

Low Natality and Trends of Demographic Development in Moldova for the First Half of the XXI century.

GAGAUZ Olga
PhD in Sociology
Institute for European Integration and Political Science
Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Chisinau

Since 1990, the Republic of Moldova faces a catastrophic decline in natality. Very often, it is explained by the influence of socio-economic factors: decline in living standards, social instability, unemployment growth, which certainly can not be denied. However, this drop in natality is related not only to the worsening of socio-economic factors but also to the effects of family policy which took place in the 1980s: prolongation of parental leave, increase in birth and child support. It is shown in some studies [1] that the main effect of these measures was not an increase in total fertility, i.e. the number of children born in the family, but a temporary and significant destabilization of birth timing (decrement of maternity age, shortening of birth intervals).

In 1990-2008, total fertility rate was decreasing progressively in both urban and rural areas. In rural regions, TFR dropped from 3.07 to 1.5 while in urban regions from 1.91 to 1.0. Over this period, TFR decreased by 1.2 (from 2.39 in 1990 to 1.27 in 2008). The rural/urban discrepancy was also blurred. If in 1990, the difference between TFR in rural and urban regions was 1.2, in 2008 – 0.5.

Postponement of childbearing brings some corrections to the calculation of natality level. Thus, adjusted total fertility rate for 2003-2005 is 1.36 children per woman, which is higher than the official estimates (1.21-1.23). At the same time, cohort fertility rate for 1967 cohort, which is close to the end of its reproductive age, is 1.97 [2].

Dynamics of age-specific fertility rates are characterized by a shift from 15-24 to 25-34 age groups. The trends are similar for urban and rural areas; however, in rural regions, this process is less pronounced and the most noticeable change is associated with a decline in natality at age 15-19 and its increase at age 20-29.

It is worth mentioning that over the recent years, natality level is much influenced by work migration, especially that of long-duration, which leads to the break of family ties and incomplete realization of reproductive purposes. If to calculate TFR taking into account the present population, it is equal to 1.44 in 2008, which is higher than the official statistics.

The natality decline had a significant impact on the dynamics of Moldovan population age structure, which will determine the number of births in the next decades. According to three

variants of population projections (pessimistic, moderate-pessimistic and optimistic, *Gagauz O., 2009*) in the first half of the XXI century, the population of Moldova will continue to decline.

The main factor determining the dynamics of population size and age structure in the next decades is the fact that the reproductive age will be reached by the less numerous generations born after 1990, which will decisively influence the evolution of the number of population in the first half of the 21st century. These generations will determine the number of the female population of fertile age and, implicitly, the number of children that will be born in the next decades.

For the next years, structural factors will contribute to the relative improvement of demographic indicators. Since at present the fertile age is reached by the numerous generations born before 1990, the level of birth rate will experience a slight recovery until the years 2011-2012, and the birth rate will vary within 11.04-11.06‰ according to the pessimistic variant and 11.2-11.4‰ according to the optimistic one.

After the year 2012, natality decreasing process will start, due to the entry in the reproductive age of the less numerous female generations born at the end of the 20th century. The reduction of the number of fertile age women will determine the birth rate and the number of children born in the prognosis period. If in 2008 the fertile age female population (15-49 years) represented approximately one million persons, in 2025 it will reach 886.2 thousand and 541.6 thousand in 2050. According to the pessimistic projection the number of live newborns in the year 2025 will drop down to 26.8 thousand, and by the year 2050 down to 17.3 thousand. Only if fertility rate increases up to 1.8 children per fertile age woman (optimistic variant), the number of live newborns will reach 29.4 thousand newborns by the year 2050.

Along with the birth rate decrease, the demographic ageing process will continue. By the year 2050 the ratio among the three large age groups (children, adults, and elderly) will be altered significantly, the weight of elderly persons in the general structure of the population will reach 30.331.9% and, at the same time, the weight of children within the population will drop dramatically, down to 11.8-13.8% (according to pessimistic and optimistic variants of population projection, respectively).

Obviously, the reduction of the negative impact of demographic aging process will be closely linked to the capacities to improve natality in Moldova.

REFERENCES:

1. Zakharov SV Demographic analysis of the effects of measures of family policy in Russia in the 1980s // <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2007/0309/analit01.php>
2. European Demographic data sheet, 2008 // www.populationeurope.org
3. Lutz W. and V. Skirbekk. Policies Addressing the Tempo Effect in Low-Fertility Countries. // Population and Development Review, 2005, № 31 (4), s.699-720.