

## **New study published: “Europe’s Demographic Future. Where the Regions Are Heading after a Decade of Crises”**

**Berlin, 10 August 2017**

**Europe is demographically divided. In the north, west and centre of the continent, comparatively high fertility rates and immigration are ensuring population growth for the foreseeable future. By contrast, many regions in southern and Eastern Europe are threatened with accelerated aging processes and marked population losses.**

Europe is not just the proverbial “old” continent. Its populations are also on average older than elsewhere in the world. Even now, there are only some three persons of working age to every pensioner. By the middle of the century, this ratio may fall to one to two. This will have consequences for the economy and social systems. It will become more difficult to finance social benefits, and companies will find it harder to find suitable personnel. “This is all the more serious in view of the fact that the economies of the twenty-first century require well-qualified people rather than major industrial plants”, says Reiner Klingholz, Director of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development.

Just how well prepared Europe is to meet these demographic challenges differs from one region to another. This is shown by the Berlin Institute’s study, which analysed a total of 290 regions. The highly developed regions of Switzerland, southern Germany and Scandinavia are in particularly good shape – in some places, including the north of the continent, because of their high fertility rates and good education systems; in others, especially Germany, because of immigration from both European and non-European countries. On the other hand, the prospects of the peripheral regions – in southern and Eastern Europe, which are in any case economically weaker – are further dimmed by the exodus of young people. By the middle of the century, the average age of the population is likely to be highest in Greece and Portugal – and those countries’ populations will also be smaller than they are today. “In many parts of southern and Eastern Europe, only the regions in and around the capital cities are managing to stabilise demographically, while rural areas are increasingly losing people”, explains Stephan Sievert, one of the authors of the study.

The demographic situation is also a consequence of the numerous crises and upheavals that Europe has experienced over the past decade. For example, the economic crisis triggered a new wave of migration from south to north. The so-called refugee crisis has led in many places to an unexpected rise in the number of inhabitants. “The integration of the new arrivals will thus be a major future task for Europe”, Stephan Sievert adds. “Only if countries succeed in quickly getting immigrants and refugees into employment will the latter be able to participate fully in society”. In addition, immigrants who have successfully integrated can help to cushion the effects of these demographic challenges. Many European states have recognised this fact and are gradually expanding their immigration channels. Others are more sceptical. Particularly in the post-socialist states many people reject immigrants, especially those from outside Europe. But these countries, too, will have a great need for immigration in the medium term. In the Czech Republic, for example, there is already almost full employment today, and employers are likely to urge a more liberal immigration policy in future.

Demographic problems can also be mitigated by better integrating previously disadvantaged groups, such as women, into working life. Northern Europe has been particularly successful at doing this. “In Scandinavia, but also in the Baltic states, there is now scarcely any difference between male and female employment”, says Reiner Klingholz. “In southern Italy, by contrast, not even one woman in two of working age is engaged in paid work.” This has to do not only with cultural differences but also with the availability of childcare, which allows mothers to go back to work soon after the birth of a child. A good family policy would be important precisely in these regions, since fertility rates have fallen here in parallel with the economic crisis in many places.

So how do Europe’s regions stand in demographic terms? The Berlin Institute for Population and Development has examined this issue in its latest study, “Europe’s Demographic Future”. The overall findings, which are based on various indicators of demographic and economic development, show that the challenges are greater in the south and the east of the continent than they are in the north and the west.

You can download the study as a PDF free of charge from:

<http://www.berlin-institut.org/en/publications/studies-in-english/europes-demographic-future.html>

Please address all enquiries to:

**Berlin Institute for Population and Development**

Schillerstr. 59

10627 Berlin

Stephan Sievert (sievert@berlin-institut.org, T. 030-31 10 26 98)

Dr. Reiner Klingholz (klingholz@berlin-institut.org, T. 030-31 01 75 60)

The Berlin Institute for Population and Development is an independent think tank that focuses on regional and global demographic change. The Institute was founded in 2000 as a non-profit foundation. Its mission is to raise awareness of demographic change, to promote sustainable development, to introduce new ideas to policymakers and to develop concepts to solve demographic and development problems. The Berlin Institute publishes studies as well as discussion and background papers and compiles scientific data to be used in the political decision-making process. For further information or to subscribe to our free regular newsletter “Demos” (in German), please visit [www.berlin-institut.org](http://www.berlin-institut.org).

Founded in 1934, the GfK Verein is a non-profit organisation for the promotion of market research. It comprises some 550 companies and individuals. The purpose of the Verein is to develop innovative research methods in close cooperation with scientific institutions, to promote the training and further education of market researchers and to follow the structures and developments in society, the economy and politics that form the basis for private consumption and to study their impact on consumers. Study findings are made available to members of the Verein free of charge. The GfK Verein is the majority shareholder of GfK SE. For more information, please visit: [www.gfk-verein.org](http://www.gfk-verein.org).  
Twitter: GfK\_Verein /// facebook: GfK Verein

The Berlin Institute would like to thank the GfK Verein for funding the study.