

Population Europe

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# Discussion Paper

**PERSPECTIVES OF POLICY-RELEVANT  
POPULATION STUDIES**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations, the world population reached 7 billion at the end of October 2011 and will likely be 8 billion by 2025<sup>1</sup>. There is, of course, great disparity across the world in terms of basic demographic patterns of life expectancy, fertility dynamics, and migration. It has been argued that the existing disparity and population dynamics have fundamental consequences for our future, which are comparable to the impact of climate change. Europe is particularly vulnerable to these developments but the picture varies across countries with regard to fertility rates, ageing, and migration. Thus, a diverse set of questions becomes more and more important: Will life expectancy continue to increase as it has since the 18th century? Will birth rates continue to remain at low levels in many European countries, or will we see increasing trends in the future? What will future families look like if the dissolution of traditional living arrangements continues? How will migration flows affect receiving as well as sending communities? How will life-courses change in a society becoming more heterogeneous?

In order to answer these questions, we must fully grasp the dynamics of the population change we are facing in our times. Since demographic change has become a major societal challenge in Europe, a sound understanding of its underlying trends is essential for decision-makers in the economy and society. How can the labour market, welfare state, health care institutions, and the public-private systems of old age provision adapt to a new population composition that has an increasing share of older people and changing needs for care? In some countries, the labour force will shrink significantly and allocation conflicts between rural and metropolitan regions will increase. These trends affect not only societies as a whole, but every individual. New life-course strategies may include more flexibility in terms of regional mobility, more time for family-care through new working-time arrangements, lifelong education, and, presumably, a later age of retirement. Intergenerational solidarity may have to be redefined when the traditional concept of family comes into question.

### Population dynamics in Europe have fundamental consequences for our future.

It is also crucial to gain a better understanding of population change in Europe from a global perspective. First of all, European trends are unprecedented and differ from other parts of the world. Although declining and ageing populations are not necessarily new trends, the intensity of these changes in Europe has increased dramatically due to the post-war baby-boom that has been followed by very low fertility rates. Secondly, these population trends seem to be irreversible in the short run, and even in countries where policies are targeted at reducing the impact of demographic change, efforts do not seem to be very effective over the long-term. These European trends raise challenges from which other countries may draw lessons in the event that they experience similar population developments.

Europe itself can be seen as a laboratory where population change can be studied under different parameters, involving 27 more or less varying political systems and an even greater number of regions, social structures, economic conditions, and cultural traditions. Due to its comparative character, methodological variety, and interdisciplinary openness, demographic research is especially well-equipped to address these kinds of questions. In particular, stronger collaboration between European demographers can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of general trends and regional variance under different initial conditions and policy interventions.

### A stronger collaboration between European demographers can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of general trends and regional variance.

This document highlights some of the emerging issues in policy-relevant population research in light of these fundamental demographic developments. Without claiming to be comprehensive, it sets an agenda of the most urgent topics and most exciting approaches in the field of policy-relevant population studies. The subsequent four sections of the document introduce and elaborate on main thematic fields of demographic research. In these, we handle the most relevant topics

and enquiries on population dynamics that impact markets, society, and policies today and in the near future.

The aim of this paper is to set an agenda of the most urgent policy-relevant topics in the field of European population studies.

*Ageing, Health and Mortality* is the first field and focuses on the relevance of changes over time in longevity and healthy ageing that have made population ageing a mass phenomenon, as well as questions current employment and welfare schemes. Second, the *Fertility and Family* field sheds light on the fall of intended and actual birth rates, changes in family forms, types and relations, and new insights on the intersection between

family and work life. Next, *Migration and Integration* aims to understand the determinants of migration and the consequences for the receiving and sending countries in terms of migration's impact on employment and welfare systems, as well as the paths of individual lives. Lastly, *Cross-cutting Research Topics* handles issues that go beyond traditional demographic research, such as interregional development or intergenerational relations, among others, which have become new wells of demographic interest due to their societal relevance. Finally, the last section presents a short review of the *Methods and Infrastructure* available to research.

This comprehensive overview has been compiled by Population Europe: the collaborative network that brings together leading demographic research centres throughout Europe and more than 200 eminent scholars from a broad range of disciplines with relevance in the field of population studies. Thus, Population Europe forms a unique pool of knowledge and presents research-driven information at the cutting-edge and validated data on more topics, regions, and methods than one single partner could cover alone, which promotes the

The Population Europe network forms a unique pool of knowledge in population studies.

analysis of complex problems from a cross-national and interdisciplinary perspective. In addition, Population Europe offers an infrastructure to disseminate information to scientific, as well as policy and lay audiences, in Brussels and in the European states covered by the Partner institutes.

## 2. RESEARCH AREAS

### 2.1 AGEING, HEALTH, AND MORTALITY

More and more political and societal stakeholders are beginning to realise the extent to which European countries will experience a pronounced phase of population ageing in the coming decades. Research has shown that life expectancy at birth has risen

at a remarkably regular pace of 2.5 years per decade in the past one and a half centuries. As a result, people born today may expect average life spans of 90 to 100 years<sup>2</sup>. So-called centenarians, those living 100 years or more, are already a quickly growing group in many European countries. In Sweden, for example, the number of centenarians has risen from less than 20 in 1950 to over 1,300 in 2000. In the United Kingdom, the number of centenarians quadrupled from 2,600 in 1981 to 11,600 in 2009. Moreover, current population projections suggest that the number will reach almost 80,000 by 2033, which corresponds to an annual increase of eight percent. These trends in longevity will make population ageing a mass phenomenon throughout Europe – regardless of the fertility levels in the various countries. For example, the share of people aged over 65 in France, a country with comparably high fertility rates, and in Germany, a country with comparably low fertility rates, will increase by about 80 percent in the next 25 years<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, recent research indicates that people not only live longer, they also do so in better health. This is mainly due to investment in medical advancements and public health efforts, higher living standards, improvements in education, better nutrition, and more balanced lifestyles<sup>4</sup>. As a consequence, frailty, i.e. the period during which disabling conditions emerge and ultimately lead to death, usually begins between the ages of 75 and 80. However, research suggests that this phase is being progressively delayed. Health problems that used to be typical at age 70 are now typical at 80, and conditions that prevailed at age 80 now prevail at 90. As a result, healthy life expectancy increases at about the same rate as overall life expectancy.

**With increasing longevity, European countries will experience a pronounced phase of population ageing.**

Increasing life expectancy has various consequences for society and the economy, as well as for policy-making. The average lifespan of a population is one of the central parameters for policy-makers, either implicitly or explicitly. In all European countries, the costs for social care are already increasing, and the costs for health care even more so. Will states be able to fund these rapidly growing budgetary needs by raising taxes? Or do we need to make reforms in addition to the ones already being made in the pension systems in several European countries? The fact that it is difficult to make health care dependent on personal contributions, as in the case of many pension systems, prompts the question of how to develop sustainable funding for health care. The question of how to re-design labour markets, working lives, and civic engagement to account for changing demographic realities has also moved into the focus of debate in many European countries. In order to contribute to these debates, more scientific research is needed, especially in three fields: ageing processes on the individual level and their interaction with macro level trends; the interdependence between work, retirement, and healthy ageing; and, the consequences for society at large and in particular for the future funding of health care and pension systems<sup>5,6</sup>.

**More research is needed on:**  
**(1) ageing processes,**  
**(2) the relationship between work, retirement, and healthy ageing, and,**  
**(3) societal consequences of demographic change.**

Whereas much research addresses ageing processes at the population level, a better understanding at the individual level is needed. Ageing processes turn out to be not only heterogeneous but are also triggered by characteristics determined earlier in life, such as education and income. On average, people live longer and also healthier. However, more research is needed on the question of how these trends differ on the individual level and across various demographic, economic, and social groups. For example, we know that there is a detrimental effect of smoking on individual health and life expectancy<sup>7,8</sup>, and that higher education results in the postponement of cognitive decline later in life<sup>9</sup>. In

addition, social inequality, in its various dimensions, adds heavily to longevity and health-related differences within populations.

Typical but not exclusive cases are related to gender and socio-economic status. At the moment, women live longer than men. Therefore, men are more likely to get social care from their spouses, while women often need to rely on someone else or state services. Studies also show that people with low socio-economic status live shorter and less healthy lives after retirement than people with high socio-economic status<sup>10</sup>. In this regard,

**Demographic research can contribute to a better understanding of determinants and consequences of societal dynamics.**

we also need to learn more about how the various dimensions of ageing (behaviour, economic resources, access to health care, social engagement) are interlinked and how macro indicators, such as institutions or norms, shape individual ageing and vice versa. For example, it is still unexplained why many live longer in good health but do not necessarily prefer to extend employment or make further productive use of their

resources in formal or informal societal activities. It also remains unclear why most European countries have mandatory retirement at age 65 although many are able and to a certain extent willing to work longer. Hence, innovative employment concepts addressing issues such as life-long learning, active ageing, and flexible retirement ages are necessary.

In light of a shrinking and ageing labour force, as well as an increasing share of the population in retirement, the issue of work versus retirement will remain a key topic in decades to come. The conditions and effects of transitions from work to retirement have until recently been addressed by economists and sociologists. Being able to link these perspectives and add a strongly needed demographic perspective, population studies can make a valuable contribution to these analyses by assessing the following questions: What is the effect of careers (occupation, working conditions, stress, and work history) on health later in life? How does lifestyle – including partnerships, marriage, and divorce – affect retirement

income? Which early life events influence work and retirement phases later in life? How do adverse economic conditions impact life expectancy and health? What is the effect of extended education, life-long learning, and international migration on retirement income? How does early or late retirement affect health? How exactly does the impact of these factors evolve over a lifespan and during specific life stages (in or out of education and work, family situation, etc.)?

## 2.2 FERTILITY AND FAMILY

Fertility and family patterns in Europe have changed tremendously over the past several decades. These changes include fertility rates dropping below the population replacement level in most European countries. Even though one group of countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and the Nordic countries, have fertility rates that have never fallen below an average of 1.6 children per woman, a second group including the German-speaking countries, Southern Europe, as well as Central and Eastern Europe, has seen fertility rates fall to an average of 1.3 to 1.4 children per woman.

One of the main reasons for these low fertility levels has been an increase in the mean age at first birth. In all European countries, this has increased by three to five years and now lies between the age of 25 and 30 years<sup>11</sup>. Men and women prefer to attain economic stability (through education and employment) before they become parents. This process, and in general, the transition to adulthood, is increasingly taking longer than in the recent past due to new challenges created by economic and labour market changes. A better understanding of these constraints might allow the design of well-targeted policies supporting young adults in this crucial period.

It has been argued that many couples are not able to have their desired number of children as first births tend to take place later. Furthermore, the decision to have more children arises when medical and other factors might make it more difficult to conceive. However, a



number of questions remain open: Do people have additional children more quickly if they are older when having their first child or do they just stop having children? Another question to be addressed concerns the effects of assisted reproduction. As more women complete higher education and achieve economic independence, more women postpone pregnancy and rely on assisted reproduction. Further research is also needed to better understand the reasons and patterns behind unwanted, as well as wanted low fertility, resulting in more and more childless adults. In the majority of European countries, between 15 and 25 percent of women will not become mothers<sup>12</sup>. Some pioneering research indicates that preference for childlessness may be developed early in life and stays stable over the life-course, whereas other fertility- and family-related preferences seem to be more fluid and change over time<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, there is hardly anything known about childlessness and the desired number of children among men. Whereas it is generally assumed that trends among men parallel those found among women, more detailed studies show that there are significant differences according to educational status: women with a higher qualification level tend to be childless more than women with lower qualifications. At the same time, the likelihood of remaining childless seems to be higher for low-qualified men than for those with higher education<sup>14</sup>. However, in some of the Nordic countries the trend for women seems to have recently reversed. Highly qualified women now have more children than their less-qualified counterparts<sup>15</sup>. The question is whether these patterns can be generalised to all of Europe or whether they are unique to Nordic settings. More comparative research is needed to capture these trends and to understand their underlying causes.

As a result of increasing childlessness and low fertility, household sizes have declined throughout Europe in recent decades by between 10 and 15 percent, reaching a European average of 2.5 people per household. With one-person households on the rise, it can be expected

**It is essential to understand the role of economic and labour market forces in delayed fertility trends.**

that this average will decrease further in the future<sup>16</sup>. This is one example of how Europe is also experiencing changes with regard to family structures. For instance, an increasing number of children are growing up with single mothers or fathers, or in so-called “blended families” (reconstituted families). This is due to falling marriage rates and increasing divorce rates, as well as changes towards attitudes on partnership forms. Increasing divorce rates lead to less time spent in partnerships, which has the predictable effect of lowering the number of children born to men and women<sup>17</sup>, but new partnerships appear to minimize the fertility gap between the divorced and never-divorced and this gap is already lessened by the widespread pattern of postponing parenthood<sup>18</sup>.

Fewer and fewer people consider it necessary to marry before becoming parents; over the past three decades, there has been a considerable increase in childbirth out of wedlock. In many countries, the percentage of these births has doubled or even tripled<sup>19</sup>. In countries like France, Norway, and Sweden over half of all children are born to parents who are not married. However, in many countries it is not known whether children born out of wedlock actually live with a single parent or a cohabiting couple, since data on cohabitation is scarce. Furthermore, couples often marry throughout the child-bearing process and/or in the first three years of parenthood, which means that single parenthood might often be only a temporary status<sup>20, 21</sup>. Indeed, marriage rates seem to be slowly increasing again in countries with relatively higher fertility rates, like Sweden<sup>22</sup>. All in all, we still do not know enough about the patterns and dynamics of new family forms in Europe.

**In-depth research is needed into the persistence and consequences of changing family structures.**

A key question to be answered in this discussion is how persistent these observed trends actually are. For example, there is a scientific debate about whether or not fertility rates in countries with lowest-low fertility levels are on the upturn, and which factors have triggered this trend. A new development in the measurement of de-

mographic trends has indicated that the recent upturn in overall fertility rates may in fact be due to slowing postponement trends, rather than an actual increase in the number of children born to a woman<sup>23</sup>. We need to know more about the impact of contextual factors (such as policies, socio-economic conditions, norms, values, and institutions) on future generations' fertility behaviour. It is also necessary to study the extent to which indicators of partnership formation and stability (marriage, cohabitation, divorce) will change. Conversely, how will changing partnership behaviour, e.g. new gender roles or blended families, affect future living arrangements, particularly under the conditions of ageing societies? With the share of older people growing and family structures changing, how the increasing need for care will be met? Who will care for whom within the family (children, parents, grandparents, step-parents, etc.) and what role will public institutions play in this context? Issues of work-family balance and related gender roles will also become an even more pressing issue, as dependencies and care needs will intensify at both ends of the life-course. Will the so-called rush hour of life become a rush hour of later-life in the future?

### 2.3 MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

Since the early 1990s, net migration (i.e. the difference between immigration and emigration) within single countries of the EU-27 represented an average European population growth of around two and four percent annually since the beginning of the 21st century<sup>24</sup>. Because migrants are generally young and in the reproductive

**Migration is an important social, political, and economic factor in Europe.**

stage of life, Europe would have had a general population growth of around zero without these migration flows and the population structure would have aged even more pronouncedly. Therefore, immigration alleviated persistent societal and economic deficits in Europe such as a shrinking

labour force, which has consequences for sustaining market production and the pension systems. Current and historical migration dynamics in Europe have led to a foreign population of 32.5 million, which was 6.5 per-

cent of the population of Europe in 2010. If we consider those residents born in another country regardless their nationality, the figure increases to 47.3 million, which is 9.4 percent of the European population<sup>25</sup>. There are, however, differences across European countries: the largest proportions of migrants are residing in relatively small countries such as Luxembourg and Estonia. Nevertheless, around 75 percent of the foreign and foreign-born population in the EU is found in the five largest countries, namely Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

A large number of migrants originate from outside the EU-27, representing the majority of the foreign and foreign-born population living in the EU-27. Although migration is generally an individual decision, sending and receiving communities are affected by the cumulative consequences. For example, in 2006, total remittances from the European Union to non-EU countries amounted to an estimated EUR 19.1 billion<sup>26</sup>. These remittances can have an important impact on the development of the sending communities, whereas in the receiving communities issues arise around social cohesion between ethnic groups and the strain on social security resources<sup>27</sup>. However, shrinking and ageing labour forces have triggered a debate in many European countries on whether migration could solve shortages in future labour markets. Another issue that might become important in the future is if it is socially just for European nations to expect poorer countries to bear the costs of reproducing and educating workers who would then move to richer countries. How do flows of aid to poor countries compare to flows of investment in human capital from poor countries, which are often publicly funded? Since remittances are private transfers, they cannot be easily used to build welfare state programs in sending countries. Therefore, the benefit of migrants' work to sustain European welfare states may compromise the development of welfare states elsewhere in the world.

The impact of migration in the receiving countries is often difficult to quantify. Immediate benefits may be followed by long-term costs and direct costs may precede returns. Communities may see immigrants as

a threat to the established way of life. That is particularly the case when immigrants are expected to give up their original identity (values, language, etc.) or when immigrants compete for scarce resources (e.g. jobs, housing, social security). Communities may also see immigrants and the socio-cultural diversity that comes with them as an asset. This is often the case when immigrants perform activities that are valued by the community and are not in direct competition with the local community, such as in sports, arts and science, but also in health care.

### The effects of migration on the sending and the receiving countries are contested.

This question, essentially one of integration, is particularly important as a change in location does not usually imply a clean break with the past, given that each person has a memory, a life history and socio-cultural background that shape his or her individual and social identity. Immigrants may continue to share values, language and assets, and they may maintain ties by exchanging information, financial connections, and other resources. As a result, people may have multiple group memberships, such as through dual citizenship<sup>28</sup>. Relocation and self-positioning in a network are processes that are embedded in the life of migrants and should therefore be studied in context. The usual types of migration (due to employment, marriage, family reunification, residential mobility, and retirement) are all embedded in life opportunities. The life-course perspective on relocation also points to its repetitive nature: one migration is often followed by another (return or onward migration), or even sequential or circular migration.

To monitor migration flows and understand the consequences for both sending and receiving communities, all these aspects of migration and migrants need to be considered. This calls for an approach organised around three key concepts: agents or agencies (e.g. migrants and non-migrants, families,

### Why is mobility within European countries decreasing and what are the economic consequences of this trend?

institutions and organisations), life-course, and networks<sup>29</sup>. There also needs to be a distinction between different forms of migration, for example permanent or short-term migration, in order to understand the differing effects, as well as different necessities and possibilities of policy intervention. A few conceptual questions must be raised, such as regards the conditions and effects of fluid migration forms or when people live and work in different countries. Is the concept of migration still helpful in understanding this phenomenon or do we need to expand the analysis to multiple forms of mobility?

Within this framework, the flow of people in a network of opportunities, and the adaptation of immigrants to destination communities, as well as the adaptation of communities to newcomers, prompts specific research topics such as the evolution of migration systems and the determinants of migration flows. Who are the agents in migration networks, and how do they interact? When does migration become a life-course strategy, and what is the impact of emigration on families? How can we assess the impact of migration on receiving communities, in particular on their demographic and social structure, social cohesion, and migrants' position in the network of opportunities? How does migration affect population health and the systems of social security and social support? What are the long-term effects of migration on sending communities – not only in regard to non-European states but also to European regions that are affected by population loss? How do policies in the receiving and also the sending countries affect patterns of migration?

Lastly, in contrast to the general claim of increasing migration to Europe, mobility between regions of single European countries has decreased over time<sup>30</sup>. This trend seems to be persistent. Moreover, research has shown that internal mobility is an important mechanism to reduce the effects of economic shocks on the

### To understand the determinants and consequences of migration, analyses should consider: (1) agents, (2) the entire life-course, and, (3) networks.

efficiency of local labour markets. Laid-off workers may react to unemployment levels of the region where they presently reside by moving to other regions with more employment opportunities. Although some forms of mobility, such as workplace commuting and temporary displacement for job reasons, have become more important and replaced the need for permanent residential change in some cases, several questions still arise: What are the barriers to internal mobility within European countries? How do these barriers affect employment levels within countries? Are new forms of work-related mobility an optimal solution to poor employment opportunities in the local labour market? To what extent do different types of mobility allow work aspirations to combine better with family obligations?

## 2.4 CROSS-CUTTING RESEARCH TOPICS

Beyond the research outlined above, which follows the classical branches of demographic research, it is important to look across these domains and identify research topics that have traditionally been neglected.

With people living longer, changes in the family, and increased mobility, an emerging key question is how these demographic shifts influence and are influenced by intergenerational relations. How are flows of transfers between generations affected by demographic trends and how do they differ across age, time, and space? What are the determinants of these flows and what are the consequences of changes in the volume and nature of intergenerational exchanges? How are these mediated by institutions and policies? For example, what will be the role of the state vis-à-vis the family in light of eventually declining resources and an increasing demand for care? How will changes in the population structure, labour market, and mobility affect the availability of formal and informal care? To what extent will migrant workers substitute care that was typically provided by family members? What role will unpaid work play in the context of intergenerational transfers?

Another research area that spans across disciplines relates to significant changes in the life-course. In general, it is characterised by postponement of the timing of

demographic events (first birth, marriage, education, transition to adulthood), more diversity throughout the life-course (multiple demographic and economic transitions, shorter phases in and out of the labour market, redistribution of the working lifetime), and a longer period of dependency at the end of life (morbidity and disability, old-age poverty). Demographers have the expertise to respond to all these questions by linking individual experiences and events over the life-course with population composition and dynamics.

The interregional perspective on population trends is another cross-cutting research area. Today, regions in Europe increasingly compete in terms of their demographic set-up (age distribution, appeal to domestic, international and in particular well-qualified migrants, attractiveness for families, etc.). Some regions of Europe are already facing the threat of high levels of depopulation, which could ultimately lead to “ghost regions”. Other regions are more successful with higher centralisation and urbanisation. What are the dynamics of these developments on the regional, national and global levels, and how can societies respond to eventual polarisation tendencies without losing social cohesion?

Finally, Europeanisation and Globalisation have not yet received sufficient attention with regard to demographic trends. Some important questions are: How do increasing economic and political interdependencies shape peoples’ lives and the demographic structure of societies? Do demographic trends become more similar across the states of the European Union or do new transnational European patterns occur? Are these really European phenomena or are they more general trends of Globalisation? To what extent are national policies still able to effectively address demographic challenges that result from increasing processes of transnationalisation?

### 3. METHODS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Just as the demographic trends outlined in this paper are determined by increasing diversity, there is no “one size fits all” methodological approach to be applied. The many challenges in the “Demographic Laboratory of Europe” require various methods, including longitudinal analysis to capture change and dynamics of demographic trends, as well as cross-national analyses to pursue comparative studies. Generally, existing models could and should be extended to connect contextual and individual-level factors. This allows for analysis, for example, of how policy interventions on the macro level connect with the lives of individuals at micro level. In order to assess the scope of current and future demographic trends and their consequences, all these analyses will ideally be complemented by projections, for example using simulation techniques.

In terms of the overall research infrastructure needed for the proposed research agenda, adequate data, i.e. long-term time series, multi-level, and individual data, have to be identified and eventually collected in order to improve the empirical base for cutting-edge population research. Some data sources are already providing material for some of the research questions posed above (e.g. WHO-data on health, Eurostat, the National Transfer Accounting (NTA) project, and the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), SHARE on intergenerational relations and transfers, and NORFACE for migration research). Yet, data are often incomplete, fragmented, and address only specific research needs. Therefore, the collection of new data is essential, particularly internationally comparable surveys and databases on indicators of mortality, fertility, migration, and contextual indicators (such as inequality trends across age, gender, ethnicities, marital status, parenthood, and social tiers; also policies, regions, health status, and causes of death). In order to increase synergies, new data should ideally be integrated into or at least be made comparable to existing data sources. In fact, the creation of a coherent, easily accessible European data infrastructure may be a promising endeavour.

**Developing European data infrastructure may contribute to the evaluation and development of effective policies.**

### 4. CONCLUSION

Presently, population researchers in Europe already contribute a great bulk of knowledge and methodological expertise toward a better understanding of the causes and consequences of demographic developments. Their research findings, built upon a sound methodological and conceptual base, support decision-makers with research-driven, evidence-based, and reliable information on current and future population developments. Demographers have developed precise mathematical and statistical models for the very particular analysis of population structure and dynamics with immediate applications and accurate recommendations for policy design. Still, there is a strong need for more collaborative research among the best population researchers in Europe to adequately address the kinds of questions raised in this paper. This might enable modern societies to find better solutions for the challenges to labour markets and welfare systems brought about by increasing longevity and healthy ageing of the European population, to assess the intersection between work and family for a European population that faces low fertility rates and changing family forms, and to illuminate the societal impact of migration dynamics and compositions for an increasingly diverse Europe. Cross-country comparisons and research tackling cross-cutting issues in demography will particularly allow for ground-breaking insights and new methodological approaches. It is obvious that these demands can be best met if we combine our forces and capacities.

**Stronger collaboration between European demographers is needed to better understand the determinants and consequences of demographic changes in Europe.**

In that sense, Europe has great potential to gain from its diversity in the field of population studies and demographic policies if we can create a structure that enables us to gain a better understanding of the multifaceted mosaic of population developments in Europe.

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