

THE POPULATION OF THE BALKANS AT THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY
Fifth International Conference of Balkans demography
(Ohrid, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 21-24 October 2015)

On the initiative of the DemoBalk Association (http://www.demobalk.org/DemoBalk_conferences_seminars/?lang=en&cs=1) and in cooperation with the Institute of Economics in Skopje (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), an international population conference will be held in October 2015 on the theme: *The population of the Balkans at the dawn of the 21st century* (see <http://www.ek-inst.ukim.edu.mk/index.php?lang=en>).

Making use of the recently published 2010 census results, this conference aims to assess the demographic situation in the Balkans in the early 21st century and to draw attention to the major trends observed and their potential effects over the medium and long term.

The conference will begin by examining key aspects of population dynamics: fertility, mortality, mobility. The first session, devoted to fertility, will examine the low fertility affecting a large part of the Balkan region, and will analyse its effects on population growth and age structure. The second session will focus on analysis of mortality and morbidity, to provide a general picture of population health in the Balkans. Internal and international mobility, viewed from the angle of the demographic and socioeconomic gains and losses for the countries concerned, will be discussed in the third session.

The conference will then turn its attention to the state of the Balkans populations. The fourth session will be devoted to changes in family and household structures, the fifth session to changes in age structure and older populations, and the sixth will analyse the spatial distribution of national populations and their main constituent ethnic groups.

In parallel within the conference, a workshop will be organized on the theme of: Population data collection in the Balkan countries, the experience of the 2010 round censuses: methodological concepts, field data collection, data comparability and data dissemination methods. This workshop will bring together representatives of statistical offices and other producers of demographic and socioeconomic data in the Balkan region, and the users of these data: scholars, teachers, decision-makers, members of civil society.

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| The conference languages will be French, English and Macedonian. Preference will be given to papers developing a comparative approach |
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FIRST SESSION
The Balkans: a low fertility region

This first session will provide an opportunity for a methodological comparison of the various fertility estimates that can be deduced from available sources (vital records, surveys, censuses) and for a diagnosis of key trends (intensity and timing).

It will then look at the endogenous causes of the low fertility now characterizing a large part of the Balkan region. Analysis of fertility by birth order, mother's age, level of education, occupational category and place of residence will provide a more accurate picture of the situation and will help decision makers to devise appropriate response measures.

This session will also include papers on the past and future effect of fertility decline on population growth and age structure.

SECOND SESSION
Population health in the Balkans

This second session will aim to provide a general picture of population health in the Balkans.

On the basis of available statistical sources, the first objective will be to analyse long-term changes in the age pattern of mortality. Distinguishing by sex wherever possible, the respective contributions of different age groups to changes in life expectancy at birth will be determined,

The roles of infant mortality, mortality at advanced ages and the contribution of the major causes of death to the lengthening of life will be reviewed. Focusing on differential mortality, inequalities in death will be measured by region of residence, educational level, occupational category, ethnicity, etc.

With a view to informing institutional decision-makers, gains in life expectancy associated with the eradication of certain causes of death – alcohol, smoking, deaths from external causes – will be

estimated. The nature and intensity of the link between population health and healthcare provision (medical demography) will also be tested.

THIRD SESSION

Migration in the Balkans

For the Balkans, the 1980s and 1990s were decades of crisis and conflict that led to mass migration both within and between countries. In the 2000s, it was the very countries to which many Balkan emigration candidates had turned – Italy and Greece – that were hit by a severe economic crisis.

In this third session, the first task will be to establish an overview of migration flows in the various Balkan nations over the last three decades.

Directly, using data on migrant inflows and outflows, or indirectly, by comparing census population counts or estimates of expected population numbers at the census dates, overall migration flows will then be broken down by age and sex and their effect on the growth and age structure of the affected populations will be assessed.

Reasoning at national level (international migration) or regional level (external and internal migration), the aim will be to determine the true gains or losses due to migration for the territorial entities studied. Participants will examine the effect of skilled labour migration (brain drain) and return migration on the socioeconomic development of the regions concerned.

FOURTH SESSION

Changes in family and household structures in the Balkans

Declining fertility, longer life expectancy and increased geographical mobility will be sufficient in themselves to produce radical changes in family and household structures. Changes in patterns of union (marriage, cohabitation) and disunion (divorce, separation) are further factors at play.

The aim of this session will be, first, to estimate the contribution of each of these demographic factors to the change in the size and structure of family and household units, and second, to establish a typology of families and households and to analyse its evolution over time.

Participants will also seek to predict how modes of cohabitation are liable to evolve over the next two to three decades, and with what consequences (for example, in terms of housing and personal services).

FIFTH SESSION

Population ageing and old age in the Balkans

Fertility decline, longer life expectancy and the departure of young people or the arrival of older adults are all a source of population ageing, a process that may be sudden or progressive, fast or slow.

How have these various factors affected populations in the Balkans at both regional and national levels? How may they operate in the future?

Beyond this double question, this session will focus on trends in the older populations and their main demographic characteristics (number, age-sex structure) and socioeconomic characteristics (household size and structure, place of residence, living conditions, living standard).

Be it in terms of social protection (pension system, health insurance, dependency in old-age), employment, sharing and redistribution of the gains from growth, solidarity, etc., population ageing may profoundly modify the social landscape in the Balkans; all attempts at prospective analysis will be welcome in this session.

SIXTH SESSION

Population distribution and territories in the Balkans

In a region affected by a marked slowdown in population growth, some territories still have a positive natural balance and/or continue to exert a powerful attraction. Why and how are these territories different from the others? Which population categories are most attracted to them? Is their growth sustainable?

Conversely, the population is declining in many areas. Are these areas becoming population deserts? Is this a long-term trend? How are the people who stay different from those who leave?

This session will focus on providing detailed and firmly grounded analyses of population distribution in the Balkans, past patterns of change, and the various medium and long-term implications for the regions concerned.