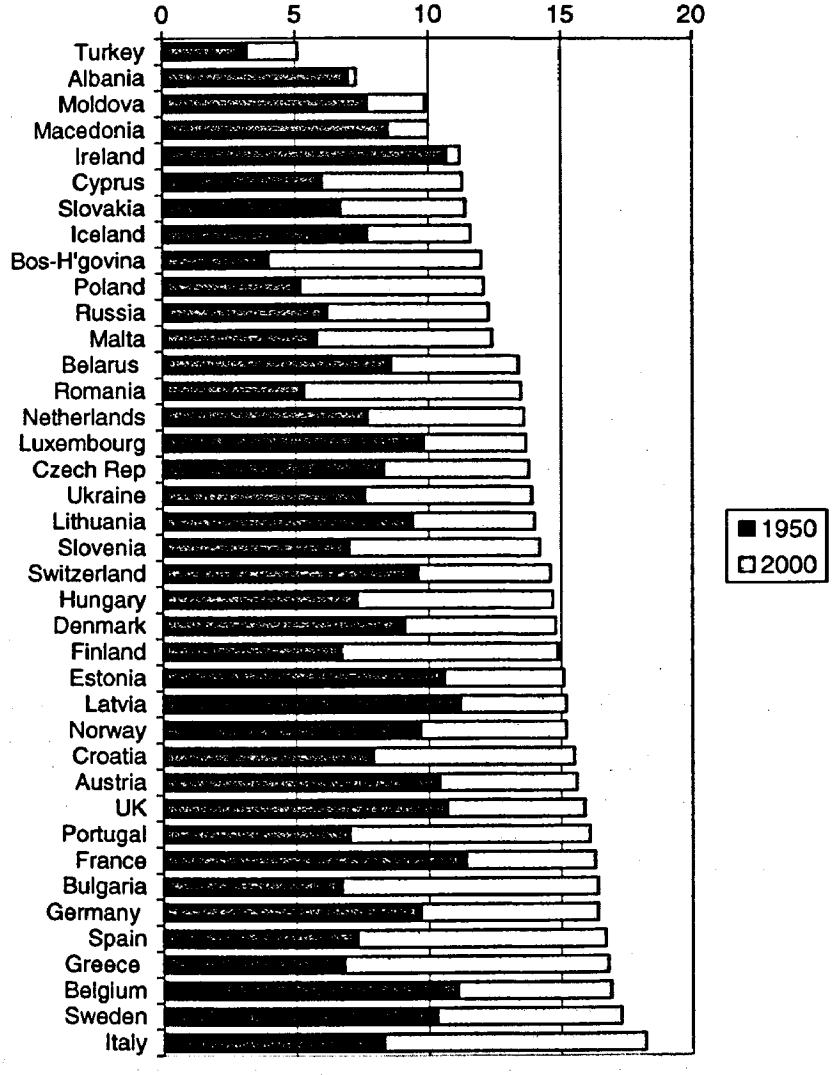


Fig. 14.6 Percentage of population aged 65+ in European countries, 1950 and 2000
Source: UN Population database, 2006 Revision. No data for Serbia and Montenegro.

ageing to date is only a matter of delay rather than of permanent avoidance, since the next few decades will see them move down the same path of changing age structure already trodden by most of the rest of Europe. Italy is the country that is leading the way down that path (in the world as a whole, only Japan has aged to a similar degree). In 1950, Italy had less than 8 percent aged 65 or over. By 2000, that had increased to over 18 percent and, according to UN projections, it could reach 35 percent by 2050. Coming behind Italy is a mixed group of countries where the elderly share of the population had exceeded 15 percent by 2000. These include states from the former communist east (Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria), from southern Europe (Greece, Spain and Portugal), and from central Europe (Germany and Austria), as well countries of the north-west rim (such as the UK and France) that are among the stronger demographic performers in Europe on many counts. This group of countries has arrived at current levels of population ageing through diverse paths (for example, in regard to the timing and extent of fertility decline and of increased longevity), which indicates that a changing balance between young and old people in the population is not the outcome of a single, uniform demographic process.

14.5 Low Fertility

The greatest single source of unease about Europe's demographic dynamism (or lack of it) comes from its low fertility rate (for general accounts, see Billari 2005, d'Addio and d'Ercole 2005, Frejka and Sardon 2004, Sleebos 2003). The indicator that receives most attention in this context is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which is an estimate of the number of children the average woman would have if over her lifetime she bore children in line with the age distribution of births found in a particular year. This indicator is often criticised as misleading since it is based on birth data from a single year and as such is liable to fluctuate from year to year in a way that can be out of line with movements in the actual average number of births that women have. Nevertheless, it has an immediacy and intuitive appeal that over-rides its technical shortcomings. The story it tells of European demographic weakness in the past two decades has been dramatic: in 1990, no country in Europe had a total fertility rate below 1.3, but by 2001, 57 percent of Europeans were living in countries with such 'lowest-low' fertility (Sobotka 2004: 200).

The concern with Europe's fertility trend (along with that of its partner in fertility decline, Japan) is caused in part by its poor showing compared to the United States (Fig. 14.7). By the late 1950s, Japan had already fallen below the replacement fertility rate (2.1 births per woman) and it set out to decline further from the 1970s onwards. Europe's baby boom of the 1950s was muted compared to that of the United States, but by the mid-1970s, the US TFR had fallen sharply from the peak of the mid-1950s and had arrived at a point marginally below the European rate. However, since then, the USA has staged a modest recovery, and since the early 1990s, its birth rate has hovered just above 2. Europe continued to drift downwards, particularly in the 1980s as more countries joined the falling trend, and since the early 1990s the European fertility rate has hovered just at or below 1.5 births per woman. The discomfiting fact for Europe, therefore, is that for going on two decades now, the US fertility rate has consistently been up to a third higher than that of Europe.

Viewed in a longer historical perspective, Europe's fertility decline since the 1960s could be seen as a return to a downward trend that was already underway as far back as the 1880s but was interrupted by a brief resurgence in the period after World War II

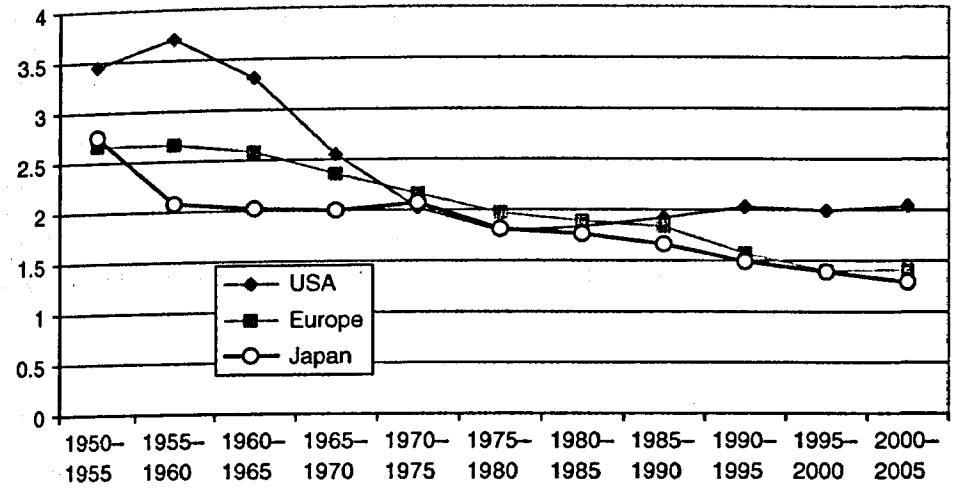


Fig. 14.7 Total fertility rates in Europe, USA and Japan, 1950–2005
Source: UN Population database, 2006 Revision.

(Therborn 2005, Chesnais 1992). France, the historical pioneer of fertility decline, already had a total fertility rate below 3 in the 1890s and fell below 2 in the years between 1915 and 1920. In the 1930s, low fertility spread over much of the most developed regions of Europe – both Germany and England and Wales, for example, experienced total fertility rates below 2 in this period (Chesnais 1992: 543).

The post-1960s phase, therefore, can be seen as a second wave of decline, distinguished from the first both in how low it has dropped and in how widely it is spreading around the world (Therborn 2005). Figure 14.8 picks out a number of indicative countries which show how this second wave of decline spread across Europe. France, the leader in the first wave of decline, stabilized in the post-1960s period at a rate that was merely low rather than, as in much of the rest of Europe, very low. By the early 2000s, its fertility was in the vicinity

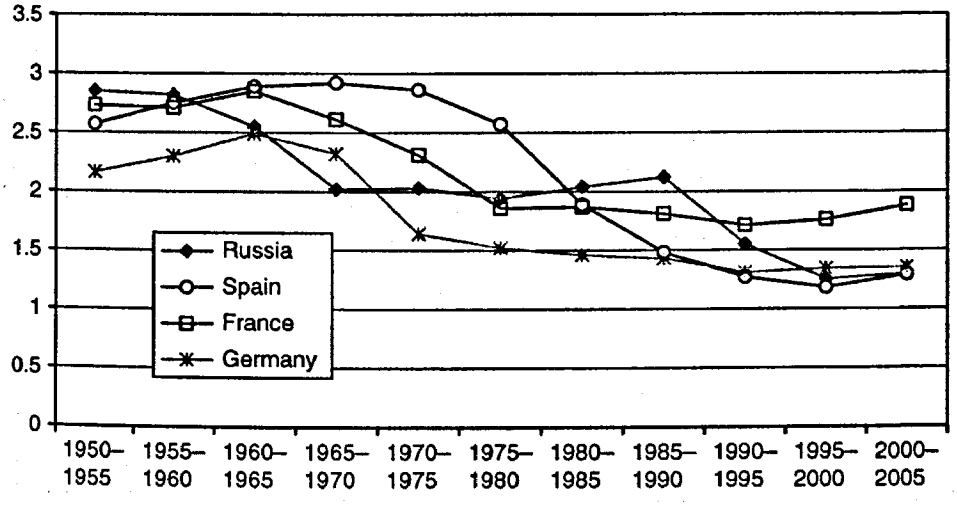


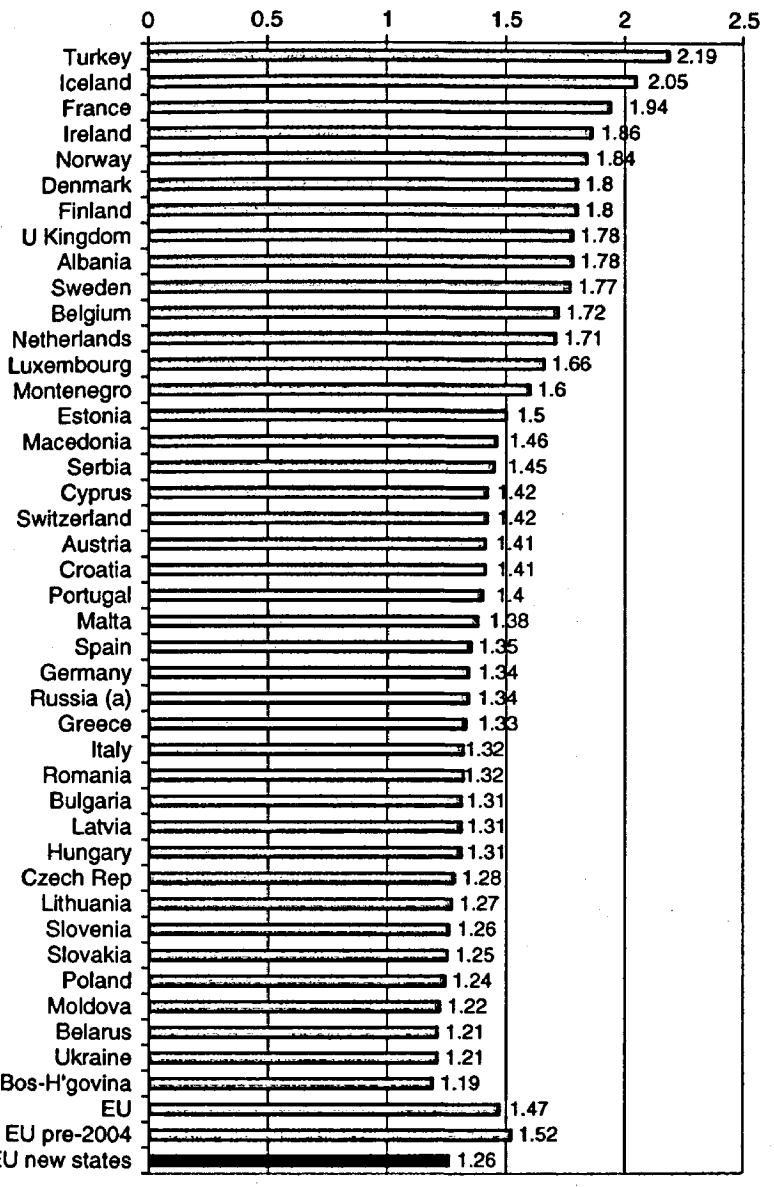
Fig. 14.8 Total fertility rates in indicative European countries, 1950–2005
Source: UN Population database, 2006 Revision.

of 1.9 and at that was touching the top of the European fertility league. This outcome was helped in part by high fertility among immigrants but also by a fertility rate among the native French that, at 1.65, was in the upper half of the distribution for the continent as a whole (Toulemon 2004; for an overview of the highly variable contribution of immigrants to fertility in a number of European countries, see Sobotka 2008). Germany, another early decliner, had a smaller recovery in fertility than France in the late 1950s and early 1960s and fell further than France in the second wave of decline. By the mid-1970s, German fertility had dropped below 1.5 and there it has remained since. While other European countries have since fallen even lower than Germany, none has had such a long exposure to sub-1.5 fertility rates. Germany thus stands out in Europe as a major instance of very low fertility that has persisted for at least a full generation.

Spain is included in Fig. 14.8 as a representative of the southern European experience. Here the second wave of decline was later to arrive – fertility rates remained above 2.5 until that late 1970s – but it caught up quickly with a precipitous fall in the 1980s. By the early 1990s, Spain and Italy were competing for bottom spot on the world fertility tables. During the 1990s, eastern Europe – represented by Russia in Fig. 14.7 – joined in the movement towards very low fertility. Family supports in the communist era had succeeded in keeping fertility rates above the replacement level, but in the post-communist transition, the majority of the former communist states quickly dropped into the critically low region of 1.3 or less, and in doing so took over from Italy and Spain as the weakest fertility performers in Europe. Looking at Europe as a whole, therefore, very low fertility could be said to have arrived in the north-west and centre in the 1960s and 1970s, to have spread to southern Europe in the 1980s and to have swept into eastern Europe in the 1990s.

The full range of national fertility rates now found around Europe is shown in Fig. 14.9. Though all are low by historical standards, the gap between top and bottom is wide. This is particularly so when Turkey is included in the picture – its fertility rate in 2005 of 2.19 is the equivalent of one child higher than that of the lowest, Bosnia-Herzegovina (at 1.19). Apart from Turkey, 11 of the other 40 states included in Fig. 14.8 have fertility rates in the 'comfort zone' of 1.7 or above, that is, where births may not be numerous enough to replace the population but which require only a manageable supplement from immigration to keep population either relatively stable or on a modest growth path. However, 26 states are in the discomfort zone below 1.5, nine of them in the crisis region below 1.3.

The latter very low rates are likely to be short term, reflecting the tempo effects of postponement of births among women since the early 1990s. Indeed in the last few years, total fertility rates in many European countries have begun to edge slightly upwards (thus sparking the hopes of a demographic 'bounce-back' in Europe referred to earlier). If, following postponement, women go on to have as many children as their precursors did in the pre-postponement period, completed family size will be higher than the total fertility rates of the 1990s and early 2000s would imply. While there are techniques for adjusting period fertility rates to take account of tempo effects (Sobotka 2004, Sobotka et al. 2005), it is a matter of some conjecture whether women who reached childbearing age in the years of deferred fertility in the 1990s will yet go on the 'recuperate' the births they missed out on by delaying the start of family formation. Unless they do so, at least to some degree, Europe outside the north-west rim faces the possibility, not of the modern equilibrium between low fertility and low mortality envisaged in the 1950s, but of a new disequilibrium where mortality is low but fertility is even lower and where, if the births deficit is wide and long-lasting enough, population could enter a new era of sharp, sustained contraction (Lutz 2006).



(a) 2004.

Fig. 14.9 Total fertility rates for European countries, 2005 or nearest available year
Sources: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Gerogia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey – WHO European Health for all database; all others – Eurostat New Cronos database.

While low fertility, and in many instances *very* low fertility, is now common in Europe, there are many differences between countries in what it entails. Some countries have had a considerable rise in childlessness and in some cases, particularly Germany, this has been identified as a major driver of fertility decline (in Germany, the incidence of childlessness rose from 11 percent among the cohort born in 1940 to 32 percent among the cohort born in 1965 – Birg 2001). However, countries differ in this regard. In a study of eight EU countries, Pearse (1999) found that, comparing the age cohort born in 1940 to that born

in 1960, three countries had experienced substantial increases in childlessness but five had not (for example, the percentage childless remained at 8 percent in France and rose only from 7 to 8 percent in Portugal). The unusually strong role of childlessness in Germanic countries is reflected in surveys of family size preferences: Germany and Austria stand out as countries with low average ideal family size (both below 1.8 among women aged under 35 in Eurobarometer data from 2002 reported in Fahey and Spéder 2004: 28–30), and that in turn reflects the unusually large minorities among those women who state 'none' or 'one' as their preferred number of children (Fahey and Spéder 2004, pp. 28–30; see also Testa 2007).

14.6 Mortality and Life Expectancy

One of the great achievements of modern civilisation is the successful war it has waged on early death. In the mid-nineteenth century, as a rough rule of thumb, it took two births to produce one live young adult. Today, survival from birth to early adulthood has generally exceeded 97 percent in developed countries. As a result, the latest phase of the war on death has shifted the battlefront from childhood and early adulthood to early old age and has implicitly redefined early death to refer as much to something that happens among people aged in their sixties and seventies as among younger people. This shift is evident in the huge gains in how long older people can expect to live that have been achieved in the past three decades. In the EU15, for example, life expectancy at age 65 increased by one-third between 1970 and 2005 (from 14.6 to 19.1 years – WHO European Health for All Database, accessed January 2008). The biggest contributor to this advance was a sharp fall in circulatory diseases. In the EU15, deaths from circulatory diseases among those aged 65 and over dropped from 3,500 per 100,000 in the early 1970s to 1,650 in 2005, a reduction of over a half (ibid). Deaths from cancer, the other major killer disease, have been slower to reduce: in the EU15, deaths among those aged 65 and over from this cause in 2005 (at 1,000 per 100,000) were only 5 percent lower than they had been in 1970 (1050 per 100,000).

Large and continuous gains in overall life expectancy have become so commonplace in the modern world that what stands out are instances where they have failed to occur. Europe today provides a case in point, represented by the dramatic reversal in life expectancy that has emerged in large regions of the former Soviet Union since the collapse of communism. The quite unexpected advent of this reverse, coupled with the collapses in fertility referred to earlier, gives an added and almost freakish element to demographic decline to this region of Europe, a degree of demographic crisis that is exceeded only by the AIDS-stricken regions of the world (most of which are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa).

Figure 14.10 shows the basic picture for major regions of Europe by reference to trends in life expectancy at birth. The EU15 has experienced continuous gain in this indicator over the past three decades, with a rise from just under 72 years in 1970 to just under 80 years in 2004. Turkey has gained even more dramatically, though starting at a low base in 1970 (life expectancy of 54.15 years) and with a slight reverse at the end of the period (down to under 69 years life expectancy in 2004 from a high point of 70 reached in 2001 and 2002). The ten new member states that joined the EU in 2004, which are dominated by eight ex-communist countries, showed little gain in life expectancy in the closing years of communist rule or in the early years of transition, but by 1995 they were on a steady upward path. The striking

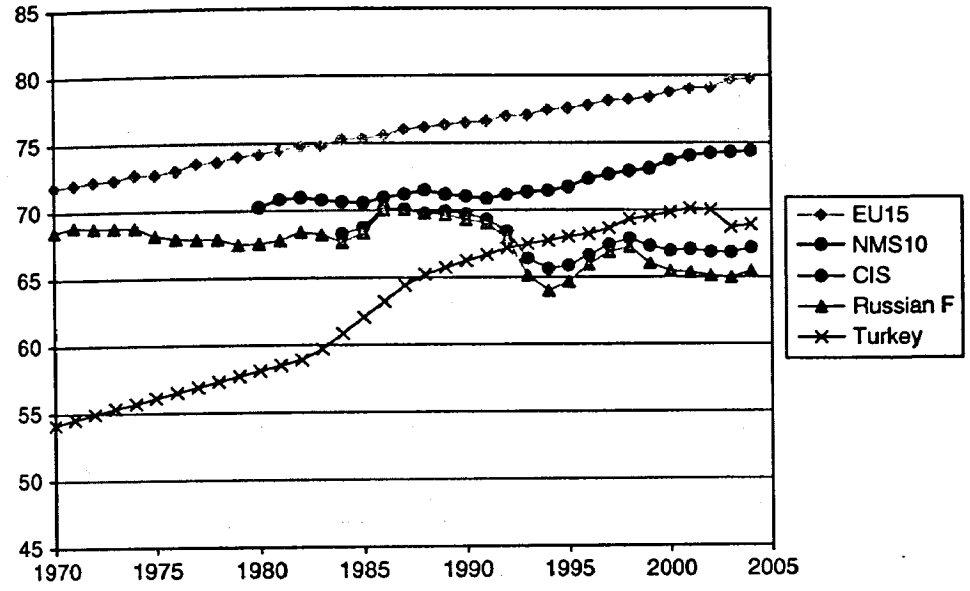
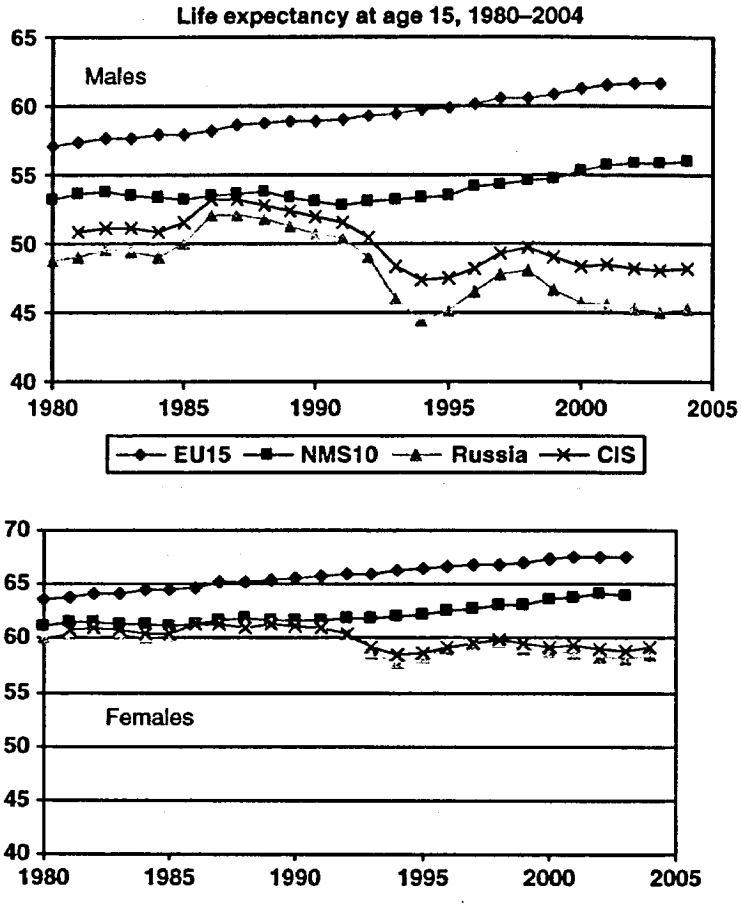


Fig. 14.10 Trends in life expectancy at birth in Europe
Source: WHO European Health for All database (downloaded November 2007).

deviation from the overall picture is found in the ex-Soviet sphere, represented in Fig. 14.10 by Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, the association of eleven former Soviet Republics of which Russia is the largest member). Here a sharp reverse in life expectancy occurred in the early years of post-communist transition, most notably in Russia. Life expectancy at birth in Russia for males and females combined fell by almost 6 years between the late 1980s and 1994, and by 2004 little real recovery had taken place.

The main contributor to the new mortality crisis in Russia is an exceptionally high death rate among Russian men (World Bank 2005). Male life expectancy at age 15 in Russia fell by almost 8 years between the early 1980s and 1994, and by 2004, the gap between male and female life expectancy at that age had widened to 13 years, a uniquely wide gender differential (Fig. 14.11). The proximate cause of this outcome was an epidemic of self-damaging behaviour among Russian men, centred mainly on alcohol and tobacco. A World Bank study has estimated that drinking was the biggest contributor to Russian men's exceptional health problems, with smoking not far behind – these two factors together accounted for 30 percent of excess loss of disability-free years of life found in Russia in 2002 (see table in Fig. 14.11). In most of Europe, key aspects of demographic contraction could be viewed as consequences of developments that are largely benign in themselves – fertility decline as a reflection of women's greater control over their own reproductive functions, population ageing as in part a consequence of better health and greater longevity among older people. In the large ex-Soviet regions, however, the male mortality crisis of the 1990s added a dimension that has no redeeming features and that lends a direness to demographic decline that has no parallel anywhere else in the developed world.



Source: WHO European Health for All database (downloaded January 2007)
Russia: % of disability-adjusted life years lost attributable to 8 leading risk factors

1.	Alcohol	16.5%
2.	High blood pressure	16.3%
3.	Tobacco	13.4%
4.	High cholesterol	12.3%
5.	High body-mass index	8.5%
6.	Low fruit & vegatable intake	7.0%
7.	Physical inactivity	4.6%
8.	Illicit drugs	2.2%

Fig. 14.11 The mortality crisis in the former Soviet Union
Source: World Bank (2005).

14.7 Migration

The impending decline in the number of natives in most European societies means that migration is likely to be a significant part of Europe's demographic future. European citizens do not like that prospect, and already anti-emigrant attitudes are hardening in many European countries (Boeri and Brücker 2005). Academic commentators looking at the

demography of European migration have also sounded notes of alarm about what it may portend for Europe's future (Smil 2005, Coleman 2006).

Figure 14.4 has already presented a snapshot of recent levels of net migration in European countries. Here the concern is less with the details of migration than with its overall scale and significance. The point to be considered is whether the scale is as large as some of the commentary on the topic implies and whether its significance may lie as much in its implications for European mind-sets as in effects on European population. Despite the anti-migrant feeling now arising in Europe, one could remark at how little rather than how much population mobility occurs in Europe, particularly in the richer regions. There are difficulties in making precise statements on this question since the plethora of ways of counting migrants (not to speak of domestic movers) adopted by different states means that our grasp of the basic facts of population mobility is surprisingly poor (Lemaitre et al. 2007, OECD 2006).[5] Yet it appears that workers in the richer parts of Europe are less willing to move to find jobs now than were their predecessors in the 1950s and 1960s and than are their present-day counterparts in major competitor countries (especially the United States). Boeri et al. (2002: viii), for example, judge that less than half a percentage point of the EU labour force changes region of residence a year, compared to 2.5 percent moving across states in the United States. Even when movement between sub-national regional units within EU states is included, the European Commission finds that labour mobility is only about one-third of the level found at inter-state level in the United States (European Commission, 2006: 220, 223). It is in this context that the Commission bemoans the lack of a 'genuine mobility culture' in the EU and laments the drag on EU economic growth that results (ibid., 207; see also Krieger 2008; on the relative importance of labour immobility compared to other factors as impediments to EU economic growth and regional convergence, see Funck and Pizzati 2003). Resulting economic sluggishness in turn contributes to resentment against immigration from outside, even where immigrant labour is needed to fill gaps that native labour will not respond to (Boeri and Brücker 2005). This creates what has been called the 'vicious circle of European migration': 'while migration is needed because European workers are immobile, the immobility of Europeans makes them less keen to accept migrants' (Boeri et al. 2002, p. ix).

A further aspect of the scale and significance of immigration in Europe relates to what Europeans understand by the term 'outsiders'. Here there is potential for great muddle since most of the outsiders who make up the migration flows into European countries are themselves European and so, from a pan-European point of view, are not outsiders at all. The OECD calculates that the top ten source countries in 2004 for immigration into the OECD's European member states provided those states with almost a million immigrants – but that over 800,000 of these came from other European countries (OECD 2006, p. 33). Romania and Poland were the two top countries of origin, between them accounting for

[5] In measuring migration *flows*, the main source of variation in counting practices lies in the degree to which data seek to exclude temporary migrants such as students and visiting family members. Recent efforts by the OECD to harmonise international immigration data focus on *permanent* migration and on that basis produce estimates of immigration for some OECD countries (particularly Japan, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Austria and the UK) that are substantially below usually published national statistics (Lemaitre et al. 2007, p. 6). In counting the *stock* of immigrants, the main issue is the distinction between the *foreign-born* population and the *non-national* population, with the latter referring only to those who have not adopted the nationality of their host country (for estimates of the migrant stock measured in both ways for a number of countries, see OECD 2006: 45). In Germany in 2004, for example, the non-national population was estimated at 8.9 percent of the total while the foreign-born population was estimated at 13 percent (ibid.).

close to four out of every ten immigrants into the rest of Europe. Morocco (with 12 percent of the total) and the United States (with 5 percent) were the only two non-European states to feature in the top ten list. Much of European migration, therefore, takes the form of a spatial re-shuffling of Europe's existing ethno-national populations rather than a genuine influx from 'outside'.

The corollary of this is that immigration from the 'real' outside has not yet been or is unlikely to become large, at least in comparison with other major developed countries that Europeans often take as comparators. Over the past two decades, the period in which immigration is said to have risen rapidly in Europe, net immigration from outside the continent amounted to the equivalent of 3.7 percent of its population at the end of the period (the concept of Europe referred to here is that of the UN and thus excludes Turkey). This compares to an immigrant inflow into the United States of 8.4 percent of population over the same period and 13 percent in Australia (calculations based on UN population database 2006 revision). The UN's medium variant projections up to 2050 envisage a net immigration total for Europe by the end of that period equivalent to 5.5 percent of population, compared to corresponding figures of 12 percent for the United States and 16 percent for Australia. Some regional areas within Europe will undoubtedly have more immigration than others but again not to an exceptional degree by world standards. In the United Nations projections, only Northern Europe is assumed to experience immigration totals in the 45 years from 2005 to 2050 that, at 8.4 percent of population, approximate those accumulated over the past 20 years in the United States.

14.8 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to describe the main constituents of what many people see as Europe's depressing population prospects – its apparently inevitable shift towards a smaller, greyer and less ethnically cohesive population in the future. Some disagree that the picture is as bleak as is often supposed, on the grounds that either the forecasts may be wrong (for example, in that birth rates may unexpectedly recover) or that, even if correct, their consequences may be more bearable than expected, particularly if Europe responds in sensible ways. Yet there is no doubt that present demographic trends cast a shadow over Europe's future and raise fundamental questions about the turn it should take to preserve its position as a leading world region.

Those questions apply with full force to the 'European project' itself, the European Union's attempt to modify, if not fully overcome, the modern ethno-national fragmentation of the continent. Mention has earlier been made of certain demographic aspects of that challenge, not least the sheer number of states the EU has to cope with and their great diversity in population size. In addition, the divergence now emerging between the stronger and weaker demographic performers among EU states (basically, between the still growing states of the north-west rim and the rest – the demographically faltering states of southern, central and eastern Europe) adds a new element of diversity to the European mix. Yet, as well as looking at how demography might shape the prospects of the EU, one might also ask what the EU might have to offer by way of solutions to Europe's demographic problems. One obvious aspect of such solutions is the very fact of union itself: Europe as an aggregation of discrete states might lose demographic weight in the world but the EU as a single political entity would still remain near the top of the global league in population

size (with its present 27 states, it could rest at third in the world list after India and China for decades to come – Demeny 2003).

The second potentially important consequence of European integration lies in its as yet unfulfilled capacity to unleash Europe's economic energies, particularly in regard to job creation. The demographic significance of this potential could lie in its impact on a key aspect of Europe's population weakness, namely, its low fertility. There has been much discussion of the pro-family policies that European states might implement in order to boost fertility. However, the lesson of the past two decades is that the best general support for fertility lies not in any particular mix of family policies but in an abundance of jobs, particularly jobs for women (see especially d'Addio and Mira d'Ercole 2005; also Castles 2003; Brewster and Rindfuss 2000; Ahn and Mira 2002; Sleebos 2003; Billari 2005). The underlying argument here is that Europe's sluggish fertility performance may well be a symptom of its sluggish economy and particularly of its dysfunctional labour market, as reflected in its static job numbers and high unemployment rates. The big question, then, is whether the EU can help deliver the surge in employment that may well be the most effective antidote to Europe's critical shortage of births.

A third aspect of a possible EU impact on Europe's population future relates to migration. Here the issue in part is how the EU may help manage migration flows (European Commission 2006). The more fundamental question, though, is whether it can mould European mind-sets so that the twentieth-century attachment to the mono-ethnic state, rooted in nationalist thinking, may give way to a multi-ethnic model of polity and society. The goal of detaching polity from ethnicity is at the heart of the EU project: it is central both to the politics of 'ever-greater union' and the economics of market integration. But it also has demographic implications, as it could help foster the fluid inter-mingling of the ethno-national populations that readier migration would entail. Relocation of people from one part of Europe to another does not of itself add to population numbers, but, as the champions of European integration argue, it may well be necessary for the kind of social and economic re-energising of the continent that is required to get Europe's demographic motor moving again.

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