

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC REGULARITIES OF AGEING IN THE BALTIC STATES

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The purpose of this paper is to characterize the level, dynamics and differentiation of population ageing in three Baltic States, as well as determine the causes and the social consequences of ageing. Already from the 1930s Estonia and Latvia were referred to demographically aged countries. In the soviet period migration (predominately mass immigration of younger people) freezed the ageing process.

Since the restoration of political independence in 1991 the Baltic States experienced very rapid decrease in fertility, especially in Lithuania. In addition, the ageing process has been accelerated by emigration of predominately younger population in working ages. As a result, the Baltic States are among the most ageing countries in Europe and in the world. According to the calculations of the author, the rank of Latvia and Estonia by three ageing indicators (mean age, percentage of older population, ageing index) is within twenty oldest countries. Mean age of population exceeded 40 years, which slightly surpasses the European average. Therefore overall mortality rate (13-14 deaths per 1000 population) is very high and expected increase of life expectancy in circumstances of high speed of ageing will not prevent depopulation. The proportion of old people, ageing index and mean age in Latvia are slightly higher than in Estonia and particularly in Lithuania. (see Table).

We have found dissynchronous ageing trends among different groups of population. Contrary to the soviet period now urban population is even slightly older than population of rural areas. Also, foreign-origin population (non-titular ethnicities) has become older than population of titular ethnicities (ethnic Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians).

Country ranking by ageing, 2009
(rank by 3 indicators: 60+ (%), median age, ageing index)

Country	60+ (%)	Median age	Ageing index	Sum of ranks	Rank by 3 indicators
Japan	1	1	1	3	1
Italy	2	3	2	7	2
Germany	3	2	3	8	3
Latvia	15	19	6	40	13
Estonia	16	26	13	55	16-17
Lithuania	24	25	19	68	23

Calculation of the author from: World Population Ageing 2009, pp. 65-66.

* 2007 (World Population Ageing 2007, p. 68)

The Baltic States are characterized by a high level of women ageing and the biggest gap between women and men ageing indicators between the Member States of the European Union. Women predominate in the elderly population. Special attention was devoted to the analysis of population ageing in different regions, urban and rural areas as well as ageing trends of working population. On average the oldest population live in major towns but the biggest increase of population mean age during the last two decades can be observed in major cities (especially in capital cities). Urban population ageing process is more rapid due to low fertility rate and on the whole urban population is older than rural population.

The scenarios of depopulation still prevail in coming 15-20 years. All demographic projections show that the intensity of ageing in the Baltics will be high. Particularly strong increase will be in proportion of oldest old. National social protection systems (and pensions schemes in particular) should respond to these challenges. The lawdefined age that gives the right to receive old age pensions has been increased considerably in all Baltic States. Since 2008 very rapid fall of economic development and loss of jobs by hundreds thousands caused decrease in fertility and provoked emigration accelerating ageing process. The emerging conflict between the young and the old people over public resources is a new phenomenon in the Baltics, and further increase in retirement age will

have the biggest impact on sustainability of existing pension systems. Experts and governmental bodies have already started to work out improvements of the existing systems.

There is a lack of planning on ageing research and shortage of funding for this in the Baltics. There is a need for wider collaboration of specialists from the Baltic States in the ageing field at the European level, including to the EC 7th framework programme.