

How many Europeans in 2050 ?

The recent enlargements of the European Union are reinforcing a previous tendency of aging and depopulation in Europe. Between 2004 and 2005, a large majority of the countries from the EU could see their population diminish.

The synthetic fertility rate index of the EU27 area has been under the replacement threshold (2,1) since the first half of the mid-1970's. The former members of the European Union had already reached that threshold before the Union's enlargement. However, the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 admitted countries characterized by a low fertility rate, which does not improve the results at the community level.

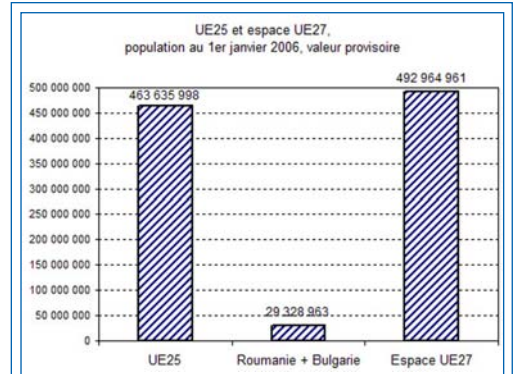
Looking ahead, the Eurostat experts write: "Within the next two decades, the EU25 total population should increase by more than 13 millions inhabitants (more), from 456,8 millions inhabitants on January 1st 2004 to 470,1 millions inhabitants on January 1st 2025. The growth of the EU25 population will mainly be the result of the migratory rate, since the crude death rate should exceed the total birth rate starting 2010. The migratory rate will likely not counterbalance the natural population degrowth after 2025, which should start diminishing progressively to reach 449,9 millions inhabitants on January 1st 2050, which mean a loss of more than 20 millions inhabitants compared to 2025 (1). The losses will be even more important while integrating Romania and Bulgaria in the EU, two countries with a high tendency toward depopulation.

Since the year 2025 seems to be a turning point, it will be useful to compare the projections in the numbers of the EU27 between 2025 and 2050 (Cf. map EU27 : projection of population from 2025 to 2050).

Projected figures indicates that the population of the EU25 will diminish from 1,5% on the available projection period (2004-2050), under the effect of a 0,4% growth in the EU15 and a drop from 11,7% within the ten new country members since 2004. This demonstrates that the 2004 enlargement – even worse in 2007 – is reinforcing the tendency toward depopulation in communitarian Europe. Between 2004 and 2050, the most important drops will be noticed in most of the new country members since 2004 or 2007 : Bulgaria (-34,7%), Romania (-21,1%), Latvia (-19,2%), Estonia (-16,6%), Lithuania (16,4%), Czech Republic (-12,9%), Hungary and Slovakia (-11,9% each), and Poland (-11,8%). In other words, the Bulgarian population could diminish by more than a third between 2004 and 2050. Compared to the other new country members, Cyprus and Malta are the exceptions, with respective growths of 33,5% and 27,1%. In absolute terms, the most important growths are expected in France (+ 5,8 millions inhabitants), Great-Britain (+ 4,7) and Ireland (+ 1,5). This will not be enough, however, to invert the communitarian tendency.

Three non-working person for every four employed persons in 2050

Eurostat warns: "The proportion of youth within the total population is diminishing. In 2004, youths aged 0 to 14 made up 16,5% of the total population against 18,8% in 1993. Youths aged 15 to 24 accounted for 12,7% in 2004 against 14,5% in 1993. Adults aged 25 to 49 account for more than a third of the total EU population (2004: 36,5%). From 1993 to 2004, the aging population of more than 50 years old increased in all the EU. The 65-79 age group went from 10,9% of the total population in 1993 to 12,5% in 2004. [...] Within the last decade, the life expectancy at birth increased by nearly three years in the twenty five members of the actual EU. In 2002, it was 75 years for men and 81 years for women. [...] The population aging process is growing stronger. Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of people older than 65 within the total population increased from almost 2 percentage points in the actual EU25 (2005 - PV). The growth actually reached 3 percentage points in some of the southern, central and eastern countries, where growth figures have consistently been lower. In 2004, the highest percentages of people aged 65 and more could be seen in Italy, Sweden, Greece, Spain, Belgium and Germany." (2).



Realized by Pierre Verluise

Source : EUROSTAT, base de données, consultation octobre 2007

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http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1205/publi_pdf1_popf.3_2006_sardon.pdf

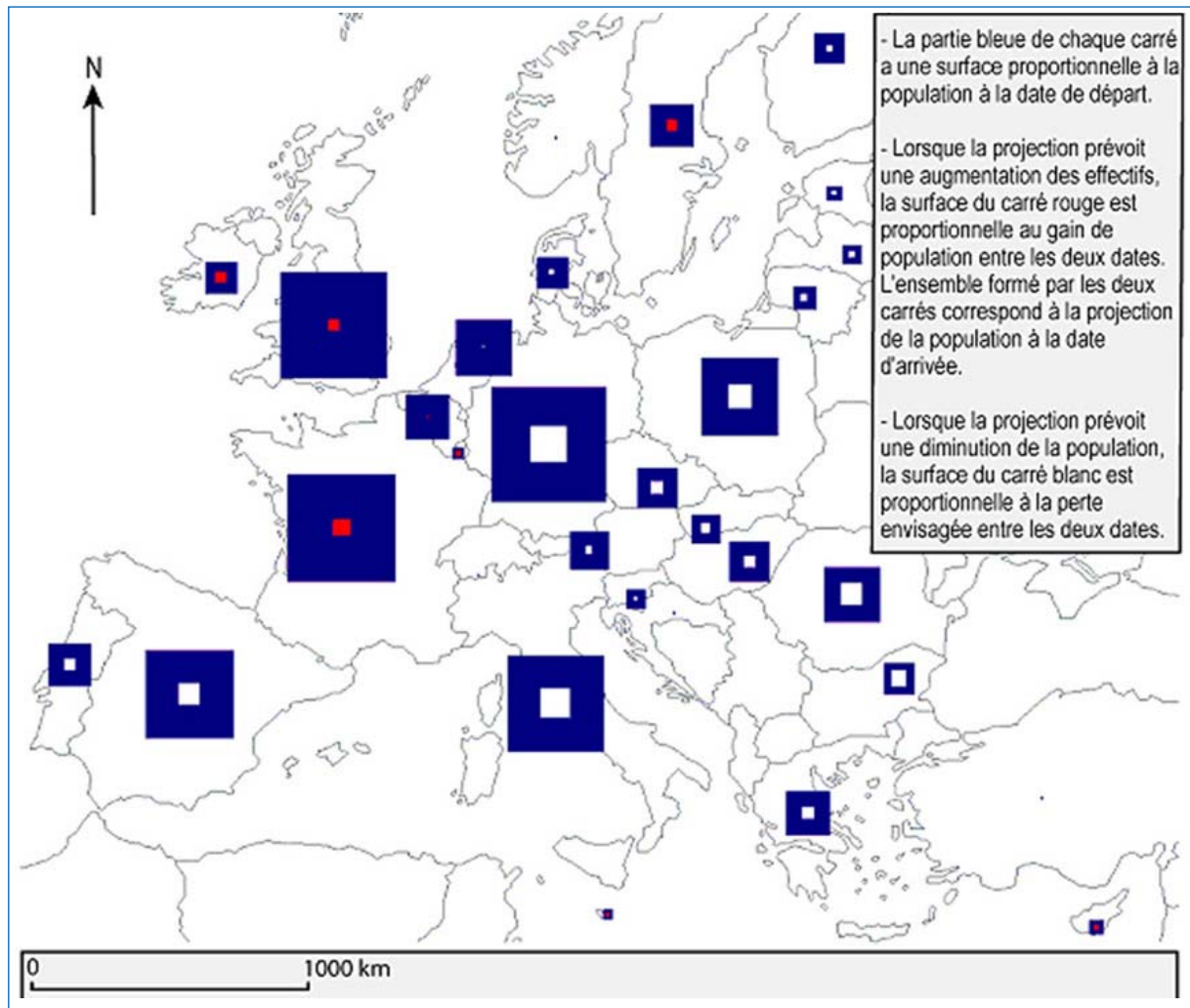
USEFUL LINKS

INED : <http://www.ined.fr/>

EUROSTAT : <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

POPULATION & AVENIR : <http://www.population-demographie.org>

EU27 : POPULATION PROJECTION FROM 2025 TO 2050



Source : EUROSTAT, "Projection de la population 2004-2050. Hausse de la population de l'UE 25 jusqu'en 2025, baisse ensuite", communiqué de presse, 48/2005 - 8 avril 2005, p.3. Fond de carte GEOATLAS, Cartographie sur APIC, F. et P. Verluise, 2007.

- The blue part of each square is proportional to population on the starting date.
- When the projection is expecting the numbers to increase, the red square surface is proportional to the population gaining between the two dates. The total formed by both squares corresponds to the population prospect on the final date.
- When the projection is expecting the numbers to decrease, the white square surface is proportional to the loss expected between the two dates.

Please note that the figures on this map are only speculative as they are projections. The migratory rate seems to be particularly difficult to seize within such a deadline. Nevertheless, the map is worth consideration. Between 2025 and 2050, only 8 countries of the EU27 should see their population increasing. It should be six countries from the ex-EU15 (Sweden, Ireland, United-Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg and France) and only two new countries from 2004 : Malta and Cyprus. All other states of the EU27 should see their population diminish significantly between 2025 and 2050. The new member countries are over-represented in this group.

In this context, the dependency rate of ageing people should exceed 50% for the EU25 by 2045. "It means that for each retired person, there will be two people in employment. In 2045, it is probable that the EU25 will have a biggest proportion of aging people than its main rivals will have". (3) In 2050, more than 10% of the EU25 population will be over 80 years old.

According to Eurostat, the proportion of the working-age population (from 15 to 64) will clearly diminish in the long run. "It will go from 67,2% in the EU25 in 2004 to 56,7% in 2050, which means from 306,8 millions in 2004 to 254,9 millions in 2050 in absolute terms. [...] Therefore, the dependency rate of aging people in the EU25 should increase; from 25,4% in 2004 to 52,8% in 2050, while the youth dependency rate will more or less remain stable within the same period, going from 24,4% in 2004 to 23,7% in 2050. The total youth dependency rate (4) in the UE25 will increase, from 48,9% in 2004 to 76,5% in 2050. This means that whereas there was one non-working person (young or old) for every two working-age people, there will be three non-working persons for every four working-age people in 2050". (6)

It would be foolish to imagine that the decrease of 52 million working-age people between 2004 and 2050 could remain harmless for the productive capacity of the communitarian Europe and its world rank. The consequence on Research and Development could be significant, possibly affecting increases in productivity, or even on defence technologies. There will be a lot to do for this aging perspective not to slow down the economy. This would make the financing of retirement even more complicated. Indeed, how can we finance the retirement system tomorrow when we know that the spending on retirement and life benefits is already higher than spending on any other social benefits ?

Will the EU know how to invent a population policy ?

Until the early 2000's, the institutions of an aging communitarian Europe did not think about the means as to the readjustment between the generations thanks to a growing youth population, which means a higher fertility rate (6). The 2004 integration of countries considered to be true "mines of depopulation" began a period of progressive conscious awareness of the issue.

In March 2005, the European commission is publishing a "Green book" titled "Facing climate changes, a new solidarity between generations"(7). It is especially written that "If Europe wants to invert the demographic decline tendency, families should be more supported from public policies allowing women and men to combine their personal and professional lives. [...] We should ask ourselves two simple questions : what priorities should we give to children ? Do we wish to give families their due place in the European society, no matter what their form is ?" (8)

However, family policies is perceived differently among country members, for cultural or historic motives. This may be the reason why the coordination of the migratory policies is progressing faster. Will communitarian Europe know how to take up the gauntlet of the aging and depopulation process with a global policy ?

By Pierre Verluise,

Researche Fellow at IRIS, Doctor of political geography at the Université Paris-Sorbonne, Director of www.diplo-web.com

(1) EUROSTAT, Population projection for 2004-2005. The population of the EU25 increasing until 2005, decreasing afterward. The working-age population should diminish from 52 millions until 2050. Press communiqué, 48/2005. The figures used here are presented on page 3. The communitarian averages are calculated for the ex-EU15 and EU25 but the prospects for Bulgaria and Romania are also specified. This is why they appear on the map, whereas the prospects for Croatia and Turkey are not indicated. This is why they do not appear on the map.

(2) EUROSTAT, L'Europe en chiffres. Annuaire Eurostat 2005, Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes, 2005, pages 64, 80 et 84.

(3) EUROSTAT, L'Europe en chiffres - Annuaire Eurostat 2006-2007, p. 59.

(4) Sum of the youth and ageing population dependency rates

(5) EUROSTAT, Population projection for 2004-2005. The population of the EU25 increasing until 2005, decreasing afterward. The working-age population should diminish from 52 millions until 2050. Press communiqué, 48/2005 – April 8, 2005 page 2

(6) ARISTIDE L'ANCIEN, European Union. To end up with the Euromerta. Population & Avenir, may-june 2001, n°653, page 14.

(7) COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, Green book, Face aux changements démographiques, une nouvelle solidarité entre générations, 2005, COM (2005) 94 final, March 16 2005, page 26

(8) COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, Green book, Face aux changements démographiques, une nouvelle solidarité entre générations, 2005, COM (2005) 94 final, March 16 2005, page 2, 3 and 10